Adams William Henry Davenport

Some Heroes of Travel, or, Chapters from the History...

William Adams

Some Heroes of Travel, or, Chapters from the History of Geographical Discovery and Enterprise

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23171291
Some Heroes of Travel / or, Chapters from the History of Geographical Discovery and Enterprise:

Содержание

W. H. Davenport Adams
Some Heroes of Travel / or, Chapters from the History of Geographical Discovery and Enterprise

PREFACE

The present age is sometimes described as an Age of Commonplace; but it has its romance if we care to look for it. Assuredly, the adventures of its travellers and explorers do not lose in importance or interest, even when compared with those of their predecessors in days when a great part of the world was still "virgin ground." In the following pages, this thesis is illustrated by a summary of the narratives of certain "Heroes of Travel" belonging to our own time; and I believe it will be found that for "stirring scenes" and "hair-breadth escapes" they vie with any which the industrious Hakluyt, the quaint Purchas, or, coming down to a later date, the multifarious Pinkerton has collected. However, on this point the reader has an opportunity of satisfying himself, as, by way of contrast, I have prefixed to these Episodes

of Recent Travel a succinct account of the enterprise of Messer Marco Polo, the Pioneer of Mediæval Travellers.

There is no pleasanter mode of learning geography than by studying the works of distinguished travellers; and therefore this little book may claim to possess some slight educational value, while primarily intended to supply the young with attractive but not unwholesome reading. The narratives which it contains have been selected with a view to variety or interest. They range over Mexico, Western Australia, Central Africa, and Central Asia. They include the experiences of the hunter, the war correspondent, and the geographical explorer; and, in recognition of the graceful influence of women, of a lady traveller, who showed herself as resolute and courageous as any of the so-called hardier sex. And, finally, they have the merit, it is believed, of not having appeared in previous compilations.

As a companion for the fireside corner, this little book will, I hope, be welcome to all English-speaking lads and lasses, who will learn from its pages how much may be accomplished by patience, perseverance, and energy.

SIR MARCO POLO, THE VENETIAN, AND HIS TRAVELS IN ASIA

We should be inclined to consider Sir Marco Polo as one of the greatest travellers the world has ever seen. It is true he was not a man of genius; that he was not, like Columbus, inspired by a lofty enthusiasm; that he displayed no commanding superiority of character. But when we remember the vast compass of his journeys, and the circumstances under which they were carried out; when we remember, too, how close an observer he was, and how rigidly accurate, and his plenitude of energy and perseverance – we feel that he is, beyond all cavil or question, entitled to be recognized as the king of mediæval travellers. Let us take Colonel Yule's summary of his extraordinary achievements: —

"He was the first Traveller to trace a route across the whole longitude of Asia, naming and describing kingdom after kingdom which he had seen with his own eyes; the Deserts of Persia, the flowering plateaux and wild gorges of Badakshan, the jade-bearing rivers of Khotan; the Mongolian steppes, cradle of the power that had so lately threatened to swallow up Christendom; the new and brilliant Court that had been established at Cambaluc: the first Traveller to reveal China in all

its wealth and vastness, its mighty rivers, its huge cities, its rich manufactures, its swarming population, the inconceivably vast fleets that quickened its seas and its inland waters; to tell us of the nations on its borders, with all their eccentricities of manners and worship; of Tibet, with its sordid devotees; of Burma, with its golden pagodas and their tinkling crowns; of Laos, of Siam, of Cochin China; of Japan, the Eastern Thule, with its rosy pearls and golden-roofed palaces: the first to speak of that Museum of Beauty and Wonder, still so imperfectly ransacked, the Indian Archipelago, source of those aromatics then so highly prized and whose origin was so dark; of Java, the Pearl of Islands; of Sumatra, with its many kings, its strange costly products, and its cannibal races; of the dusky savages of Nicobar and Andaman; of Ceylon, the Isle of Gems, with its sacred Mountain and its tomb of Adam; of India the Great, not as a dreamland of Alexandrian fables, but as a country seen and partially explored, with its virtuous Brahmans, its obscene ascetics, its diamonds and the strange tales of their acquisition, its sea-beds of pearl, and its powerful sun: the first in mediæval times to give any distinct account of the secluded Christian Empire of Abyssinia and the semi-Christian island of Socotra; to speak, though indeed dimly, of Zanzibar, with its negroes and its ivory, and of the vast and distant Madagascar, bordering on the Dark Ocean of the South, with its Roc [1] and other monstrosities; and, in a remotely opposite region, of Siberia and the Arctic Ocean, of dog-sledges, white

[1] The roc, a gigantic bird, which figures in the Eastern fable of Sinbad the Sailor.

bears, and reindeer-riding Tunguses."

Who can dispute the fame of a man whose name and memory are associated with so marvellous a catalogue of discoveries, who anticipated the travellers of a later generation in many of their most remarkable enterprises? At one time, the authenticity of his statements was frequently and openly impugned; he was accused of exaggeration and inexactitude; but the labours of Marsden, Pauthier, and especially of Colonel Yule, have shown that his statements, so far as they are founded on personal observation, may be implicitly accepted.

In the early part of the fourteenth century there lived at Venice a patrician of good family, named Andrea Polo, to whom were born three sons, Marco, Nicolo, and Maffeo. Nicolo, the second of these sons, was the father of our traveller, Marco Polo, who was born in 1254. Engaged in extensive commercial operations, Nicolo, soon after his son's birth, journeyed to Constantinople, and thence proceeded on a trading venture to the Crimea, which led to his ascending the Volga for a considerable distance, and crossing the steppes to visit Bokhara and the Court of the great Kublai Khan, on or within the borders of Cathay. Kublai, the hero of so many legends, had never before seen a European. He tendered to Nicolo and his brother Maffeo (who travelled with him) a right royal welcome; was deeply interested in all they told him of the kingdoms and states of Europe; and finally resolved on sending them back, with one of his own nobles, as ambassadors to the Pope. In this capacity they arrived at Acre in 1269; but as

Pope Clement IV. had died in the previous year, and no successor had as yet been elected, the two brothers thought they might reasonably indulge themselves in a visit to their Venetian homes, from which they had been absent for fifteen years.

Nicolo remained at Venice until 1271, when, no Pope having been elected, he deemed it well that he should return to the Great Khan to explain the delay which had taken place in the fulfilment of his mission. Accompanied by his brother Maffeo, and his son Marco, a lad of seventeen, he sailed to Acre, and thence to the port of Ayas on the gulf of Scanderoon, where he was overtaken by the news that a Pope had at last been elected in the person of an old friend of his, Tedoldo Visconti, or Pope Gregory X., at that time legate in Syria. The new Pope immediately sent for the two brothers to Acre, and charged them with a cordial message for the Khan. He also sent him two Dominican monks to teach the truths of science and Christianity; but they took fright at an early stage of the journey, and hurried back to Acre; while the two brothers, with young Polo, started overland for the Court of the Great Khan.

Reaching Hormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, they seem to have taken a northern route; traversing successively the regions of Kerman and Khorasan, Balkh and Badakshan, and ascending the Upper Oxus to the great plateau of Pamir – a route followed by no European traveller, except Benedict Goro, until it was undertaken by Captain John Wood, of the Indian navy, in his special expedition to the sources of the Oxus in 1838.

Leaving the bleak wastes of the Pamir, the Polos descended into Kashgar, visited Yarkand and Khotand, passed near Lake Lob, and eventually traversed the great Desert of the Gobi, since explored by several European travellers, to Tangut, the name then applied by Mongols and Persians to territory at the extreme north-west of China, both within and without the famous Wall. Skirting the Chinese frontier, they came upon the Great Khan at his summer palace of Kaiping-fu, near the foot of the Khin-gan Mountains, and about fifty miles north of the Great Wall. This must have been in May, 1275, or thereabouts, when Marco Polo was close upon one and twenty.

"The king of kings" received the three bold Venetians with much favour. "He showed great pleasure at their coming, and asked many questions as to their welfare, and how they had sped. They replied that they had in verity sped well, seeing that they found the Khan well and safe. Then they presented the credentials and letters which they had received from the Pope, and those pleased him right well; and after that they produced some sacred oil from the Holy Sepulchre, whereat he was very glad, valuing it greatly. And next, spying Marco, who was then a young gallant (*jeune bacheler*), he asked who was that in their company. 'Sire,' said his father, Messer Nicolo, 'he is my son and your liegeman.' 'Welcome is he too,' quoth the Emperor. But why should I make a long story? There was great rejoicing at the Court because of their arrival; and they met with attention and honour from everybody. So there they abode at the Court with

the other barons."

Among young Marco Polo's gifts appears to have been a facility for acquiring languages. He speedily mastered that of the Tartars, so as both to write and speak it; and in a brief space he came to know several other languages and four written characters. He studied also the customs of the Tartars and their mode of carrying on war. His ability and prudence greatly recommended him to Kublai, and he began to employ him in the public service. His first embassy was to a country lying a six months journey distant; apparently the province of Yun-nan, which he reached by way of Shansi, Shensi and Szechuen. He had been shrewd enough to observe that the Khan was disgusted with the rigid officialism of his ambassadors, who, on returning from their various missions, would speak only of the business they had transacted, whereas he would fain have heard of the strange things, peoples, and countries they had seen. And so he took full notes of all he saw, and returned to the Khan's Court brimful of surprising information, to which the prince listened with evident pleasure. "If this young man live," he said, "he will assuredly come to be a person of great work and capacity."

For seventeen years Marco Polo remained in the Khan's service, being sent on several important embassies, and engaged also in the domestic administration. For three years he held the government of the important city of Yangchau. On another occasion, with his uncle Maffeo, he spent a twelvemonth at Kangchau in Tangut. He also visited Karakorum, the old

Mongolian capital of the Khans, and penetrated into Champa, or Southern Cochin China. Finally, he seems to have been sent on a mission to the Indian Seas, and to have explored several of the southern states of India. And thus it came about that Messer Marco Polo had knowledge of, or actually visited, a greater number of the different countries of the world than any other man; the more that he was always eager to gain information, and to examine and inquire into everything.

Meantime, the Venetians were growing wealthy, and Marco's father and uncle were growing old; and increasing wealth and increasing years raised in them an apprehension of what might befall them in case of the aged Khan's death, and a desire to return to their native land. Several times they applied to Kublai for permission to depart; but he was loth to say farewell to the men whom he had known and trusted so long, and, but for an opportune event, they might never have succeeded in carrying themselves and their jewels and gold back to Europe. In 1286 Arghún Khan, of Persia, Kublai's great-nephew, lost his favourite wife, the Khatun Bulaghán. On her death-bed she charged him to supply her place with a daughter of her own tribe, the Mongols of Bayaut; and, desirous of fulfilling her dying wish, the bereaved prince despatched three ambassadors to Kublai's Court to seek for him a fitting bride. The Great Khan received them with all honour and hospitality, and then sent for the lady Kukachiu, a maiden of seventeen, and a very beautiful and gracious person. On her arrival at Court she was presented to

the three ambassadors, who declared that the lady pleased them well.

The overland route from Peking to Tabriz was long and dangerous, and the envoys decided, therefore, on returning, with their fair charge, by sea. While sojourning at the Khan's Court they had made the acquaintance of the three Venetians, and being greatly impressed by their marvellous good sense and experience, and by Marco Polo's extensive knowledge of the Indian seas and territories, they entreated the Khan to allow them the advantage and protection of their company. It was with profound reluctance that Kublai gave his consent; but when once he had done so, he behaved with his wonted splendour of generosity. Summoning the three Venetians to his presence, he placed in their hands two golden "tablets of authority," which secured them a free passage through all his dominions, and unlimited supplies of all necessaries for themselves and for their company. He entrusted them also with messages to the King of France, the King of England, the King of Spain, and other sovereigns of Christendom. Then he caused thirteen ships to be equipped, each with four masts and nine to twelve sails; and when all was ready, the ambassadors and the lady, with the three Venetians, took leave of the Great Khan, and went on board their ships, with a large retinue, and with two years' supplies provided by the Emperor (A.D. 1292).

The port from which they set out seems to have been that of Zaytou, in Fo-kien. The voyage was long and wearisome, and

chequered by much ill fortune; and in the course of it two of the ambassadors died, and as many as six hundred of the mariners and attendants. They were detained for months on the coast of Sumatra, and in the south of India; nor did they arrive at Hormuz until the end of 1293. There they learned that Arghún Khan had been dead a couple of years, and that he had been succeeded by his brother Kaikhatu. The lady, according to the custom of the country, became the wife of Arghún's son, Prince Ghazan, who is spoken of as endowed with some of the highest qualities of a king, a soldier, and a legislator; but she wept much in bidding farewell to her noble Venetian friends.

As for Marco Polo, his father, and uncle, having discharged the trust placed in their hands by Kublai Khan, they proceeded to Tabriz, on a visit to Kaikhatu; and having sojourned there for some months, journeyed homeward by way of Trebizond, Constantinople, and Negropont, arriving in Venice in 1295, after an absence of four and twenty years.

The traditional story of their arrival is related by Ramusio: —

"Years of anxiety and travel, and the hardships of many journeys, had so changed the appearance of the three Venetians, who, indeed, had almost forgotten their native tongue, that no one in Venice recognized them. Their clothes, too, were coarse and shabby, and after the Tartar fashion. Proceeding to their house in Venice, a lofty and handsome palazzo, and known by the name of the Corte del Millioni, they found it occupied by some of their relatives, whom they had no small difficulty in

convincing of their identity. To secure the desired recognition, and the honourable notice of the whole city, they adopted a quaint device.

"Inviting a number of their friends and kindred to an entertainment, they were careful that it should be prepared with great state and splendour; and when the hour came for sitting down to table, they came forth from their chamber, all clothed in crimson satin, fashioned in long robes reaching to the ground, such as in those days people wore within doors. And when water for ablutions had been served, and the guests were sat, they doffed these robes, and put on others of crimson damask, while the first suits were, by their orders, cut up and divided among the servants. After partaking of some of the dishes, they again retired, to come back resplendent in robes of crimson velvet, and when they had again taken their seats, the cast-off robes were divided as before. When dinner was over, they did the like with the robes of velvet, after they had attired themselves in dresses of the same fashion as those worn by the rest of the company. Much wonder and astonishment did the guests exhibit at these proceedings.

"Now, when the cloth had been removed, and all the servants had quitted the dining-hall, Messer Marco, as the youngest of the three, rose from table, and, going into another chamber, brought forth the three shabby dresses of coarse stuff which they had worn, on their arrival in the city. Straightway, with sharp knives they began to rip some of the seams and welts,

and to draw forth vast quantities of jewels of the highest value – rubies and sapphires, carbuncles, diamonds, and emeralds – which had all been stitched up in those dresses so artfully that nobody could have suspected their presence. For when they took leave of the Great Khan, they had converted all the wealth he had bestowed upon them into this mass of precious stones, being well aware of the impossibility of carrying with them so great an amount in gold, over a journey of such extreme length and difficulty. The exhibition of this immense treasure of jewels and precious stones, all poured out upon the table, threw the guests into fresh amazement, so that they appeared bewildered and dumfounded. And straightway they recognized, what they had formerly doubted, that the three strangers were indeed those worthy and honoured gentlemen of the Polo family whom they had claimed to be; and paid them the greatest reverence. And the story being bruited abroad in Venice, the whole city, gentle and simple, hastened to the house to embrace them, and make much of them, with every demonstration of affection and respect. On Messer Maffeo, the eldest, they conferred an office that in those days was of high dignity; while the young men came daily to visit and converse with the ever polite and gracious Messer Marco, and to ask him questions about Cathay and the Great Khan, all of which he answered with such courtesy and kindliness, that every man felt himself in a manner in his debt. And as it chanced that in the narrative which he was constantly called on to repeat of the magnificence of the Great Khan, he would speak of his revenues

as amounting to ten or fifteen 'millions' of gold, and, in like manner, when recounting other instances of great wealth in those remote lands, would always employ the term 'millions,' people nicknamed him Messer Marco *Millioni*– a circumstance which I have noted also in the public books of this Republic where he is mentioned. The court of his house, too, at S. Giovanni Crisostomo has always from that time been popularly known as the Court of the Millioni." [2]

We pass on to 1298, a year which witnessed a fresh outburst of the bitter enmity between Genoa and Venice. The Genoese, intent upon crushing their formidable rival, despatched a great fleet into the Adriatic, under the command of Lamba Doria. Off the island of Curzola they were met by a more powerful armada, of which Andrea Dandolo was admiral, and one of the galleys of which was commanded by Marco Polo. The battle began early on the 7th of September, the Venetians entering into it with the glad confidence of victory. Their impetuous attack was rewarded by the capture of the Genoese galleys; but, dashing on too eagerly, many of their ships ran aground. One of these was captured, cleared of its crew, and filled with Genoese. Closing up into a column, the Genoese pushed the encounter hotly, and broke through the Venetian line, which the misadventure we have spoken of had thrown into disorder. Throughout the long

[2] A rich, quaint, walled-up doorway, in semi-Monastic, semi-Byzantine style, still extant in the Corte del Sabbrin, or Corta Sabbonicia, is nearly all that remains of the house of Messer Marco Palo.

September day the fight was bravely supported; but, towards sunset, a squadron of cruising ships arriving to reinforce Doria, the Venetians were taken in flank, and finally overpowered. The victory of the Genoese was complete; they captured nearly all the Venetian vessels, including the admiral's, and seven thousand men, among whom were Dandolo and Marco Polo. The former disappointed the triumph of his victors by dashing out his brains against the side of his galley; the latter was removed to Genoa.

During his captivity Polo made the acquaintance of a Pisan man of letters, named Rusticiano, or Rustichello, who was a prisoner like himself. When he learned the nature of Polo's remarkable experiences, this Pisan gentleman, not unnaturally, urged him to record them in writing; and it would seem that the great traveller complied with the request, and dictated to his new friend the narrative that has since excited so much curious interest. Through the intervention of Matteo Visconti, Captain-General of Milan, peace was concluded in May, 1299, between Genoa and Venice, and as one of the conditions was the release of prisoners on both sides, Messer Marco Polo soon afterwards obtained his freedom, and returned to his family mansion in the Corte del Sabbrin. He took with him the manuscript story of his world wanderings, and in 1306 presented a copy of it to a noble French knight, Thibault de Cipoy, who had been sent on a diplomatic mission to Venice by Charles of Valois.

The closing years of a life which, in its spring and summer, had been crowded with incident and adventures, were undisturbed

by any notable event, and in his old age Marco Polo enjoyed the sweetness of domestic peace and the respect of his fellow-countrymen. On the 9th of January, 1324, "finding himself growing feebler every day through bodily ailment, but being by the grace of God of a meek mind, and of senses and judgment unimpaired, he made his will, in which he constituted as his trustees Donata, his beloved wife, and his dear daughters, Fantina, Bellola, and Monta," bequeathing to them the bulk of his property. How soon afterwards he died, there is no evidence to show; but it is at least certain that it was before June, 1325. We may conclude, therefore, that his varied life fulfilled the Psalmist's space of seventy years.

Marco Polo, says Martin Bucer, was the creator of the modern geography of Asia. He was the Humboldt of the thirteenth century; and the record of his travels must prove an imperishable monument of his force of character, wide intelligence and sympathy, and unshaken intrepidity. We have thus briefly summarized his remarkable career, and indicated the general extent of his travels. To follow him in detail throughout his extensive journeys would be impossible within the limits prescribed to us; and we shall content ourselves, therefore, with such extracts from his narrative as will best illustrate their more interesting and striking features, and indirectly assist us in forming some conception of the man himself.

And first, we take his description of the great river of Badakshan and the table-land of Pamir – which the wandering

Kirghiz call "The Roof of the World" – substituting modern names of places for those in the original.

"In leaving Badakshan, you ride twelve days between east and north-east, ascending a river [the Upper Oxus] that runs through land belonging to a brother of the Prince of Badakshan, and containing a good many towns and villages and scattered habitations. The people are Mohammedans, and valiant in war. At the end of those twelve days you come to a province of no great size, extending indeed no more than three days' journey in any direction, and this is called Wakhan. The people worship Mohammed, and have a peculiar language. They are gallant soldiers, and have a chief whom they call *None* [No-no?], which is as much as to say Count, and they are liegemen to the Prince of Badakshan.

"There are numbers of wild beasts of all kinds in this region. And when you leave this little country, and ride three days north-east, always among mountains, you get to such a height that it is spoken of as the highest place in the world. And when you reach this height, you find a great lake between two mountains [Lake Sir-i-kol], and out of it a pure river [the Oxus] flows through a plain clothed with the most beautiful pasture in the world, so that a lean beast would fatten there to your heart's content in ten days. There are great numbers of all kinds of wild beasts; among others, wild sheep of large size, with horns six palms in length [the Rass, or *Ovis Poli*]. From these horns the shepherds make great bowls out of which to eat their food; and they use the

horns also to enclose folds for their cattle at night. Messer Marco was told also that the wolves were numerous, and killed many of those wild sheep. Hence quantities of their horns and bones were found, and these were made into great heaps by the wayside, in order to direct travellers when snow lay on the earth.

"The plain is called Pamir, and you ride across it for twelve days together, finding nothing but a desert without habitation or any green thing, so that travellers are compelled to carry with them whatever they have need of. The region is so lofty and so cold, that not a bird is to be seen. And I must also observe that, owing to this extreme cold, fire does not burn so brightly, nor give out so much heat as usual, nor does it cook food so thoroughly.

"Now, if we continue our journey towards the east-north-east, we travel fully forty days, continually passing over mountains and hills, or through valleys, and crossing many rivers and wildernesses. And in all this extent you find neither habitation of man, nor any green thing, and must carry with you whatever you require. The country is called Bolor [the Tibetan kingdom of Balti]. The people dwell high up in the mountains, and are savage idolaters, living only by the chase, and clothing themselves in the skins of beasts. They are, in truth, an evil race."

[In February, 1838, Captain John Wood crossed the Pamir, and his description of it may be compared with the Venetian traveller's. "We stood, to use a native expression," he says, "upon the *Báni-i-Duniah*, or 'Roof of the World,' while before us lay stretched a noble, but frozen sheet of water, from whose western

end issued the infant river of the Oxus. This fine lake (Sir-i-kol) lies in the form of a crescent, about fourteen miles long from east to west, by an average breadth of one mile. On three sides it is bordered by swelling hills about 500 feet high, while along its southern bank they rise into mountains 3500 feet above the lake, or 19,000 feet above the sea, and covered with perpetual snow, from which never-failing source the lake is supplied. Its elevation is 15,600 feet… The appearance of the country presented the image of a winter of extreme severity. Wherever one's gaze rested, a dazzling bed of snow covered the soil like a carpet, while the sky above our heads was of a sombre and melancholy hue. A few clouds would have refreshed the eye, but none could be anywhere seen. Not a breath rippled the surface of the lake; not a living animal, not even a bird, presented itself to the view. The sound of a human voice had been harmonious music to the ear, but, at this inhospitable season of the year, no one ventured into these icy realms. Silence reigned everywhere around us; a silence so profound that it oppressed the heart." [3]

Of the city of Lop (or Lob) and the great Desert of Gobi, Marco Polo writes: —

"Lop is a large town on the border of the desert which is called the Desert of Lop, and is situated between east and north-east. It belongs to the Great Khan, and the people worship Mohammed. Now, such persons as propose to cross the desert take a week's

[3] A summary of the Russian explorations of the Pamir, by Sievertzof, has been published in Kettler's "Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Geographie."

rest in this town to refresh themselves and their cattle; and then they make ready for the journey, taking with them a month's supply for man and beast. On quitting this city they enter the desert.

"The extent of this desert is so great, that it is said it would take a year and more to ride from one end of it to the other. And here, where its breadth is least, it takes a month to cross it. It is all composed of hills and valleys of sand, and contains not a thing to eat. But after riding for a day and a night you find fresh water, enough mayhap for some fifty or one hundred persons with their beasts, but not for more. And all across the desert you will find water in like manner, that is to say, in some twenty-eight places altogether you will find good water, but in no great quantity; and in four places also you find brackish water.

"Beasts there are none; for there is no food for them. But there is a marvellous thing related of this desert, which is that when travellers are on the march by night, and one of them chances to drop behind, or to fall asleep or the like, when he tries to regain his company, he will hear spirits talking, and suppose them to be his comrades. Sometimes the spirits will call him by name; and thus shall a traveller frequently be led astray so that he never finds his party. And in this way many have perished. Sometimes the travellers will hear as it were the tramp and murmur of a great cavalcade of people away from the real line of road, and taking this to be their own company, will follow the sound; and when day breaks they discover the deception, and perceive that

they are in an evil plight. Even in the day time the spirits may be heard talking. And sometimes you shall hear the sound of various musical instruments, and still more commonly the rattle of drums. Hence, in performing this journey, it is customary for travellers to keep close together. All the animals, too, have bells at their necks, so that they cannot easily get astray. And at sleeping time a signal is hoisted to show the direction of the next march.

"And in this way it is that the desert is crossed."

As the sea has its mermaids, and the river its water-sprites, Undines, or Loreleys, which entice their victims to death, so the deserts and waste places of the earth have their goblins and malignant demons. The awe inspired by the vastness and dreary solitude of the wilderness suggests to the imagination only gloomy ideas, and it is conceived of as a place where no influences or beings favourable to man can exist. Its sounds are sounds of terror; its appearances all foster a sentiment of mystery. Pliny tells us of the phantoms that start up before the traveller in the African deserts; Mas'udi, of the Ghûls, which in night and solitude seek to lead him astray. An Arab writer relates a tradition of the Western Sahara: – "If the wayfarer be alone the demons make sport of him, and fascinate him, so that he wanders from his course and perishes." Colonel Yule remarks that the Afghan and Persian wildernesses also have their *Ghûl-i-Beában*, or Goblin of the Waste, a gigantic and fearful spectre which devours travellers; and even the Gaels of the West Highlands

have the desert creature of Glen Eiti, which, one-handed, one-eyed, one-legged, seems exactly to answer to the Arabian Nesúas or *Empusa*. And it may be added that the wind-swept wastes of Dartmoor, limited as is their expanse, are, in the eyes of the peasantry, haunted by mysterious and malevolent spirits.

The effect of the Desert on a cultivated mind is well described by Madame Hommaire de Hell: – "The profound stillness," she says, "which reigns in the air produces an indescribable impression on our senses. We scarcely dare to interrupt it, it seems so solemn, so fully in harmony with the infinite grandeur of the desert. In vain will you seek a calm so absolute in even the remotest solitudes of civilized countries. Everywhere some spring murmurs, everywhere some trees rustle, everywhere in the silence of the nights some voices are heard which arrest the thought; but here nature is, so to speak, petrified, and we have before us the image of that eternal repose which the mind is hardly able to conceive."

Concerning the customs of the Tartars, Marco Polo writes: —

"The Tartar custom is to spend the winter in warm plains where they find good fodder for their cattle, while in summer they betake themselves to a cool climate among the mountains and valleys, where water is to be found, as well as woods and pastures.

"Their houses are circular, and are made of wands covered with felt. These are carried along with them whithersoever they go; for the wands are so strongly interwoven, and so well

combined, that the framework can be made very light. Whenever these huts are erected, the door is always placed to the south. They also have waggons covered with black felt so efficaciously that no rain can enter. These are drawn by oxen and camels, and the women and children travel in them. The women do the buying and selling, and whatever is necessary to provide for the husband and household; for the men all lead the life of gentlemen, troubling themselves about nothing but hawking and hunting, and looking after their goshawks and falcons, unless it be the practice of warlike exercises.

"They live on the meat and milk which their birds supply, and on the produce of the chase; and they eat all kinds of flesh, including that of horses and dogs, and Pharaoh's rats, of which there are great numbers in burrows on these plains. Their drink is mare's milk..

"This is the fashion of their religion: They say there is a most high God of Heaven, whom they worship daily with thurible and incense, but they pray to him only for health of mind and body. But they have also a certain other god of theirs called Natigay, and they say he is the God of the Earth, who watches over their children, cattle, and crops. They show him great worship and honour, and every man hath a figure of him in his house, made of felt and cloth; and they also make in the same manner images of his wife and children. The wife they put on the left hand, and the children in front. And when they eat, they take the fat of the meat and grease the god's mouth withal, as well as the mouths of

his wife and children. Then they take of the broth and sprinkle it before the door of the house; and that done, they deem that their god and his family have had their share of the dinner.

"Their drink is mare's milk, prepared in such a way that you would take it for white wine, and a good right drink it is, called by them komiz.

"The clothes of the wealthy Tartars are for the most part of gold and silk stuffs, lined with costly furs, such as sable and ermine, vair and fox skin, in the richest fashion."

As in succeeding chapters of this volume we shall have something to say about the manners and customs of the Mongolian nomads, we may here be content with observing that Marco Polo's "Natigay" seems identical with the "Nongait" or "Ongotiu" of the Buriats, who, according to Pallas, is honoured by them as the tutelary god of sheep and other cattle. Properly the divinity consists of *two* figures, hanging side by side, one of whom represents the god's wife. These two figures are merely a pair of lanky flat bolsters with the upper part shaped into a round disc, and the body hung with a long woolly fleece; eyes, nose, breasts, and navel being indicated by leather knobs stitched upon the surface. The male figure commonly has at his girdle the foot-rope with which horses at pasture are fettered, whilst the female, which is sometimes accompanied by smaller figures representing her children, is adorned with all sorts of little nick-nacks and sewing implements.

The Tartar customs of war are thus described: —

"All their harness of war is excellent and costly. Their arms are bows and arrows, sword and mace; but, above all, the bow, for they are capital archers, indeed the best that are known. On their backs they wear armour of cuirbouly, [4] prepared from buffalo and other hides, which is very strong. They are excellent soldiers, and passing valiant in battle. They are also more capable of hardship than other nations; for many a time, if need be, they will go for a month without any supply of food, living only on the milk of their mares and on such game as their bows may win them. Their horses also will subsist entirely on the grass of the plains, so that there is no need to carry store of barley, or straw, or oats; and they are very docile to their riders. These, in case of need, will abide on horseback the livelong night, armed at all points, while the horse will be continually grazing.

"Of all troops in the world these are they which endure the greatest hardship and fatigue, and cost the least; and they are the best of all for making wide conquests of country. And there can be no manner of doubt that now they are the masters of the larger half of the world. Their armies are admirably ordered in the following manner: —

"You see, when a Tartar prince goes forth to war, he takes with him, say, a hundred thousand horse. Well, he appoints an officer to every ten men, one to every hundred, one to every thousand, and one to every ten thousand, so that his own orders have to be

[4] *Cuir-bouilli*, leather softened by boiling, during which process it took any form or impression required, and afterwards hardened.

given to ten persons only, and each of these persons has to pass the orders only to other ten, and so on; none having to give orders to more than ten. And every one in turn is responsible only to the officer immediately over him; and the discipline and order that comes of this method is marvellous, for they are a people very obedient to their chiefs… And when the army is on the march they have always two hundred horsemen, very well mounted, who are sent a distance of two marches in advance to reconnoitre, and these always keep ahead. They have a similar party detached in the rear and on either flank, so that there is a good look-out kept on all sides against surprise. When they are going on a distant expedition, they take no gear with them except two leather bottles for milk, and a little earthenware pot to cook their meat in, and a little tent to shelter them from rain. And in case of great urgency, they will ride ten days on end without lighting a fire or taking a meal. On such an occasion they will sustain themselves on the blood of their horses, opening a vein and letting the blood jet into their mouths, drinking till they have had enough, and then staunching it.

"They also have milk dried into a kind of paste to carry with them; and when they need food, they put this in water, and beat it up till it dissolves, and then drink it. It is prepared in this way: They boil the milk, and when the rich part floats on the top they skim it into another vessel, and of that they make butter; for the milk will not become solid till this is removed. Then they put the milk in the sun to dry. And when they go on an expedition,

every man takes some ten pounds of this dried milk with him. And of a morning he will take a half-pound of it and put it in his leather bottle, with as much water as he pleases. So, as he rides along, the milk-paste and the water in the bottle get well churned together into a kind of pap, and that makes his dinner.

"When they come to an engagement with the enemy, they will gain the victory in this fashion: They never let themselves get into a regular medley, but keep perpetually riding round and shooting into the enemy. And as they do not count it any shame to run away in battle, they will sometimes pretend to do so, and in running away they turn in the saddle and shoot hard and strong at the foe, and in this way make great havoc. Their horses are trained so perfectly that they will double hither and thither, just like a dog, in a way that is quite astonishing. Thus they fight to as good purpose in running away as if they stood and faced the enemy, because of the vast volleys of arrows that they shoot in this way, turning round upon their pursuers, who are fancying that they have won the battle. But when the Tartars see that they have killed and wounded a good many horses and men, they wheel round bodily, and return to the charge in perfect order, and with loud cries; and in a very short time the enemy are routed. In truth, they are stout and valiant soldiers, and inured to war. And you perceive that it is just when the enemy sees them run, and imagines that he has gained the battle, that he has in reality lost it; for the Tartars wheel round in a moment when they judge the right time has come. And after this fashion they have won many

a fight.

"All this that I have been telling you is true of the manners and customs of the genuine Tartars."

We come next to the magnificent city of Chandu – that is, Shangtu, or "Upper Towa," the Chinese title of Kublai Khan's summer palace at Kaiping-fu. The ruins, both of the city and palace, were extant as late as the end of the seventeenth century.

"When you have ridden three days from the city of Chagan Nor [Chagan Balghassan], between north-east and north, you come to a city called Chandu, which was built by the Khan now reigning. There is at this place a very fine marble palace, the rooms of which are all gilt and painted with figures of men and beasts and birds, and with a variety of trees and flowers, all wrought with such exquisite art that you regard them with delight and astonishment.

"Round this palace is built a wall, enclosing a compass of sixteen miles, and inside the park are fountains and rivers and brooks and beautiful meadows, with all kinds of wild animals (excluding such as are of ferocious nature), which the Emperor has produced and placed there to supply food for the gerfalcons and hawks which he keeps in mew. Of these the gerfalcons alone number more than two hundred, without reckoning the other hawks. The Khan himself goes every week to see his birds sitting in mew, and sometimes he rides through the park with a leopard behind him on his horse's croup; and then, if he sees any animal that takes his fancy, he lets loose his leopard at it, and the game

when taken is used to feed the hawks in mew. This he does for diversion.

"Further, at a point in the park where blooms a delightful wood, he has another palace built of bamboo, of which I must give you a description. It is gilt all over, and most elaborately finished inside. It is supported on gilt and lackered columns, on each of which stands a dragon all gilt, the tail being attached to the column, while the head uplifts the architrave, and the claws likewise being extended right and left as props to the architrave. The roof also is formed of bamboo, covered with a varnish so good and strong that no amount of rain will rot it. These canes are fully three palms in girth, and from ten to fifteen paces in length. They are cut across at each knot, and the pieces are then split so as to form from each two hollow tiles, and with them the house is roofed; only every such tile has to be nailed down to prevent the wind from lifting it. In short, the whole palace is built of these bamboos, which, I may mention, are employed for a great variety of other useful purposes. The construction of the palace is such that it can be taken down and put up again with great rapidity; and it can be removed to any place which he may desire. When erected, it is held up by more than two hundred (200) ropes of silk.

"The Emperor resides in this park of his, sometimes in the palace of marble, and sometimes in that of bamboo, for three mouths of the year, namely, June, July, and August; preferring this abode because it is by no means hot; in fact, it is very cool.

When the 28th day of August arrives he takes his departure, and the bamboo palace is pulled to pieces. But I must tell you what happens when he takes his departure every year on the 28th of August.

"You must know that the Khan keeps an immense stud of white horses and mares; in truth, upwards of two hundred of them, and all pure white without a blemish. The milk of these mares is drunk by himself and family, and by no one else, except by the people of one great tribe who have also the privilege of drinking it – a privilege granted to them by Chingis Khan, on account of a certain victory which, long ago, they helped him to win. The name of the tribe is Horiad [the Uirad or Oirad].

"Now, when these mares are passing across the country, and any one falls in with them, be he the greatest lord in the land, he must not presume to pass until the mares have gone by; he must either tarry where he is, or go a half-day's round if so need be, so as not to come nigh them; for they are to be treated with the greatest respect. Well, when the Emperor sets out from the park on the 28th of August, as I have told you, the milk of all those mares is taken and sprinkled on the ground. And this is done at the bidding of the idolaters and idol-priests, who say that it is an excellent thing to sprinkle that milk on the ground every 28th of August, so that the earth and the air and the false gods shall have their share of it, and the spirits likewise that inhabit the air and the earth. And thus those beings will protect and bless the Khan, and his children, and his wives, and his folk, and his gear,

his cattle and his horses, his corn, and all that is his. After this is done, the Emperor is off and away.

"But I must now tell you a strange thing that hitherto I have omitted to mention. During the three months of every year that the Khan resides at that place, if it should chance to be bad weather, there are certain crafty enchanters and astrologers in his train who are such adepts in necromancy and the diabolic arts, that they are able to prevent any cloud or storm from traversing the spot whereon the imperial palace stands. The sorcerers who do this are called Icbit and Kesomin, which are the names of two nations of idolaters. Whatever they do in this way is by the help of the devil, but they make these people believe that it is compassed by their own sanctity and the help of God. They always go in a state of dirt and uncleanness, devoid of respect for themselves, or for those who see them, unwashed, unkempt, and sordidly attired.

"These people have another custom which I must describe to you. If a man is condemned to death, and executed by the lawful authority, they take his body, and cook and eat it. But if any one die a natural death, then they will not eat his body.

"There is another marvel performed by these Bacsi [*Bakhshi*, or *Bhikshu*], of whom I have spoken as skilled in so many enchantments. For when the Great Khan is at his capital and in his great palace, seated at his table, which stands on a platform some eight cubits above the ground, his cups are set before him on a great buffet in the middle of the hall pavement, at a distance

of some ten paces from his table, and filled with wine, or other good spiced liquor such as they use. Now, when the lord desires to drink, these necromancers, by the power of their enchantments, cause the cups to move from their place without being touched by anybody, and to present themselves to the Emperor! This every one present may witness, and ofttimes there are more than two thousand persons present. 'Tis a truth, and no lie; and so will the sages of your own country who understand necromancy, tell you, for they also can perform this marvel.

"And when the idol festivals come round, these Bacsi go to the prince and say, 'Sire, the feast of such a god is come' (naming him). 'My lord, you know,' the enchanter will say, 'that this god, when he gets no offerings, always sends bad weather and spoils our seasons. So we pray you to give us such and such a number of black-faced sheep' (naming whatever number they please). 'And we also beg, good my lord, that we may have such a quantity of incense, and such a quantity of lign-aloes, and' – so much of this, so much of that, and so much of t'other, according to their fancy – 'that we may perform a solemn service and a great sacrifice to our idols, and that so they may be induced to protect us and all that is ours.'

"The Bacsi say these things to the nobles entrusted with the stewardship, who stand round the Great Khan, and then repeat them to the Khan, and he then orders the nobles to give to the Bacsi anything they have demanded. And when they have received the articles, they go and make a great feast in honour

of their god, and hold grand ceremonies of worship, with grand illuminations and quantities of incense of a variety of odours, which they make up from different aromatic spices. And then they cook the meat, and set it before the idols, and sprinkle their broth hither and thither, saying that in this way the idols obtain their bellyful. In this way it is that they keep their festivals. You must know that each idol has a name of his own, and a feast-day, just as our saints have their anniversaries.

"They have also immense minsters and monasteries, some as big as a small town, with upwards of two thousand monks, so to speak, in a single monastery. These monks dress more decently than the rest of the people, and shave the head and beard. Some among these Bacsi are allowed by their rule to take wives, and they have plenty of children.

"Another kind of devotees is the Sunni, who are more remarkable for their abstemiousness, and lead a life of such austerity as I will describe. All their life long they eat only bran, which they take mixed with hot water. That is their food; bran, and nothing but bran; with water for their drink. Their life is one long fast; so I may well speak of its asceticism as extraordinary. They have great idols, and very many; but they sometimes also worship fire. The other idolaters who are not also of this sect call these people heretics —*Palamis*, as we should say – because they do not worship the idols after their fashion. Those of whom I am now speaking would not take a wife on any consideration. They wear dresses of hempen stuff, black and blue, and sleep upon

mats; in fact, their asceticism is something astonishing. Their idols are all feminine; that is, they bear women's names."

[It was after reading Marco Polo's account of the Great Khan's palace, as it is given in Purchas's "Pilgrims," that the poet Coleridge, falling asleep, dreamed his melodious dream of Kublai's Paradise. When he awoke he was able to recall a portion of it, beginning thus: —

> "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
> By caverns measureless to man,
> Down to a sunless sea.
> So twice five inches of fertile ground
> With walls and towers were girdled round;
> And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
> Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
> And here were forests, ancient as the hills,
> Enfolding sunny spots of greenery."]

The principal palace of the Great Khan was situated, however, at Cambaluc (the modern Peking), and is thus described by our Venetian: —

"It is enclosed all round by a great wall, forming a square, each side of which is a mile in length; that is to say, the whole compass thereof is four miles. This you may depend on; it is also very thick, and a good ten paces in height, whitewashed and loop-

holed all round. At each angle of the wall is situated a very fine and rich palace, in which the war harness of the Emperor is kept, such as bows and quivers, saddles and bridles, and bowstrings, and everything needful for an army. Also, midway between every two of these corner palaces is another of the like; so that, taking the whole circuit of the enclosed, you will find eight vast palaces stored with the great lord's harness of war. And you must understand that each palace is reserved for only one kind of article; one being stored with bows, a second with saddles, a third with bridles, and so on, in succession, right round.

"The great wall has five gates on its southern face, the central being the great gate, which is opened only for the egress or admission of the Great Khan himself. Close on either side is a smaller one, through which all other people pass; and then, towards each angle, is another great gate, also open to people in general; so that on that side are five gates in all.

"Inside of this wall is a second, enclosing a space that is somewhat longer than it is broad. This enclosure has its eight palaces also, corresponding to those of the outer wall, and stored like them with the Emperor's harness of war. There are likewise five gates on the southern face, answering to those in the outer wall; and one gate on each of the other faces. In the centre of the second enclosure stands the Emperor's Great Palace, and I will tell you what it is like.

"You must know that it is the greatest palace ever erected. Towards the north it is in contact with the outer wall, while

towards the south lies a vacant space which the nobles and the soldiers are constantly traversing. The palace itself hath no upper story, but is all on the ground floor; only the basement is raised some ten palms above the surrounding soil. And this elevation is retained by a wall of marble raised to the level of the pavement, two paces in width, and projecting beyond the base of the palace so as to form a kind of terrace-walk, by which people can pass round the building, and this is exposed to view; while along the outer edge of the wall runs a very fine pillared balustrade, up to which the people are allowed to come. The roof is very lofty, and the walls are covered with gold and silver. They are also adorned with representations of dragons, sculptured and gilt, beasts and birds, knights and idols, and divers other subjects. And on the ceiling, too, can nothing be seen but gold and silver and painting. On each of the four sides is a great marble staircase, leading to the top of the marble wall, and forming the approach to the palace.

"The hall of the palace is so large that it could easily dine six thousand people; and it is quite a marvel to see how many rooms there are besides. The building is altogether so vast, so rich, and so beautiful, that no man on earth could design anything superior to it. The outside of the roof also is all coloured with vermilion and yellow and green and blue and other hues, which are fixed with a varnish so fine and exquisite, that they shine like crystal, and lend a resplendent lustre to the palace, visible far around. This roof is so solidly and strongly constructed that it is fit to

last for ever.

"On the inner side of the palace are large buildings with halls and chambers, where the Emperor's private property is placed, such as his treasures of gold, silver, gems, pearls, and gold plate, and in which the ladies and concubines reside. He occupies himself there at his own convenience, and no one else has access to it.

"Between the two walls of the enclosure which I have described are two fine parks, and beautiful trees bearing a variety of fruits. There are beasts also of sundry kinds, such as white stags and fallow deer, gazelles and roebucks, and fine squirrels of various kinds, with numbers also of the animal that gives the musk, and all manner of other beautiful creatures, insomuch that the whole place is full of them, and no spot remains void except where there is traffic of people going to and fro. The parks are covered with abundant grass; and the roads through them being all paved and raised two cubits above the surface, they never become muddy, nor does the rain lodge on them, but flows off into the meadows, quickening the soil and producing that fertility of herbage.

"From the north-western corner of the enclosure extends a fine lake, containing abundance of fish of different kinds, which the Emperor hath caused to be put in there, so that, whenever he desires any, he can have them at his pleasure. A river enters this lake and issues from it; but a grating of iron or brass is put up to prevent the escape of the fish.

"Moreover, about a bowshot from the north side of the palace is an artificial hill, made with the earth out of the lake; it is a good hundred paces in height, and a mile in compass, and is entirely covered with evergreen trees which never lose their leaves. And I assure you that wherever a beautiful tree exists, and the Emperor hears of it, he sends for it and has it transported bodily, with all its roots and the earth attached to them, and planted upon his hill. No matter how huge the tree may be, he has it carried by his elephants, and in this way he has formed the finest collection of trees in all the world. And he has also caused the whole hill to be covered with ore of azure, [5] which is very green. And thus not only are the trees all green, but the hill itself is all green likewise; and there is nothing to be seen on it that is not green; and hence it is called the Green Mount; and, in good sooth, it is well named.

"On the top of the hill, too, stands a fair large palace, which is all green outside and in, so that the hill, and the trees, and the palace form together a charming spectacle; and it is wonderful to see their uniformity of colour. Everybody who sees it is delighted. And the Great Khan has ordered this beautiful prospect for the comfort, solace, and delectation of his heart.

"You must know that besides the palace I have been describing, *i. e.* the Great Palace, the Emperor has caused another to be built, resembling his own in every respect; and this he has done for his son, when he shall reign and be Emperor after him. Hence it is made just in the same fashion, and of the same

[5] Probably *malachite*, or carbonate of copper.

size, so that everything can be carried on in the same manner after his death. It stands on the other side of the lake from the Great Khan's palace, and a bridge is thrown across from one to the other. The prince I speak of holds now a seal of empire, but not with such complete authority as the Great Khan, who remains supreme as long as he lives."

Let us now accompany the Emperor on a hunting expedition: —

"After he has sojourned in his capital city for three months, December, January, and February, the Great Khan starts on the first day of March, and travels southward towards the Ocean Sea, a two days' journey. He takes with him fully ten thousand falconers and some five hundred falcons, besides peregrines, sakers, and other hawks in great number; and goshawks also, for flying at the water-fowl. But do not suppose that he keeps all these together by him; they are distributed hither and thither, one hundred together, or two hundred at the utmost, as he thinks proper. But they are always fowling as they advance, and the greater part of the quarry taken is carried to the Emperor. And let me tell you, when he goes thus a-fowling with his gerfalcons and other hawks, he is attended by fully ten thousand men, who are placed in couples; and these are called *Toscach*, which is as much as to say, 'Watchers.' The name describes their business. They are posted from spot to spot, always in couples, so that they cover a good deal of ground. Each of them is provided with whistle and hood, so as to be able to call in a hawk, and hold it in hand.

And when the Emperor makes a cast, there in no need that he should follow it up, for the men I speak of keep so close a watch that they never lose sight of the birds, if the hawks require help, they are ready to render it.

"The Emperor's hawks, as well as those of the nobles, have a little label attached to the leg to mark them, whereon are written the names of the owner and the keeper of the bird. So that the hawk, when caught, is at once identified, and handed over to its owner. But if not, the bird is carried to a certain noble, styled the *Bulargachi*, that is, 'the Keeper of Lost Property.' And I tell you that anything found without a proper owner, whether horse, sword, or hawk, or what not, is taken immediately to that official, and he holds it in charge. Should the finder neglect to carry his trover to the Bulargachi, the latter punishes him. Likewise, the loser of any article goes to him, and should it be in his hands, he immediately gives it up to its owner. Moreover, the said noble always pitches on the highest point of the camp, with his banner displayed, in order that those who have lost or found should have no difficulty in making their way to him. Thus, nothing can be lost without being quickly found and restored..

"The Emperor, on his journey, is borne upon four elephants in a fine pavilion made of timber, lined inside with plates of beaten gold, and outside with lion's skins. He always travels in this fashion on his hunting expeditions, because he is troubled with gout. He invariably keeps beside him a dozen of his choicest gerfalcons, and is attended by several of his nobles, who ride

on horseback by his side. And sometimes, as they go along, and the Emperor from his chamber is discoursing with his nobles, one of the latter will exclaim, 'Sire, look out for cranes!' Then the Emperor has the top of his chamber instantly thrown open, and, having marked the cranes, he casts one of his gerfalcons, whichever he pleases; and often the quarry is struck in his sight, so that he has the most exquisite sport and diversion, as he sits in his chamber or lies on his bed; and all the nobles in attendance share the enjoyment with him! So it is not without reason I tell you that I do not believe there ever existed in the world, or will exist, a man with such sport and enjoyment as he has, or with such rare opportunities.

"And when he has travelled until he reaches a place called Cachar Modem, there he finds his tents pitched, with the tents of his sons, and his nobles, and those of his ladies, and their attendants, so that there shall be fully ten thousand in all, and all costly and handsome. And I will tell you how his own quarters are disposed. The tent in which he held his courts is large enough to accommodate a thousand persons. It is pitched with its door to the south, and the nobles and knights remain in attendance in it, while the Emperor abides in another close to it on the west side. When he wishes to speak with any person, he causes him to be summoned to the great tent. Immediately behind the latter is a spacious chamber, where he sleeps… The two audience-tents and the sleeping-chamber are thus constructed: – Each of the audience-tents has three poles, which are of spice-wood, and

most artfully covered with lion's skins, striped with black and white and red, so that they do not suffer from any weather. All three apartments are also covered outside with similar skins of striped lions, a substance that lasts for ever. Inside they are lined with sable and ermine, which are the finest and costliest furs in existence… All the tent-ropes are of silk. In short, I may say that these tents, namely, the two halls of audience and the sleeping-chamber, are so costly, that it is not every king could afford to pay for them.

"Round about these tents are others, also fine ones and beautifully pitched, in which abide the imperial ladies, and the ladies of the different princes and officers. Tents are there also for the hawks and their keepers, so that altogether the number of tents on the plain is something wonderful. To see the many people who are thronging to and fro on every side and every day there, you would take the camp for a good large city. For you must include the physicians and astrologers and falconers, and all the other attendants on so numerous a company; and add that everybody has his own household with him, for such is their custom.

"There until the spring the Emperor remains encamped, and all that time he does nothing but go hawking among the cane brakes that fringe the abundant lakes and rivers in that region, and across broad plains plentifully frequented by cranes and swans, and all other kinds of fowl. Nor are the rest of the nobles of the camp ever weary of hunting and hawking, and daily they

bring home great store of venison and feathered game of every kind. Indeed, unless you witnessed it, you would never believe what quantities of game are taken, and what marvellous sport and diversion they have while residing there in camp.

"Another thing I must mention, namely, that for twenty days' journey round the spot nobody is allowed, whoever he may be, to keep hawks or hounds, though anywhere else whoever chooses may keep them. And furthermore, throughout all the Emperor's territories, nobody, however audacious, dares to hunt any of these four animals, namely, hare, stag, buck, and roe, from the month of March to the month of October. Whoever should do so would rue it bitterly. But these people are so obedient to their Emperor's commands, that even if a man were to find one of those animals asleep by the roadside, he would not touch it for the world. And thus the game multiplies at such a rate, that the whole country swarms with it, and obtains as much as he could desire. Beyond the time I have mentioned, however, to wit, that from March to October, everybody may take these animals as he chooses.

"After the Emperor has tarried there, enjoying his sport, as I have related, from March to the middle of May, he moves with all his people, and returns straight to his capital city of Cambaluc (which is also the capital city of Cathay, as you have been told), but all the while continuing to take his diversion in hunting and hawking as he travels."

We pass on to Marco Polo's description of Tibet, which at one

time was considered a part of the empire of the Mongol Khans. Its civil administration is ascribed to Kublai Khan: —

"In this region you find quantities of bamboos, full three palms in girth, and fifteen paces in length, with an interval of about three palms between the joints. And let me tell you that merchants and other travellers through that country are wont at nightfall to gather these canes and make fires of them; for as they burn they make such loud reports, that the lions and bears and other wild beasts are greatly frightened, and make off as fast as possible; in fact, nothing will induce them to come near a fire of that kind. [6] So, you see, the travellers make these fires to protect themselves and their cattle from the wild beasts, which have so greatly multiplied since the devastation of the country. And it is this multiplication of the wild beasts that prevents the country from being reoccupied. In fact, but for the help of these bamboos, which make such a noise in burning that the beasts are terrified and kept at a distance, no one would be able even to travel through the land.

"I will tell you how it is that the canes make such a noise. The people cut the green canes, of which there are vast numbers, and set fire to a heap of them at once. After they have been burning awhile they burst asunder, and this makes such a loud report, that you might hear it ten miles off. In fact, a person unused to this

[6] The Hon. Robert Lindsay writes: – "At night each man lights a fire at his post, and furnishes himself with a dozen joints of the large bamboo, one of which he occasionally throws into the fire, and the air it contains being rarefied by the heat, it explodes with a report as loud as a musket." – "Lives of the Lindsays," iii. 191.

noise, hearing it unexpectedly, might easily go into a swoon or die of fright. But those accustomed to it care nothing about it. Hence those who are not used stuff their ears well with cotton, and wrap up their heads and faces with all the clothes they can muster; and so they get along until they have become used to the sound. It is just the same with horses. Those unused to these noises are so terrified that they break away from their halters and heel-ropes, and many a man has lost his beasts in this way. So all who do not wish to lose their horses are careful to tie all four legs, and peg the ropes down strongly, and wrap the heads and eyes and ears of the animals closely, and so they save them. But horses also, when they have heard the noise several times, cease to mind it. I tell you the truth, however, when I say that the first time you hear it nothing can be more alarming. And yet, in spite of all, the lions, bears, and other wild beasts will sometimes come and do great mischief; for in those parts they are very numerous.

"You ride for twenty days without finding any inhabited spot, so that travellers are obliged to carry all their provisions with them, and are constantly falling in with those wild beasts which are so numerous and so dangerous. After that you come at length to a tract where there are very many towns and villages..

"The people are idolaters and an evil generation, holding it no sin to rob and maltreat; in fact, they are the greatest brigands on earth. They live by the chase, as well as on their cattle and the fruits of the earth.

"I should tell you also that in this country are many of

the animals that produce musk, which are called in the Tartar language *Gudderi*. These robbers have great numbers of large and fierce dogs, which are of much service in catching the musk-beasts, and so they procure an abundance of musk. They have none of the Great Khan's paper money, but use salt instead of money. They are very poorly clad, for their clothes are only of the skins of beasts, and canvas, and buckram. They have a language of their own, and are called *Tebit*."

Speaking of the people who dwell in the provinces to the north-west of China, Marco Polo relates the following curious custom: —

"When any one is ill, they send for the devil-conjurors, who are the keepers of their idols. When these are come, the sick man tells what ails him, and then the conjurors incontinently begin playing on their instruments, and singing, and dancing; and the conjurors dance to such a pitch, that at last one of them will fall to the ground lifeless, like a dead man. And then the devil entereth into his body. And when his comrades see him in this plight, they begin to put questions to him about the sick man's ailment. And he will reply, 'Such or such a spirit hath been meddling with the man, for that he hath angered it and done it some despite.' Then they say, 'We pray thee to pardon him, and to take of his blood or of his goods what thou wilt in consideration of thus restoring him to health.' And when they have so prayed, the malignant spirit that is in the body of the prostrate man will, perhaps, answer, 'The sick man hath also done great despite unto such another

spirit, and that one is so ill-disposed that it will not pardon him on any account.' This, at least, is the answer they get if the patient be like to die. But if he is to get better, the answer will be that they are to bring two sheep, or maybe three; and to brew ten or twelve jars of drink, very costly and abundantly spiced. Moreover, it will be announced that the sheep must be all black-faced, or of some other particular colour, as it may happen; and then all these things are to be offered in sacrifice to such and such a spirit whose name is given. And they are to bring so many conjurors, and so many ladies, and the business is to be done with a great singing of lauds, and with many lights and store of good perfumes. That is the sort of answer they get if the patient is to get well. And then the kinsfolk of the sick man go and procure all that has been commanded, and do as has been bidden, and the conjuror springs to his feet again.

"So they fetch the sheep of the prescribed colour, and slaughter them, and sprinkle the blood over such places as have been enjoined, in honour and propitiation. And the conjurors come, and the ladies, in the number that was ordered, and when all are assembled and everything is ready, they begin to dance and play and sing in honour of the spirit. And they take flesh-broth, and drink, and lign-aloes, and a great number of lights, and go about hither and thither, scattering the broth and the drink, and the meat also. And when they have done this for a while, one of the conjurors will again fall flat, and wallow there foaming at the mouth, and then the others will ask if he have yet pardoned the

sick man. And sometimes he will answer 'Yes,' and sometimes he will answer 'No.' And if the answer be 'No,' they are told that something or other has to be done all over again, and then he will be pardoned; so this they do. And when all that the spirit has commanded has been done with great ceremony, then it will be announced that the man is pardoned, and will be speedily cured. So when they at length receive this reply, they announce that it is all made up with the spirit, and that he is propitiated, and they fall to eating and drinking with great joy and mirth, and he who had been lying lifeless on the ground gets up and takes his share. So when they have all eaten and drunken, every man departs home. And presently the sick man gets sound and well."

[Sir A. Phayre testifies that this account of the exorcism of evil spirits in cases of obstinate illness tallies exactly with what he himself has seen in similar cases among the Burmese; and, in truth, the practice extends widely among the non-Aryan races. Bishop Caldwell furnishes the following description of "devil-dancing" as it still exists among the Shanars of Tinnevelly: —

"When the preparations are completed and the devil-dance is about to commence, the music is at first comparatively slow; the dancer seems impassive and sullen, and he either stands still or moves about in gloomy silence. Gradually, as the music becomes quicker and louder, his excitement begins to rise. Sometimes, to help him to work himself up into a frenzy, he uses medicated draughts, cuts and lacerates himself till the blood flows, lashes himself with a huge whip, presses a burning torch to his breast,

drinks the blood which flows from his own wounds, or drains the blood of the sacrifice, putting the throat of the decapitated goat to his mouth. Then, as if he had acquired new life, he begins to brandish his staff of bells, and to dance with a quick, but wild, unsteady step. Suddenly the afflatus descends; there is no mistaking that glare, or those frantic leaps. He snorts, he stares, he gyrates. The demon has now taken bodily possession of him; and though he retains the power of utterance and motion, both are under the demon's control, and his separate consciousness is in abeyance. The bystanders signalize the event by raising a long shout, attended with a peculiar vibratory noise, caused by the motion of the hand and tongue, or the tongue alone. The devil-dancer is now worshipped as a present deity, and every bystander consults him respecting his diseases, his wants, the welfare of his absent relatives, the offerings to be made for the accomplishment of his wishes, and, in short, everything for which superhuman knowledge is supposed to be available."]

"And now," says Marco Polo, in concluding his wonderful narrative, – "and now ye have heard all that we can tell you about the Tartars and the Saracens and their customs, and likewise about the other countries of the world, so far as our researches and information extend. Only we have said nothing whatever about the Greater Sea [the Mediterranean], and the provinces that lie round it, although we know it thoroughly. But it seems to me a needless and endless task to speak about places which are visited by people every day. For there are so many who sail all

about that sea constantly, Venetians, and Genoese, and Pisans, and many others, that everybody knows all about it, and that is the reason that I pass it over and say nothing of it.

"Of the manner in which we took our departure from the Court of the Great Khan you have already heard, and we have related the fortunate chance that led to it. And you may be sure that, but for that fortunate chance, we should never have got away, in spite of all our trouble, and never have returned to our country again. But I believe it was God's pleasure we should return, in order that people might learn about the things the world contains. For according to what has been said in the introduction at the beginning of the book, there never was man, be he Christian or Saracen or Tartar or heathen, who ever travelled over so much of the world as did that noble and illustrious citizen of the city of Venice, Messer Marco, the son of Messer Nicolo Polo.

"Thanks be to God! Amen! Amen!"

We incline to believe, out of consideration for the modesty of "Messer Marco, the son of Messer Nicolo Polo," that he finished his narrative at the word "contains," and that the last sentence was added by his amanuensis. Yet the assertion it contains does not go beyond the truth. Of all the mediæval travellers it may be repeated that Marco Polo is the first and foremost; and the world is indebted to him for a vast amount of valuable information, which, but for his industry, his perseverance, and his intelligence, would have been wholly or partly lost. We owe to him a graphic and, as it is now known to be, an accurate picture of the condition

of Asia in the thirteenth century; a picture full of lights and shadows, but interesting and instructive in every detail.

MR. GEORGE F. RUXTON, AND HIS ADVENTURES IN MEXICO AND THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

A.D. 1847

Mr. Ruxton's sweeping condemnation of the Mexicans is, unfortunately, confirmed by most reputable authorities, or we might hesitate to reproduce it here. "From south to north," he says, "I traversed the whole of the Republic of Mexico, a distance of nearly ten thousand miles, and was thrown amongst the people of every rank, class, and station; and I regret to have to say that I cannot remember to have observed one single commendable trait in the character of the Mexican; always excepting from this sweeping clause the women of the country, who, for kindness of heart and many sterling qualities, are an ornament to their sex, and to any nation." Whatever may be affirmed to the discredit of the people, it cannot be doubted that they inhabit a country which was at one time the seat of a remarkable civilization, which presents to the traveller a succession of remarkable and frequently romantic scenery, and

a wonderful variety and luxuriance of vegetation.

From the southern frontier of the United States it stretches down to the isthmus which connects the northern and southern mainlands of the great American continent. On the west its shores are washed by the waters of the Pacific; on the east, by those of the Mexican Gulf and Caribbean Sea. Roughly speaking, its area is about 850,000 square miles; its population may number ten souls to a square mile. Its form of government is pseudo-republican; and for administrative purposes it is divided into twenty-five provinces. Its capital, Mexico, has 200,000 inhabitants: its only other important towns are Puebla, 75,000 inhabitants; Guadalajara, 65,000; Guanajuata, 50,000; and San Luis and Merida, about 45,000 each.

A glance at the map will show you that Mexico consists in the main of an elevated table-land, which in the south rises up into the Cordilleras of Central America, and on the east and west descends, by more or less gradual terraces, to the sea-coast. Owing to its geographical position, this table-land enjoys the profuseness and beauty of a tropical vegetation; on the other hand, its climate is so tempered by its various elevations, which lie between 5000 and 9000 feet, that it has been found possible to naturalize the European fauna and flora. A remarkable geological feature is the volcanic belt or chain that runs from ocean to ocean between the parallels of 18° 15′ and 19° 30′ north latitude, and is marked by several active as well as extinct volcanoes. Among them may be named Orizaba,

Cittalapetl ("The Mountain of the Star"), Popocatapetl ("The Smoking Mountain"), 17,884 feet, Istaccihuatl ("The White Woman"), and Toluca. Most of the mountain chains that break up the table-land are of comparatively low altitude; the principal is the Sierra Madre, or Tepe Serene. The two chief streams are the Rio Santiago and the Rio Grande del Norte.

In company with a young Spaniard who was travelling as far as Durango, Mr. Ruxton quitted Mexico one fine day in September, 1847, bent on crossing the country to the United States. He passed at first through a mountainous district, covered with dwarf oak and ilex; afterwards he entered upon a tract of open undulating downs, dotted with thickets. Villages were few and far between, and when found, not very attractive, consisting only of a dozen huts built of adobes, or sun-dried bricks. Crossing a rocky sierra, he came to the town of San Juan del Rio; its one-storied houses of stone, whitewashed, with barred windows, looking out upon a fair expanse of vineyard and garden. Forty miles beyond lay Queretaro; a large and well-built town of 40,000 inhabitants, surrounded by gardens and orchards. Its chief trade is the manufacture of cigars. These, as made at Queretaro, are of a peculiar shape, about three inches long, square at both ends, and exceedingly pungent in flavour. Excellent pulque is another of its products. Pulque, the national liquor of Mexico, is made from the saccharine juice of the American aloe, which attains maturity at the age of eight or fourteen years, and then flowers. Only while it is flowering may the juice be collected. The central stem which

encloses the coming flower is cut off near the bottom, and a basin or hollow exposed, over which the surrounding leaves are closely gathered and fastened. The juice distils into the reservoir thus provided, and is removed three or four times during the twenty-four hours, by means of a syphon made of a species of gourd called acojote. One end is placed in the liquor, the other in the mouth of the operator, who by suction draws up the sweet fluid into the pipe, and forces it out into a bowl. Afterwards it receives the addition of a little old pulque, and is allowed to ferment for two or three days in earthen jars. When fresh, pulque, according to Mr. Ruxton, is brisk and sparkling, and the most cooling, refreshing, and delectable drink ever invented for mortals when athirst. The Mexicans call it "vino divino;" but, admirable as may be its qualities, it needs to be very temperately used.

Between Queretaro and Celaya the traveller gradually descends from the table-lands, and the air comes upon him with a warm tropical breath. Nopalos, or prickly-pears, line the road; the Indians collect the fruit – which is savoury and invigorating – with a forked stick. At Silao striking evidence of the geniality of the climate is supplied by the variety of fruit exposed for sale: oranges, lemons, grapes, chirimoyas, batatas, platanos, plantains, cumotes, grenadillas, mamayos, tunas, pears, and apples – a list which would have delighted Keats's Porphyro when he was preparing a refection for his lady-love Madeline. But if fruit be abundant, so are beggars and thieves; and Silao is not a comfortable place to live in! Mexico, according to its climatic

conditions, is divided into three great divisions – the *Tierras Frias*, or Cold lands; the *Tierras Templadas*, or Temperate lands; and the *Tierras Calientes*, or Hot lands. From Celaya our travellers stooped down rapidly into the *Tierra Caliente*, and the increased temperature was every day more perceptibly felt. Jalisco, the most important town on their route, is situated on the western declivity of Anahuac, a Cordillera which unites the Andes of South and Central America with the great North American chain of the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Ruxton describes the table-land on the western ridge of the Cordillera as blessed with a fertile soil and a temperate climate. It is studded with the populous towns of Silao, Leon, Lagos, and Aguas Calientes. The central portion, of a lower elevation and consequently higher temperature, produces cotton, cochineal, vanilla, as well as every variety of cereal produce. While the littoral, or coast region, teems with fertility, and lies in the shadow of immense forests, unfortunately it is cursed by the ever-prevalent vomito, or yellow fever, and its climate is scarcely less fatal to its inhabitants than to strangers.

At La Villa de Leon, a town celebrated for robbers and murderers, Mr. Ruxton met with an adventure. About nine o'clock in the evening he was returning from the plaza, which with its great lighted fires, the stalls of the market-people, the strange garb of the peasantry, and the snow-white sarapos, or cloaks, of the idlers of the town, presented a stirring aspect, when, striking into a dark and narrow street, a group of

vagabonds, at the door of a pulque shop, detected that he was a stranger, and, mistaking his nationality, yelled at him: "Let's kill him, the Texan!" Having no weapon but a bowie-knife, and not desiring an encounter with such overwhelming numbers, he turned off into another street; but the rascals followed him, renewing their wild cries. Happily, a dark doorway invited him to seek its shelter, and while crouching in its obscurity, he could see them rush by, knives in hand. When he thought they had all passed, he stepped forth, to find himself confronted by three wretches who brought up the rear, and who, brandishing their knives and rushing headlong at him, cried, "Here he is, here he is; kill him!" As the foremost rushed at him with uplifted blade, he swiftly stepped aside, and at the same moment thrust at him with his bowie. The robber fell on his knees with a cry of "Me ha matado!" ("He has killed me!"), and fell on his face. One of his companions hastened to his assistance; the other dashed upon Mr. Ruxton, but, confused by his calm attitude of preparation, fell back a few paces, and finally slunk away. Mr. Ruxton returned at once to his quarters, ordered out the horses, and in a few minutes was on his road.

By way of Aguas Calientes, a very pretty town, and Zacatecas, a populous mining town, he proceeded towards the Hacienda (or farm) of San Nicolas, with the view of traversing that singular volcanic region, the *Mal Pais*. Down to a comparatively recent period, it would seem to have been the theatre of plutonic phenomena of an extraordinary character. The convexity of the

district enables the traveller to judge very readily of the extent of the convulsion, which has spread to a distance of twelve or fourteen miles from the central crater. The said crater measures about fifteen hundred feet in circumference, and its sides are covered with dwarf oaks, mezquito, and cocoa trees, which find a rich nourishment in the chinks and crevices of the lava. At the bottom stagnate the green and slimy waters of a small lake, which is fringed with rank shrubs and cacti, growing among huge blocks of lava and scoriæ. Not a breath of air disturbs its inky surface, save when a huge water-snake undulates across it, or a duck and her progeny swim out from their covert among the bushes.

"I led my horse," says Mr. Ruxton, "down to the edge of the water, but he refused to drink the slimy liquid, in which frogs, efts, and reptiles of every kind were darting and diving. Many new and curious water-plants floated near the margin, and one, lotus-leaved, with small delicate tendrils, formed a kind of network on the water, with a superb crimson flower, which exhibited a beautiful contrast with the inky blackness of the pool. His Mexicans, as they passed this spot, crossed themselves reverently, and muttered an *Ave Maria*; for in the lonely regions of the Mal Pais, the superstitious Indian believes that demons and gnomes and spirits of evil persons have their dwelling-places, whence they not unfrequently pounce upon the solitary traveller, to carry him into the cavernous bowels of the earth. The arched roof of the supposed prison-house resounding to the tread of their horses as they pass the dreaded spot, they feel a sudden

dread, and, with rapidly muttered prayers, they handle their amulets and charms to drive away the treacherous bogies who invisibly beset the path."

From the Mal Pais Mr. Ruxton travelled onward to the rancho of La Punta, a famous cattle-breeding station.

In the preceding autumn it had been harried by a party of Comanche Indians, who, one day, without warning, rode across the sierra and swooped down upon it, killing, as they passed, the peones, or labourers, whom they found at work in the road. On their appearance the men made no attempt to defend the rancho, but fled at full speed, abandoning the women and children to their terrible fate. Some were carried away captives; some pierced with arrows and lances, and left for dead; others made the victims of unspeakable outrages. The ranchero's wife, with her two adult daughters and several younger children, fled from the rancho at the first alarm, to conceal themselves under a wooden bridge, which crossed a neighbouring stream. For several hours they escaped detection; but at last some Indians drew near their hiding-place, and a young chief took his station on the bridge to issue his commands. With keen eyes he examined the spot, and discovered the terror-stricken fugitives; but he pretended not to have seen them, playing with them as a cat might with a mouse. He hoped, he was heard to say, that he should find out where the women were concealed, for he wanted a Mexican wife and a handful of scalps. Then he leaped from the bridge, and thrust his lance under it with a yell of exultation; the point pierced the

woman's arm, and she shrieked aloud. She and her children were forthwith drawn from their retreat.

"Alas, alas, what a moment was that!" said the poor woman, as she told her painful story. The savages brandished their tomahawks around her children, and she thought that the last farewell had been taken. They behaved, however, with unusual clemency; the captives were released, and allowed to return to their home – to find it a wreck, and the ground strewn with the dead bodies of their kinsmen and friends.

"Ay de mi!" ("Woe is me!")

While at La Punta, our traveller was witness of the Mexican sport of the "Coléa de toros" (or "bull-tailing"), for the enjoyment of which two or three hundred rancheros had assembled from the neighbouring plantations.

A hundred bulls were shut up in a large corral, or enclosure, at one end of which had been erected a building for the convenience of the lady spectators. The horsemen, brave in their picturesque Mexican costume, were grouped around the corral, examining the animals as they were driven to and fro in order to increase their excitement, while the ranchero himself, and his sons, brandishing long lances, were busily engaged in forcing the wilder and more active bulls into a second enclosure. When this had been effected, the entrance was thrown open, and out dashed, with glaring eyes, tossing head, and lashing tail, a fine bull, to gallop at his topmost speed over the grassy plain before him, followed by the whole crowd of shouting, yelling horsemen, each

of whom endeavoured to outstrip the other, and overtake the flying animal. At first they all kept close together, riding very equally, and preserving excellent order, but very soon superior skill or strength or daring began to tell, and in front of the main body shot forth a few of the cavaliers. Heading them all, in swift pursuit of the rolling cloud of dust which indicated the bull's track, rode the son of the ranchero, a boy about twelve years old; and as he swayed this way and that when the bull doubled, the women made the air ring with their shrill vivas. "Viva, Pepito! viva!" cried his mother; and, dashing his spurs into his horse's streaming flanks, the brave lad ran the race. But before long the others came up with stealthy strides; soon they were abreast of him. The pace quickened; the horses themselves seemed to share the excitement; the men shouted, the women screamed; each urged on her favourite – "Alza! – Bernardo! – Por mi amor, Juan Maria! – Viva, Pepitito!" A stalwart Mexican, mounted on a fine roan, eventually took the lead, and every moment increased the distance between himself and his competitors. But Pepito's quick eyes detected a sudden movement of the bull, and saw that, concealed by the dust, he had wheeled off at a sharp angle from his former course. In an instant Pepe did the same, and dashed in front of him, amid a fresh outburst of cheers and vivas. Getting on the bull's left quarter, he stooped down to seize his tail, and secure it under his right leg, so as to bring him to the ground. But for a manœuvre which requires great muscular power, Pepe's strength was not equal to his spirit, and, in attempting it, he was

dragged from his saddle, and thrown to the ground, senseless. Several horsemen had by this time come up, and the bold rider of the roan galloping ahead, threw his right leg over the bull's tail, and turning his horse sharply outwards, upset the brute in the midst of his fiery charge, rolling him over and over in the dust.

Another bull was then let loose, and the wild ride recommenced; nor, until the corral was empty, and every horse and horseman completely spent, did the game cease. It is a rude game, though full of excitement; a rude game, and, perhaps, a cruel one; but we must not be harsh in our judgment, remembering that our English sports and pastimes have not always been exempt from a taint of ferocity.

A less manly and much more cruel equestrian game is called "el Gallo" ("the Cock)". Poor chanticleer is tied by the leg to a post driven into the ground, or to a tree, his head and neck being well greased. At a given signal the horsemen start all together, and he who first reaches the bird, and seizing it by its neck, releases it from the fastenings, carries off the prize. The well-greased neck generally eludes the eager fingers of him who first clutches it; but whoever gets hold of the prize is immediately pursued by the rest, intent upon depriving him of it. In the *mêlée* the unfortunate rooster is literally torn to pieces, which the successful horsemen present as *gages d'amour* to their lady-loves.

At Durango, the capital of Northern Mexico, popularly known as "the City of Scorpions," the traveller was shown a large mass of malleable iron, which lies isolated in the centre of the plain.

It is supposed to be an aerolite, because identical in physical character and composition with certain aerolites which fell in some part of Hungary in 1751. Durango is 650 miles from Mexico, and, according to Humboldt, 6845 feet above the sea. At the time of Mr. Ruxton's visit, it was expecting an attack from the Comanche Indians, of whose sanguinary ferocity he tells the following "owre true" story: —

Half-way between Durango and Chihuahua, in the Rio Florido valley, lived a family of hardy vaqueros, or cattle-herders, the head of whom, a stalwart man of sixty, rejoiced in the sobriquet of El Coxo ("The Cripple"). He had eight sons, bold, resolute, vigorous fellows, famous for their prowess in horsemanship, their daring and skill at the "colea" or "el Gallo." Of this goodly company, reminding us of the Nortons in Wordsworth's "White Doe of Rylstone" —

> "None for beauty or for worth
> Like those eight sons – who, in a ring
> (Ripe men, or blooming in life's spring),
> Each with a lance, erect and tall,
> A falchion and a buckler small,
> Stood by their sire," —

the handsomest and most skilful was, perhaps, the third, by name Escamilla, "a proper lad of twenty, five feet ten out of his zapatos, straight as an organo, and lithesome as a reed." Having been educated at Queretaro, he was more refined than his

brothers, and had acquired a taste for dress, which enabled him to set off his comeliness to the best advantage, and made him the cynosure of "the bright eyes" of all the neighbouring rancheras. Next to him came Juan Maria, who was scarcely less skilful, and certainly not less daring than his brother, and by good judges was reputed to be even handsomer, that is, manlier and more robust, though inferior in polish of manner and picturesqueness of appearance. Until Escamilla's return from Queretaro, he had always been victor at "el Gallo" and the "colea," and had laid his spoils at the feet of the beauty of the valley, Isabel Mora, a charming black-eyed damsel of sixteen, called from the hacienda where she resided, Isabel de la Cadena. It was understood that she accepted them with pleasure, and rewarded the suitor with her smiles.

But the course of true love never does run smooth, and in this instance it was fated to be interrupted by fraternal treachery. Escamilla contrived to win the fickle beauty's affections from his brother, who, however, instead of resenting the deceit, magnanimously forgave it, and withdrew all pretensions to her hand. Escamilla and Isabel were duly affianced, and a day was fixed for their marriage, which was to take place at the bride's hacienda; and in honour of the occasion a grand "funcion de toros" was proclaimed, to which all the neighbours (the nearest of whom, by the way, was forty miles distant) were duly invited.

Two days before the appointed wedding-day, El Coxo and his eight sons made their appearance, extorting an admiring murmur

from all beholders as, mounted on superb steeds, they rode gaily into the hacienda.

On the following day, leaving Escamilla at home El Coxo and the rest of his sons accompanied the master of the hacienda into the plains, to assist him in the arduous work of driving in the bulls required for the morrow's sport; while the other rancheros were busy in constructing the large corral intended to secure them.

Evening was drawing near; the sun dropped rapidly behind the rugged crest of the sierra, investing each ridge and precipice with a luminous glory of gold and purple; while the cold grey shadow of the coming night was swiftly creeping over the plain beneath. The cry of the cranes was heard in the silence, as, wedge-shaped, like the Macedonian phalanx of old, they pursued their aerial flight; the shrill pipe of the mother quail summoned together her foraging progeny; the brown hare stole from its covert and prowled about in search of food; and the lowing cattle assembled on the bank of the stream to quench their thirst before they were driven to their stalls. The peones, or labourers of the farm, with slow gait were returning from the scene of their day's work; while at the doors of the cottages the women, with naked arms, were pounding the tortillas on stone slabs in preparation for the evening meal. Everything indicated that the hours of labour had passed, and those of rest and refreshment come.

Escamilla and Isabel were wandering among the hushed pastures, where the last rays of the sun still lingered with a soft subdued radiance, building those airy castles in the construction

of which happy youth is always so eager and so dexterous. In the distance they saw a little cloud of dust rising from the plain; in another direction they heard the shouts of the returning cowherds, and the heavy hoofs of the bulls they were driving towards the corral. In advance rode a single horseman, swiftly making for the hacienda.

Meanwhile, the cloud of dust rolled onwards rapidly, and out of it emerged several cavaliers, who suddenly dashed towards the two happy lovers. "Here come the bull-fighters," exclaimed Isabel; and with natural modesty she added, "Let us return."

"Perhaps they are my father and brothers," answered Escamilla. "Yes, look; there are eight of them. Do you not see?"

Ay, she *did* see, as her gaze rested on the group of horsemen, who, thundering across the mead, were now within a few yards of them. She *did* see, and the blood ran cold in her veins, and her face turned white with fear; for they were Comanche Indians, naked to the waist, horrible in their war-paint, and fierce with brandished spears. Escamilla saw them, too, and shrieking, "Los barbaros! los barbaros!" he fled with rapid foot, and, like a coward, abandoned his affianced to her fate.

A horseman met him: it was Juan Maria, who, having lassoed a little antelope on the plains, was riding in advance of his company to present it to the fickle Isabel. Glancing around, he saw her imminent danger; flung down the animal he was carrying in his arms, dashed his spurs desperately into his horse's sides, and hastened to her rescue. "Salva me, Juan Maria!" she

cried, "salva me!" ("save me"). But the bloodthirsty savages were before him. With a ferocious whoop, the foremost plunged his spear into her heart, and in a moment her scalp was hanging from his saddle-bow. He did not long enjoy his triumph. A clatter of hoofs caused him to turn; and, behold, Juan Maria, with lasso swinging round his head, and his heart beating with the desire of vengeance, rode fiercely towards the murderer, heedless of the storm of arrows that rained upon him. The savage shrank from the encounter; but the open coil of the lasso, whirling through the air, fell over his head, and dragged him to the ground with a fatal crash.

The odds, however, were against Juan Maria, who, surrounded by Indians, had no other weapon than a small machete, or rusty sword. Bating not one jot of heart or hope, he rushed on the nearest Indian, and dealt a blow at his head, which cleft it open; the savage fell dead. Daunted by the Mexican's surpassing courage, the others kept at a distance, discharging their swift arrows, and piercing him with many wounds. Spurring his horse towards them, he fought on bravely, cheered by the shouts of his father and brothers, who were galloping full speed to his support. Before they could reach him, an arrow, discharged at but a few paces' distance, penetrated his heart. He slipped heavily from his horse, and one of the Comanches rode away in triumph, with the heroic Mexican's scalp as a trophy.

At that moment the Indians were reinforced by some thirty or forty of their tribe, and a desperate struggle ensued between

them and El Coxo and his sons. The latter, burning with rage at the death of their brother, fought with such eager courage, that, outnumbered as they were, they slew half a dozen of the Comanches. It is probable, however, they would have been overpowered but for the arrival of the rancheros, who, coming up from the hacienda, put the Indians to flight. As night had darkened in the sky, they did not pursue; but returned to the hacienda with the dead bodies of Juan Maria and Isabel, who were buried the next day, side by side, at the very hour that had been fixed for the unfortunate Isabel's marriage. As for Escamilla, ashamed of his cowardice, he was seen no more in the valley of the Rio Florido, but settled at Queretaro, where he afterwards married.

This tragedy occurred on the 11th of October, 1845.

From Durango Mr. Ruxton proceeded westward for Chihuahua and New Mexico. On the second day of his journey an unpleasant incident very sternly convinced him of the treachery and bloodthirstiness of the lower Mexicans. He was riding slowly ahead of his native attendant, whom he had hired at Durango, when the sudden report of fire-arms, and the whiz of a bullet close to his head, caused him to turn sharply round, and he beheld his amiable mozo [young man], pistol in hand, some fifteen yards behind him, looking guilty as well as foolish. Drawing a pistol from his holsters, Mr. Ruxton rode up to him immediately, and was about to blow out his brains, when his terror-stricken and absurdly guilty-looking face turned his

employer's wrath into "an immoderate fit of laughter."

"Amigo," said Mr. Ruxton, "do you call this being skilled, as you boasted, in the use of arms, to miss my head at fifteen yards?"

"Ah, caballero, in the name of all the saints, I did not fire at you, but at a duck which was flying over the road. Your worship cannot believe I would do such a thing." Now, the pistols which Mr. Ruxton had given him to carry were secured in a pair of holsters tightly buckled and strapped round his waist. To unbuckle them at any time was difficult; to unbuckle them in time to get one out to fire at a flying duck, was impossible. Mr. Ruxton knew that the duck was an invention, and a clumsy one, and to prevent another treacherous attack, took from the fellow everything in the shape of offensive weapon, including even his knife. Then, after lecturing him severely, he administered a sound thrashing with the buckle-end of his surcingle, and promised him that, if he were suspected of even dreaming of another attempt at murder, he would be pistolled without a moment's hesitation.

After narrowly escaping a collision with a party of Indians, Mr. Ruxton reached a place called El Gallo, where he resided for a couple of days in the house of a farmer. He tells us that in a rancho the time is occupied as follows: – The females of the family rise at daybreak, and prepare the chocolate, or alde, which is eaten the first thing in the morning. About nine o'clock, breakfast is served, consisting of chile colorado, frijoles (beans),

and tortillas (omelettes). Dinner, which takes place at noon, and supper at sunset, are both substantial meals. Meanwhile, the men employ themselves in the fields or attending to the animals; the women about the house, making clothes, cleaning, cooking, washing. In the evening the family shell corn, and chat; or a guitar is brought, and singing and dancing are continued until it is time to retire.

Riding onward from El Gallo, Mr. Ruxton turned aside from the regular route to kill an antelope and broil a collop for breakfast. He was descending the sierra to quench his thirst at a stream which flowed through a cañon, or deep ravine, when a herd of antelopes passed him, and stopped to feed on a grassy plateau near at hand. He started in pursuit. As soon as he got within rifle-shot, he crept between two rocks at the edge of the hollow, and raised his head to reconnoitre, when he saw a sight which startled him, as the footprint on the sand startled Robinson Crusoe. About two hundred yards from the cañon, and scarcely twice that distance from his place of concealment, eleven Comanches, duly equipped for war, each with lance and bow and arrow, and the chief with a rifle also, were riding along in Indian file. They were naked to the waist, their buffalo robes being thrown off their shoulders, and lying on their hips and across the saddle, which was a mere pad of buffalo-skin. Slowly they drew towards the cañon, as if to cross it by a deer-path near the spot where Mr. Ruxton lay concealed. The odds were great; but he was advantageously posted, and he held in readiness his

rifle, a double-barrelled carbine, and a couple of pistols. If he were attacked, he thought he could make a good defence; but, if unobserved, he had nothing to gain by attacking them. On they came, laughing and talking, and Mr. Ruxton, raising his rifle and supporting it in the fork of a bush which served as a screen, covered the chief with deadly aim. On they came, but suddenly diverged from the deer-path and struck across the plain, thereby saving the chief's life, and probably Mr. Ruxton's. As soon as they had disappeared, he recrossed the sierra, and returned for the night to El Gallo.

The next stage from El Gallo was Mapimi, situated at the foot of a range of mountains which teems with the precious metals. There he got rid of his mozo, or native attendant, and engaged in his place a little Irishman, who had been eighteen years in Mexico, and had almost forgotten his own language. He readily agreed to accompany him to Chihuahua, having no fear of the Indians, though they infested the country through which the travellers would have to pass. They reached Chihuahua, however, without misadventure. Its territory is described as a paradise for sportsmen. The common black or American bear, and the formidable grizzly bear, inhabit the sierras and mountains; and in the latter is found the carnero cimarron, or big-horn sheep. Elk, black-tailed deer, cola-arieta (a large species of the fallow deer), the common American red deer, and antelope, are everywhere abundant. Of smaller game the most numerous are peccaries, hares, and rabbits; and in the streams the beavers still construct

their dams. There are two varieties of wolf – the white, or mountain wolf, and the cayeute, or coyote, commonly called the prairie-dog. Of birds the most common are the faisan (a species of pheasant), snipe, plover, crane, and the quail, or rather a bird between a partridge and a quail.

The entomologist would find much to interest him in the plains of Chihuahua, and especially an insect which seems almost peculiar to that part of Mexico. From four to six inches in length, it has four long slender legs. Its body, to the naked eye, seems nothing more than a blade of grass, and has no apparent muscular action or vitality except in the two antennæ, which are about half an inch long. It moves very slowly upon its long legs, and altogether looks not unlike a blade of grass carried by ants. The Mexicans assert that if horse or mule swallow these zacateros (so called from *zacato*, grass), it invariably dies; but the assertion may well be doubted. The variety of spiders, bugs, and beetles is endless, including the tarantula and the cocuyo, or lantern-bug. Of reptiles the most common are the rattlesnake and the copper-head: both are poisonous; and the sting of the scorpion is fatal under some conditions. The grotesque but harmless cameleon abounds in the plains. On the American prairies it is known as the "horned frog."

Vegetation is very scanty in Chihuahua. The shrub that covers its plains, the mezquit, is a species of acacia, growing to a height of ten or twelve feet. The seeds, contained in a small pod, resemble those of the laburnum, and are used by the Apache

Indians to make a kind of bread, or cake, which is not unpleasant to the taste. This constantly recurring and ugly shrub, according to Mr. Ruxton, becomes quite an eyesore to the traveller who crosses the mezquit-covered plains. It is the only thing in the shape of a tree seen for hundreds of miles, except here and there a solitary alamo or willow, overhanging a spring, and invariably bestowing its name on the rancho or hacienda which may generally be found in the vicinity of water. Thus day after day the traveller passed the ranchos of El Sauz, Los Sauzes, Los Sauzilles – the willow, the willows, the little willows, – or El Alamo, Los Alamitos – the poplar, the little poplars. The last is the only timber found on the streams in northern Mexico, and on the Del Norte and the Arkansas it grows to a great size.

Leaving Chihuahua, Mr. Ruxton set out for the capital of New Mexico, escorted by three dragoons of the regiment of Vera Cruz, and carrying despatches from the governor to the commander of the American troops then posted on the frontier. At El Paso del Norte he entered a valley of great fertility; but this delightful change of scenery lasted only as far as San Diego, where begins the dreaded and dreadful wilderness significantly known as the *Jornada del Muerto*, or "Dead Man's Journey." Not only is it cursed by an absolute want of water and pasture, but it is the favourite foraging-ground of the Apache Indians, who are always on the alert to surprise the unwary traveller, to plunder and kill him. There is no vegetation but artemisia (sago) and screw-wood (torscilla). About half-way lies a hollow or depression

called the *Laguna del Muerto*, or "Dead Man's Lake," but this is hard and dry except in the rainy season. Mr. Ruxton's horses suffered considerably, but the "Dead Man's Journey" of ninety-five or one hundred miles was performed, nevertheless, without accident in twenty-four hours.

At Fray Cristoval Mr. Ruxton came upon the river Del Norte, and thence pushed along its banks to the ruins of Valverde, where, encamped in the shade of noble trees, he found a trading caravan and a United States surveying party, under the command of a Lieutenant Abert. The traders' waggons were drawn up so as to form a corral, or square – a laager, as the Boers of South Africa call it – constituting a truly formidable encampment, which, lined with the fire of some hundred rifles, could defy the attacks of Indians or Mexicans. "Scattered about," says Mr. Ruxton, "were tents and shanties of logs and branches of every conceivable form, round which lounged wild-looking Missourians; some looking at the camp-fires, some cleaning their rifles or firing at targets – 'blazes' cut in the trees – with a bull's-eye made with wet powder on the white bark. From morning till night the camp resounded with the popping of rifles, firing at marks for prizes of tobacco, or at any living creature which presented itself. The oxen, horses, and mules were sent out at daylight to pasture on the grass of the prairie, and at sunset made their appearance, driven in by the Mexican herders, and were secured for the night in the corrals. My own animals roamed at will, but every evening came to the river to drink, and made their way to my camp, where

they would frequently stay round the fire all night. They never required herding, for they made their appearance as regularly as the day closed, and would come to my whistle whenever I required my hunting mule."

Mr. Ruxton remained several days at Valverde in order to recruit his animals. He amused himself by hunting. Deer and antelope were plentiful; so were turkeys, hares, rabbits, and quail on the plain, geese and ducks in the river; and he had even a shot – an unsuccessful one – at a painter, or panther. In some men the love of sport amounts to a passion, and in Mr. Ruxton it seems to have been equalled or surpassed only by his love of adventure. But about the middle of December the camp broke up, the traders departing for Fray Cristoval; while Mr. Ruxton resumed his northward journey, in company with Lieutenant Abert's party. Crossing the Del Norte, he arrived at Socorro, the first settlement of New Mexico upon this river. Here the houses are *not* painted, but the women *are*; they stain their faces, from forehead to chin, with the fire-red juice of the alegria, to protect the skin from the effects of the sun. At Galisteo he met with a typical Yankee, of the kind Sam Slick has made us familiar with – a kind that is rapidly dying out, – sharp, active, self-reliant; a cunning mixture of inquisitiveness, shrewdness, and good nature. On reaching Mr. Ruxton's encampment he unyoked his twelve oxen, approached the camp-fire, and seated himself almost in the blaze, stretching his long lean legs at the same time into the ashes. Then he began: "Sich a poor old country, I say! Wall, strangers,

an ugly camp this, I swar; and what my cattle ull do I don't know, for they have not eat since we put out of Santa Fé, and are very near give out, that's a fact; and thar's nothin' here for 'em to eat, surely. Wall, they must jist hold on till to-morrow, for I have only got a pint of corn apiece for 'em tonight anyhow, so there's no two ways about that. Strangers, I guess now you'll have a skillet among ye; if yev a mind to trade, I'll jist have it right off; anyhow, I'll jist borrow it to-night to bake my bread, and, if you wish to trade, name your price… Sich a poor old country, say I! Jist look at them oxen, wull ye! – they've nigh upon two hundred miles to go; for I'm bound to catch up the sogers afore they reach the Pass, and there's not a go in 'em."

"Well," remarked Mr. Ruxton, "would it not be as well for you to feed them at once and let them rest?"

"Wall, I guess if you'll some of you lend me a hand, I'll fix 'em right off; tho', I tell you! they've give me a pretty lot of trouble, they have, I tell you! but the critturs will have to eat, I b'lieve!"

The aid asked for was given, and some corn added to the scanty rations which he put before his wearied and hungry oxen. When they had been fixed, the Yankee returned to the fire and baked his cake, fried his bacon, and made his coffee, while his tongue kept up an incessant clatter. He was all alone, with a journey of two hundred miles before him, and his waggon and twelve oxen to look after; his sole thought and object, however, were dollars, dollars, dollars! He caught up every article he saw lying about, wondered what it cost and what it was worth,

offered to trade for it, or for anything else which anybody might be disposed to offer, never waiting for an answer, but rattling on, eating and drinking and talking without pause; until at last, gathering himself up, he said, "Wall, I guess I'll turn into my waggon now, and some of you will, maybe, give a look round at the cattle every now and then, and I'll thank you." No sooner said than done. With a hop, step, and a jump, he sprang into his waggon, and was snoring in a couple of minutes.

Next morning, at daybreak, while he was still asleep, Mr. Ruxton resumed his journey, and before evening entered Santa Fé, after a ride in all of nearly two thousand miles.

There was nothing in Santa Fé to repay him for all he had undergone in getting there. The houses were built of sun-dried mud, and every other one was a grocery, that is, a gin or whisky shop, where Mexicans and Americans were drinking eagerly or playing monté. The streets were filled with brawlers, among whom Pueblo Indians and priests endeavoured to make their way. Donkey-loads of hoja, or corn-shucks, were hawked about for sale. It was noise everywhere; noise and filth, dirt and drink. The town contains about 3500 inhabitants, and lies at the foot of a summit of the eastern chain of the Rocky Mountains, about fourteen miles from the river Del Norte. As for the province, it covers an area of 6000 square miles, with a population of 70,000, divided among the Mexico-Spanish (descendants of the original settlers), the Mestizos (or half-castes), and the Indian Manzos or Pueblos (the aboriginal inhabitants).

Mr. Ruxton was so disgusted with Santa Fé, that in a very few days he had packed his mules, taken his leave of its profanity, drunkenness, and squalidness, and, through the valley of Taos, continued his northward route. The landscape was now ennobled by the majesty of the Rocky Mountains, with cool green valleys and misty plains lying among them, through which the river had hewn its way in deep rocky cañons. The scenery had assumed a new character of grandeur, and Mr. Ruxton surveyed it with admiration. At the Rio Colorado he crossed the United States frontier, and plunged into the wild expanse of snow, with towering peaks rising on every side, that lay before him; his object being to cross the Rocky Mountains by the trail or track of the Ute Indians, and strike the river Arkansas near its head-waters. The cold was intense, and when a cutting wind swept over the bleak plains or roared through the wooded valleys, the hardy traveller found scarcely endurable.

Stricken almost to the heart, he suffered the antelope that bounded past – hunter as he was! – to go unscathed. His hands, rigid as those of "the Commandant" in the statue-scene of Mozart's "Don Giovanni," dropped the reins of his horse, and allowed him to travel as he pleased. The half-breed who attended him, wrapped himself round in his blanket, and heaved a sigh at the thought of the fine venison that was being lost. At length, a troop of some three thousand swept almost over them, and Mr. Ruxton's instincts as a sportsman prevailed over the inertness and deadness induced by the icy air; he sprang from his horse,

knelt down, and sent a bullet right into the midst. At the report two antelopes leaped into the air, to fall prostrate in the dust; one of them shot in the neck, through which the ball had passed into the body of the other. While he was cutting up the prize, half a dozen wolves howled around, drawn to the spot by the scent of blood. A couple of these creatures, tamed by hunger, gradually drew nearer, occasionally crouching on their haunches, and licking their eager lips as if already partaking of the banquet. Mr. Ruxton flung at them a large piece of meat; whereupon the whole pack threw themselves upon it, growling and fighting, and actually tearing each other in the wild, fierce fray. "I am sure," says our traveller, "I might have approached near enough to have seized one by the tail, so entirely regardless of my vicinity did they appear. They were doubtless rendered more ravenous than usual by the uncommon severity of the weather, and from the fact of the antelope congregating in large bands, were unable to prey upon these animals, which are their favourite food. Although rarely attacking a man, yet in such seasons as the present I have no doubt that they would not hesitate to charge upon a solitary traveller in the night, particularly as in winter they congregate in troops of from ten to fifty. They are so abundant in the mountains, that the hunter takes no notice of them, and seldom throws away upon the skulking beasts a charge of powder and lead."

Mr. Ruxton pitched his camp at Rib Creek one night; at La Culebra, or Snake Creek, the next; at La Trinchera, or Bowl

Creek, on the third. The cold continued excessive. The blast seemed to carry death upon its wings; snow and sleet fell in heavy showers; the streams were covered with a solid crust of ice. But the worst part of the journey was through the Vallerito, or Little Valley – the "Wind-trap," as the mountaineers expressively call it – a small circular basin in the midst of rugged mountains, which receives the winds through their deep gorges and down their precipitous sides, and pens them up in its confined area to battle with one another, and with the unfortunates who are forced to traverse it. How they beat and rage and howl and roar! How they buffet the traveller in the face, and clasp him round the body as if they would strangle him! How they dash against the stumbling mules, and whirl the thick snow about them, and plunge them into dense deep drifts, where they lie half buried! This "Wind-trap" is only four miles long; and yet Mr. Ruxton was more than half a day in getting through it.

Once clear of it, he began the ascent of the mountain which forms the watershed of the Del Norte and Arkansas rivers. The view from the summit was as wild and drear as one of the circles in Dante's "Inferno." Looking back, the traveller saw everywhere a dense white pall or shroud of snow, which seemed to conceal but partially the rigid limbs of the dead and frozen earth. In front of him stretched the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, dominated by the lofty crest of James's or Pike's Peak; to the south-east, large against the sky, loomed the grim bulk of the two Cumbres Españolas. At his feet, a narrow valley,

green with dwarf oak and pine, was brightened by the glancing lights of a little stream. Everywhere against the horizon rose rugged summits and ridges, snow-clad and pine-clad, and partly separated by rocky gorges. To the eastward the mountain mass fell off into detached spires and buttresses, and descended in broken terraces to the vast prairies, which extended far beyond the limit of vision, "a sea of seeming barrenness, vast and dismal." As the traveller gazed upon them, billows of dust swept over the monotonous surface, impelled by a driving hurricane. Soon the mad wind reached the mountain-top, and splintered the tall pines, and roared and raved in its insatiable fury, and filled the air with great whirls of snow, and heaped it up in dazzling drifts against the trees. Its stern voice made the silence and the solitude all the more palpable. For not a sound of bird or beast was to be heard; nor was there sign or token of human life. In such a scene man is made to feel his own littleness. In the presence of the giant forces of Nature he seems so mean and powerless that his heart sinks within him, and his brain grows dizzy, until he remembers that behind those forces is a Power, eternal and supreme – a Power that seeks not to destroy, but to bless and comfort and save.

With no little difficulty, Mr. Ruxton and his guide conveyed their mules and horses down the steep eastern side of the mountain into the valley beneath. Across Greenhorn Creek they pushed forward to the banks of the San Carlos; and fourteen miles beyond, they struck the Arkansas, a few hundred

yards above the mouth of Boiling Spring River. There he was hospitably entertained in the "lodge" of a certain mountaineer and ex-trapper, John Hawkins.

The home and haunt of the trapper is the vast region of forest and prairie known as the Far West. He extends his operations from the Mississippi to the mouth of the western Colorado, from the frozen wastes of the north to the Gila in Mexico; making war against every animal whose skin or fur is of any value, and exhibiting in its pursuit the highest powers of endurance and tenacity, a reckless courage, and an inexhaustible fertility of resource. On starting for a hunt, whether as the "hired hand" of a fur company, or working on his own account, he provides himself with two or three horses or mules – one for saddle, the others for packs – and six traps, which are carried in a leather bag called a "trap-sack." In a wallet of dressed buffalo-skin, called a "possible-sack," he carries his ammunition, a few pounds of tobacco, and dressed deerskins for mocassins and other articles. When hunting, he loads his saddle mule with the "possible" and "trap-sack;" the furs are packed on the baggage mules. His costume is a hunting shirt of dressed buckskin, ornamented with long fringes; and pantaloons of the same material, but decorated with porcupine quills and long fringes down the outside of the leg. His head bears a flexible felt hat; his feet are protected by mocassins. Round his neck is slung his pipe-holder, generally a love token, in the shape of a heart, garnished with beads and porcupine quills. Over his left shoulder and under his right arm

hang his powder-horn and bullet-pouch, in which are stored his balls, flint and steel, and all kinds of "odds and ends." A large butcher-knife, in a sheath of buffalo-hide, is carried in a belt, and fastened to it by a chain or guard of steel. A tomahawk is also often added, and a long heavy rifle is necessarily included in the equipment.

Thus provided (we quote now from Mr. Ruxton), and having determined the locality of his trapping-ground, he starts for the mountains, sometimes with three or four companions, as soon as the worst of the winter has passed. When he reaches his hunting-grounds, he follows up the creeks and streams, vigilantly looking out for "sign." If he observes a cotton-wood tree lying prone, he examines it to discover if its fall be the work of the beaver; and, if so, whether "thrown" for the purpose of food, or to dam the stream, and raise the water to a level with its burrow. The track of the beaver on the mud or sand under the bank is also examined; and if the "sign" be fresh, he sets his trap in the run of the animal, hiding it under water, and attaching it by a stout chain to a picket driven in the bank, or to a bush or tree. A "float-stick" is fastened to the trap by a cord a few feet long, which, if the animal carry away the trap, floats on the water and indicates its position. The trap is baited with the "medicine," an oily substance obtained from a gland in the scrotum of the beaver. Into this is dipped a stick, which is planted over the trap; and the beaver, attracted by the smell, and wishing a close inspection, very foolishly puts his leg into the trap, and falls a victim to his curiosity.

When "a lodge" is discovered, the trap is set at the edge of the dam, at the point where the amphibious animals pass from deep to shoal water, but always beneath the surface. In early morning the hunter mounts his mule, and examines his traps. The captured animals are skinned, and the tails, a great dainty, carefully packed into camp. The skin is then stretched over a hoop or framework of osier twigs, and is allowed to dry, the flesh and fatty substance being industriously scraped or "grained." When dry, it is folded into a square sheet, with the fur turned inwards, and the bundle of ten to twenty skins, well pressed and carefully corded, is ready for exportation.

During the hunt, regardless of Indian vicinity, the fearless trapper wanders far and near in search of "sign." His nerves must always be in a state of tension; his energies must always rally at his call. His eagle eye sweeps round the country, and in an instant detects any unusual appearance. A turned leaf, a blade of grass pressed down, the uneasiness of the wild animals, the flight of birds, are all paragraphs to him, written in Nature's legible hand and plainest language. The subtle savage summons his utmost craft and cunning to gain an advantage over the wily white woodman; but, along with the natural instinct of primitive man, the white hunter has the advantages of the civilized mind, and, thus provided, seldom fails to baffle, under equal advantages, his Indian adversary.

While hunting in the Arkansas valley, Mr. Ruxton met with many exciting experiences; the most serious being that of a night

in the snow. Suspecting that some Indians had carried off his mules, he seized his rifle, and went in search of them, and coming upon what he supposed to be their track, followed it up with heroic patience for ten miles. He then discovered that he had made a mistake; retraced his steps to the camp, and, with his friend, struck in another direction. This time he hit on the right trail, and was well pleased to find that the animals were not in Indian hands, as their ropes evidently still dragged along the ground. Carrying a lariat and saddle-blanket, so as to ride back on the mules if they were caught, away went the two dauntless hunters, nor did they stop to rest until midnight. Then, in the shelter of a thicket and on the bank of a stream, they kindled a fire, and thankfully lay down within reach of its genial influence. Alas! a gale of wind at that moment arose, and scattering the blazing brands to right and left, soon ignited the dry grass and bushes; so that, to prevent a general conflagration, they were compelled to extinguish their fire. To prevent themselves from being frozen to death, they started again in pursuit of the missing animals, following the trail by moonlight across the bare cold prairies. Next day their labours were rewarded by the recovery of the mules, and Mr. Ruxton and his Irish companion began to think of returning. The latter, by agreement, made at once for the trapper's cabin; Ruxton, with the animals, turned off in search of some provisions and packs that had been left in their hunting encampment. Since morning the sky had gradually clouded over, and towards sunset had blackened into a dense, heavy, rolling

darkness. The wind had gone down, and a dead, unnatural calm, the sure precursor of a storm, reigned over the face of nature. The coyote, mindful of the coming disturbance, was trotting back to his burrow, and the raven, with swift wings, laboured towards the shelter of the woods.

Lower and lower sank the clouds, until the very bases of the mountains were hidden, and the firmament and the earth seemed mingled together. Though neither branch nor spray was stirred, the valley rang with a hoarse murmur. Through the gloom the leafless branches of the huge cotton-wood trees protruded like the gaunt arms of fleshless phantoms. The whole scene was eery and weird, impressing the mind with an indefinable sense of awe, with an apprehension of approaching disaster. The traveller turned his animals towards the covert of the wood; and they, quivering with terror, were not less eager than himself to gain it. Two-thirds of the distance still lay before them, when the windows of heaven opened, and the storm broke, and a tremendous roar filled the valley, and thick showers of sleet descended, freezing as it fell. The lonely traveller's hunting-shirt was soaked through in a moment, and in another moment frozen hard. The enormous hailstones, beating on his exposed head and face – for the wind had carried away his cap – almost stunned and blinded him. The mule he bestrode was suddenly caparisoned with a sheet of ice. To ride was impossible. He sprang to the ground, and wrapped himself in the saddle-cloth. As the storm beat in front of them, the animals

wheeled away from the wood, turned their backs upon it, and made for the open prairies; still, through the intense darkness, whirled and buffeted in clouds of driving snow, Mr. Ruxton steadfastly followed them. His sufferings were indescribable; but he persevered. The wind chilled his blood; the sleet wounded his eyes; with difficulty his weary feet toiled through the gathering snow, which was soon two feet in depth; but he persevered. This quality of tenaciousness, without which no man can become a successful traveller, any more than he can become a successful musician, painter, sculptor, engineer, Mr. Ruxton possessed in an eminent degree. He pursued the frightened animals across the darkening prairie, until, suddenly, on the leeward side of a tuft of bushes, they stood still. Some vain attempts he made to turn them towards the wood; they would not move; so that at length, completely exhausted, and seeing before him nothing but inevitable death, he sank down behind them in the deep snow, covering his head with his blanket – far away from human habitation, – far away from all help, but that of God!

Ah, what a night was that! How the wind roared over the frozen plain! How the snow rolled before it in dense huge billows, that took in the darkness a sombre greyish colour! What horrible sounds surged upon the ear and brain of the benumbed watcher, as, with his head on his knees, pressed down by the snow as by a leaden weight, with the chilled blood scarcely flowing in his veins, and an icy torpor threatening to arrest the very motion of his heart, he struggled against the temptation of a slumber from

which he knew that he should wake no more on earth! Once yield to that fatal sleep, and farewell to life! Yet how he longed to close his aching eyes, to rest his weary brain, to cease from the tumult of thought and feeling that confused and exhausted him! Every now and then the mules would groan heavily, and fall upon the snow, and again struggle to their legs. Every now and then the yell of famished wolves arose in the pauses of the storm. So passed the night, or, rather, to the hunter it seemed as if it were prolonging itself into day; each second was lengthened into a minute, each minute into an hour. At last, by keeping his hands buried in the bosom of his hunting-shirt, he so far restored their natural warmth, that he was able to strike a match and set light to his pipe, a large one made of cotton-wood bark, that chanced, by great good fortune, to be filled with tobacco to the brim. This he smoked with intense delight, and no doubt the stimulus it afforded saved his life.

He was sinking, however, into a dreamy drowsiness, when he was roused by a movement among the mules, which cheered him by proving that they were still alive. With some difficulty he lifted his head to get a look at the weather, but all was pitch dark. Was it still night? Suddenly he remembered that he was buried deep in snow, and thrusting his arm above him, he worked out a hole, through which he could see the sheen of stars and the glimmer of blue sky. After one or two efforts, he contrived to stand on his feet, and then he discovered that morning was dawning slowly in the east, whore the horizon was clear of clouds.

By dint of constant exertion he regained the use of his limbs, and, springing on his horse, drove the mules before him at full speed across the prairie, and through the valley, until he reached the Arkansas, where he was welcomed as one who had risen from the grave. It took him two days, however, to recover from the effects of that fearful night among the snow.

One of Mr. Ruxton's most agreeable excursions was to the Boiling Spring River and the Boiling Fountains, which he found to be situated in the midst of picturesque combinations of wood and rock. These celebrated springs issue from round holes in a large, flat white rock, at some distance from each other; the gas escapes with a hissing sound, like that of water in a state of ebullition; and the taste is peculiarly refreshing, like that of, but seeming more pungent than, the very best soda-water. The Indians call them the "medicine" springs, and regard them with superstitious reverence as the haunts of a spirit, who, by breathing through the transparent fluid, causes the perturbation of its surface. As to this water-spirit the Arapahoes attribute the power of preventing the success or bringing about the failure of their war expeditions, they never pass the springs without leaving there some propitiatory offerings, such as beads, wampum, knives, pieces of red cloth, strips of deerskin, and mocassins. The country round about was formerly in the hands of the Shoshone, or Snake Indians, of whom the Comanches are a branch: the latter now dwell to the east of the Rocky Mountains; the former to the west, or in the recesses of the mountains themselves.

The Snake Indians connect a curious legend with these two springs of sweet and bitter water.

They say that, hundreds of years ago, when the cotton-wood trees on the Rio Colorado were no higher than arrows, and the red man hunted the buffalo on the plains, all people spoke the same language, and two parties of hunters never met without smoking together the pipe of peace. In this happy age, it chanced on one occasion that a couple of hunters, belonging to different tribes, met on the bank of a small rivulet, in which they designed to quench their thirst. A bright clear thread of water, trickling from a spring in a rock a few feet from the bank, it wound its silvery way into the river. Now, while one of the hunters threw himself at once on the ground, and plunged his face into the running stream, the other first flung from his back a fine deer, and then, turning towards the spring, poured some of the water out as a libation to the Great Spirit, who had rewarded his prowess with bow and arrow, and caused the fountain to flow, at which he was about to refresh himself.

And it came to pass that the other hunter, who had killed no fat buck, and had forgotten to make the usual peace-offering, felt his heart swell with rage and jealousy; and the Evil Spirit taking possession of him, he sought for an excuse to quarrel with the stranger Indian. Rising to his feet with a moody frown upon his brow, he exclaimed —

"Why does a stranger drink at the spring-head, when one to whom the spring belongs is content to drink of the water that

runs from it?"

"The Great Spirit," replied the other, "places the cool water at the spring, that his children may drink it pure and undefiled. The running water is for the beasts that inhabit the plains. Au-sa-qua is a chief of the Shoshone, and he drinks at the head of the waters."

"The Shoshone," answered the first speaker, "is but a tribe of the Comanche. Wa-co-mish is the chief of the great nation. Why does a Shoshone dare to drink above him?"

"He has said it. The Shoshone drinks at the spring-head; let other nations be satisfied with the water of the stream that runs into the fields. Au-sa-qua is chief of his nation. The Comanche are brothers; let them both drink of the same water."

"The Shoshone pays tribute to the Comanche. Wa-co-mish leads that nation to war. Wa-co-mish is chief of the Shoshone, as he is of his own people."

"Wa-co-mish lies," said Au-sa-qua coldly; "his tongue is forked like the rattlesnake's; his heart is as black as the Mishotunga (evil spirit). When the Manitou made his children, whether Shoshone or Comanche, Arapaho, Shi-an, or Pá-ui, he gave them buffalo to eat, and the pure water of the crystal fountain to quench their thirst. He said not to one, 'Drink here,' or to the other, 'Drink there,' but gave to all the bright clear fountain, that all might drink."

A tempest of fury swept over the soul of Wa-comish as he listened to these words; but he was a coward at heart, and durst

not openly encounter the cooler and more courageous Shoshone. But when the latter, hot with speaking, again stooped to drink of the refreshing waters, Wa-co-mish suddenly threw himself upon him, pressed his head beneath the surface, and held it there, until his victim, suffocated, ceased to struggle, and fell forward into the spring, dead.

The murderer had satisfied his passion; but was he happy? No; as he gazed at the corpse of his victim, he was seized with a passionate sense of remorse and regret. Loathing himself for the crime he had committed, he proceeded to drag the body a few paces from the water, which, thereupon, was suddenly disturbed. The wave trembled to and fro, and bubbles, rising to the surface, escaped in hissing gas. And, as a vaporous cloud gradually rose and sank, the figure of an aged Indian was revealed to the murderer's straining eyes, whom, by his noble countenance, his long sinewy hand, and his silvery beard, he knew to be the great Wau-kan-aga, the father of the Shoshone and Comanche nation, still remembered and revered for the good deeds and the heroic acts he had done in life.

Stretching out a war-club towards the shrinking, trembling Wa-co-mish, he said:

"Accursed of my tribe! this day hast thou snapt the link that bound together the mightiest nations of the world, while the blood of the brave Shoshone cries to the Manitou for vengeance. May the water of thy tribe be rank and bitter in their throats!" And, swinging round his ponderous war-club, he dashed out the

brains of the treacherous Comanche, so that he fell headlong into the spring, which, from that day, has ever been nauseous to the taste, and an offence to thirsty lips. But at the same time, to preserve the memory of the noble Au-sa-qua, he struck a hard flint rock, higher up the rivulet, with his club, and called forth a fountain of crystal water, which, even in our own times, is the joy and the delight of men.

"Never," says Mr. Ruxton, "never was there such a paradise for hunters as this lone and solitary spot. The shelving prairie, at the bottom of which the springs are situated, is entirely surrounded by rugged mountains, and, containing perhaps about two or three acres of excellent grass, affords a safe pasture to their animals, which would hardly care to wander from such feeding. Immediately overhead, Pike's Peak, at an elevation of 12,000 feet above the level of the sea, towers high into the clouds; whilst from the fountain, like a granitic amphitheatre, ridge after ridge, clothed with pine and cedar, rises and meets the stupendous mass of mountains, well called 'Rocky,' which stretches far away north and southward, their gigantic peaks being visible above the strata of clouds which hide their rugged bases."

But here our companionship with Mr. Ruxton ceases. His travels in the United States do not present any uncommon or remarkable feature; do not differ from those of the thousand and one sightseers who yearly cross the Atlantic, and survey the broad territories of the great Western Republic. With a small

party he crossed the wide-rolling prairies to Fort Leavenworth; thence, passing the Kansas or Caro river, and entering upon a picturesque country of hill and dale, well wooded and watered, he penetrated into the valley of the Missouri. Down that noble stream he made his way to St. Louis, and afterwards traversed the prairies of Illinois to Chicago; not then, as it is now, the capital of the West, and the great corn depôt of the Mississippi States. From Chicago he crossed Lake Michigan to Kalamazoo, where he took the rail to Detroit. A Canadian steamer conveyed him to Buffalo. Thence, by rail, he travelled to Albany, and descended the majestic Hudson to New York. His home voyage was swift and prosperous, and he arrived at Liverpool in the middle of August, 1847. [7]

[7] G. F. Ruxton, "Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains." London, 1861.

DOCTOR BARTH,
AND CENTRAL AFRICA

A.D. 1850

I

Dr. Heinrich Barth, a native of Hamburg, and lecturer at the University of Berlin upon geography, had already had some experience of African travel, when, in 1849, he learned that Mr. James Richardson had planned an expedition from London to Central Africa, with the view of opening up the Soudan to European commerce, and substituting for the cruel slave-trade the legitimate enterprise of working the natural riches of the country. Dr. Barth obtained permission to accompany it, and with another volunteer, also a German, named Overweg, he repaired to head-quarters. The expedition was authorized and supported by the British Government. It met, therefore, with no preliminary difficulties; and we may begin our summary of its adventures at Tripoli, whence it started for the south on the 24th of March, 1850. Entering the Fezzan, it crossed the rocky and elevated plateau known as the Hammada, and through fertile wadys, or valley-basins, separated by precipitous ridges and broad wastes of sand, made its way to Mourzouk, the capital, situated in a sandy plain, where agricultural labour is possible only under the shelter of the date-palms. The town has no rich merchants, and is not so much a commercial depôt as a place of transit. For Dr. Barth and his companions it was, however, the first stage of their journey, and, indeed, their true point of departure. They made all haste, therefore, to leave it, and on

the 13th of June entered upon their great undertaking. On the 25th, after an unavoidable delay, they quitted Tasua, crossed a considerable mass of sand-hills, and descended into a more agreeable district, where the heights were crowned by tamarisk trees, each height standing alone and isolated, like sentinels along the front of an army. This pleasant variety of scenery did not last long, however; they came again upon a soil as rocky as that of the Hammada, and met with an alternation of green valleys and sterile promontories, similar to that which they had explored before they reached Mourzouk.

They had reached the Wady Elaveu, a huge depression running north and south, when, at a distance of two hundred yards from their camp, they discovered a pond, forming a centre of life in that solitary region. Everybody hastened to enjoy a bath; a crowd of pintados and gangas hovered, with bright-coloured wings, above the laughing, frolicking company, waiting until they could take their places. While in this vicinity the travellers were disturbed by the conduct of some Towaregs, who had been engaged to conduct them to Selompih. Eventually, some slight change was made in the plans of the expedition, which, it was determined, should go on to Ghat, and remain there for six days; while the Towaregs, on their part, undertook to set out immediately afterwards for the Asben. Striking into the valley of Tanesof, they saw before them, revelling in the glow and gleam of the sunset, the Demons' Mountain, or Mount Iniden; its perpendicular summit, adorned with towers and

battlements, showed its white outlines vividly against a dark-blue sky. Westward, the horizon was bounded by a range of sand-hills, which the wind swept like a mighty besom, filling the air with sharp, gritty sand, and covering the entire surface of the valley.

On the following morning, their course carried them towards an enchanted mountain, which the wild legends of the natives have invested with picturesque interest. In spite of the warnings of the Towaregs, or perhaps because they had cautioned Dr. Barth not to risk his life in scaling that palace of the evil spirits, he resolved on attempting the sacrilegious enterprise. Unable to obtain guides, neither threats nor bribes prevailing over their superstitious terrors, he set out alone, in the belief that it had been formerly a place of religious worship, and that he should find there either sculptures or curious inscriptions. Unfortunately, he took with him no provisions but some biscuits and dates, and worse food cannot be imagined where there is a want of water. Crossing the sand-hills, he entered upon a bare and sterile plain, strewn with black pebbles, and studded with little mounds or hillocks of the same colour. Then he followed the bed of a torrent, its banks dotted with herbage, which offered an asylum to a couple of antelopes. Anxious for the safety of their young, the timid animals did not move at his approach. Affection inspired them with courage; they raised their heads boldly, and waved their tails. The enchanted palace seemed to recede as he advanced; finding himself in front of a dark deep ravine, he changed his course, only to find the passage barred

by a precipice. Under the glare and glow of a burning sun he undauntedly pursued his way, and at last, spent with fatigue and exertion, reached the summit, which was only a few feet wide, and could boast neither of sculptures nor inscriptions.

From so lofty a watch-tower the prospect was necessarily extensive; but on surveying the plain below with anxious glance, Dr. Barth failed to detect any sign of the caravan. He was hungry and athirst; but his dates and biscuit were not eatable, and his supply of water was so limited that he durst not indulge himself with more than a mouthful. Feeble and spent as he was, to descend was imperative; he had no water left when he once more stood upon the plain. He dragged his weary limbs onward for some time, but at length was forced to own to himself that he did not know the direction he ought to take. He fired his pistol; but it elicited no reply. Wandering further and further from the route, he came upon a small grassy oasis, where some huts had been constructed of the branches of the tamarisk. With hopeful heart he hurried towards them; they were empty. Then in the distance he saw a long train of loaded camels ploughing their slow way through the sand; no, it was an illusion! – the illusion of fever. When night fell, he descried a fire gleaming redly against the darkened sky; it must be that of the caravan! Again he fired his pistol, and again there was no answer. Still the flame rose steadily towards heaven, and seemed to beckon him to a place where he should find rest and safety; but he was unable to profit by the signal. He fired again; no answering sound came forth

from the silence of the mysterious night, and Dr. Barth, on his knees, entrusted his life to the Divine Mercy, and waited and watched for the dawn of day. The dawn came, as it comes to all God's creatures, whether rich or poor, happy or wretched – comes with a blessing and a promise that are too often accepted without thought or emotion of gratitude; the dawn came, and still the calm of the desert remained unbroken. He loaded his pistol with a double charge, and the report, travelling from echo to echo, seemed loud enough to awaken the dead; it was heard by no human ear but his own. The sun, for whose beams he had prayed in the night-watches, rose in all its glory; the heat became intense; slowly the belated wayfarer crawled along the hot sand to seek the scanty shelter afforded by the leafless branches of the tamarisk. At noon there was scarcely shade enough to protect even his head, and in an agony of thirst, he opened a vein, drank a little of his own blood, and lost all consciousness. When he recovered his senses, the sun had set behind the mountain. He dragged himself a few paces from the tamarisk, and was examining the dreary level with sorrowful eyes, when he suddenly heard the voice of a camel. Never had he listened to music so delightful! For twenty-four hours had his sufferings been prolonged, and he was completely exhausted when rescued by one of the Towaregs of the caravan who had been sent in search of him.

The caravan spent six days in the double oasis of Ghat and Barakat, where crops of green millet, taking the place of barley and rye, indicated the neighbourhood of Nigritiá. The gardens

were neatly fenced and carefully cultivated; turtle-doves and pigeons cooed among the branches; the clean, well-built houses were each provided with a terraced roof. Dr. Barth observed that the male inhabitants worked with industry and intelligence; as for the women, almost every one had a babe on her shoulders, and children swarmed by the wayside. As a whole, the population was far superior, physically and morally, to the mixed, hybrid race of the Fezzan.

They left the gracious and grateful oasis to plunge into the desert, a chaos of sandstone and granite rocks. On the 30th of July, they reached the junction-point of two ravines which formed a sort of "four-ways" among these confused masses. The wady which crossed their route was about sixty feet broad, but, at a short distance, narrowed suddenly into a defile between gigantic precipices upwards of a thousand feet in height – a defile which in the rainy season must be converted into a veritable cataract, to judge from an excavated basin at the mouth, which, when Dr. Barth and his companions passed, was full of fresh and limpid water. This "four-ways," and these defiles, form the valley of Aguéri, long known to European geographers by the name of Amaïs.

The unpleasant intelligence now arrived that a powerful chief, named Sidi-Jalef-Sakertaf, projected an expedition against their peaceful caravan. Fortunately, it was only a question of the tribute which, by right of might, the Towaregs levy from every caravan that crosses the desert. Sidi-Jalef-Sakertaf was pacified;

and the enthusiasts went on their way through sterile valleys and frowning defiles that would have daunted the courage of any but a votary of science and adventure.

They next arrived at Mount Tiska, which is six hundred feet in height, and surrounded by numerous lesser cones. It forms a kind of geological landmark; for the soil, hitherto so broken and irregular, thenceforward becomes smooth and uniform, while rising gradually, and the vast plain stretches far beyond the limit of vision without anything to interrupt its arid monotony. A two days' journey brought our travellers to the well of Afelesselez. It is utterly wanting in shade; only a few clumps of stunted tamarisks grow on the sandy hillocks; but, desolate as it is and uninviting, the caravans resort to it eagerly, on account of its supply of fresh water.

Sand; stones; little ridges of quartzose limestone; granite mixed with red sandstone or white; a few mimosas, at intervals of one or two days' march; abrupt pinnacles breaking the dull level of the sandstones; dry and bushless valleys – such were the features of the country through which Dr. Barth and his companions wearily plodded. Herds of buffaloes, however, are numerous; as is also, in the higher ground, the *Ovis tragelaphis*.

On the 16th of August the travellers, while descending a rocky crest covered with gravel, came in sight of Mount Asben. The Asben or A'ir is an immense oasis, which has some claim to be considered the Switzerland of the Desert. The route pursued by Dr. Barth on his way to Agadez traversed its most

picturesque portion, where, almost every moment, the great mountain revealed itself, with its winding gorges, its fertile basins, and its lofty peaks.

Agadez is built on a plain, where it seems to lament that the day of its prosperity has passed. At one time it was the centre of a considerable commerce; but, since the close of the last century, its population has sunk from sixty thousand to seven or eight thousand souls. Most of its houses lie in ruins; the score of habitations which compose the palace are themselves in a deplorably dilapidated condition; of the seventy mosques which it previously boasted only two remain. The richer merchants shun the market of Agadez, which is now in the possession of the Touats, and supported by small traders, who do a little business in the purchase of millet when the price is low.

The day after his arrival, Barth repaired to the palace, and found that the buildings reserved for the sovereign were in tolerably good repair. He was introduced into a hall, from twelve to fifteen yards square, with a low daïs or platform, constructed of mats placed upon branches, which supported four massive columns of clay. Between one of these columns and the angle of the wall was seated Abd-el-Kadir, the Sultan, a vigorous and robust man of about fifty years old, whose grey robe and white scarf indicated that he did not belong to the race of the Towaregs. Though he had never heard of England, he received Dr. Barth very kindly, expressed his indignation at the treatment the caravans had undergone on the frontier of A'ir, and, by-and-

by, sent him letters of recommendation to the governors of Kanó, Katséna, and Daoura. Dr. Barth remained for two months at Agadez, and collected a number of interesting details respecting its inhabitants and their mode of life. Thus, he describes a visit which he paid to one of its more opulent female inhabitants. She lived in a spacious and commodious house. When he called upon her, she was attired in a robe of silk and cotton, and adorned with a great number of silver jewels. Twenty persons composed her household; including six children, entirely naked, their bracelets and collars of silver excepted, and six or seven slaves. Her husband lived at Katséna, and from time to time came to see her; but it appears that she scarcely awaited his visits with the loving expectancy of a Penelope. No rigid seclusion of women is insisted upon at Agadez. During the Sultan's absence, five or six young females presented themselves at Dr. Barth's house. Two of them were rather handsome, with black hair falling down their shoulders in thick plaits, quick lively eyes, dark complexion, and a toilette not wanting in elegance; but they were so importunate for presents, that Dr. Barth, to escape their incessant petitions, shut himself up.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.