

considerably to the height, and gives, with the addition of whiskers, a military air to the most insignificant figure. They wear their hair short round the head, but not thin upon the crown: it is generally dark, thick, and quite straight. The cap is covered by a very soft and shining black wool. Some of them have civil and military distinctions of habit; wearing in time of peace, instead of the jacket, a long frock without buttons. The sash is sometimes yellow, green, or red, although generally black; and they wear large military gloves. There is no nation in the world more neat with regard to dress; and, whether young or old, it appears to become them all. A quiet life seems quite unsuited to their disposition: they loiter about, having then no employment to interest them; and being devoted to war, seem distressed by the indolence of peace.

The *Ataman*, or Chief of the *stanitza*, approached us with very great respect and complaisance, as soon as we arrived. Notice at the same time was given to all the inhabitants, not to quit the town without his knowledge, until every thing the travellers might require should be ascertained and provided. He begged to conduct us to "*quarters*," as he expressed it; and brought us, for that purpose, to his own house, which he

House of  
the *Ata-*  
*man*.

CHAP.  
XII.

gave up entirely to our use. It was pleasantly situate, above the Don, with an open covered arcade, or wooden gallery : in this gallery we breakfasted and dined, while we remained. His cave of provisions was in the court-yard ; and he made his wife and daughters open it for our use. We had the curiosity to descend into this place. It was floored with ice ; upon which we saw *sterlet* from the Don, *game*, and other luxuries. The house was perfectly clean and comfortable ; so much so, that we could not resist the pressing invitation made to us of staying a short time, to study the manners of the *Cossacks*, in a town nearly as large as their capital.

It was amusing to observe the temporary respect they paid to the *Ataman*. If he convened any of the inhabitants on business, however trivial, they made their obeisance before him, standing bareheaded, as in the presence of a Sovereign : but the moment the assembly was dissolved, he passed unheeded among them, receiving no greater mark of respect than any of the other *Cossacks*. It is an office to which the election is annual ; but if an *Ataman* be particularly popular, he may retain his station, by re-election, during many years. This however does not often happen. Our host was in his *first* year, and his

predecessors had generally changed when the time arrived. We soon perceived that the *Cossacks* are characterized by great liveliness and animation; that they are little disposed to a sedentary life, but fond of amusement, and violent when their passions are roused. In their dances, drinking-songs, and discussions, they betray great vehemence. They have abundance of excellent food, and as much brandy as they may think proper to drink. It is therefore surprising that order is so well maintained in their *stanitzas*.

However indisposed a traveller may be to listen to those false alarms which the inhabitants of every country raise in the minds of strangers who wish to explore any remote part of their territory, it is not possible at all times to disregard such relations, especially when they come from persons of the highest authority, and who pretend to accurate knowledge of the facts they attempt to substantiate. In *Russia*, there was not an individual, of any respectability, with whom we conversed upon the subject of our journey, who did not endeavour to dissuade us from the danger of traversing what was termed "*the deserts of the Don Cossacks*." The event, however, served to convince us of the misrepresentation, and absurdity of such statements.

Ideal Dan-  
gers of the  
Country.

CHAP.  
XII.

Among the *Russians*, indeed, we were constantly exposed to danger; either from imposition that it was hazardous to detect, or from insult that it was fearful to resent; and in both cases the consequences affected our security. In the first view of the *Cossacks*, we beheld a brave, generous, and hospitable people. If we questioned them concerning the dangers of the country, we were referred to districts tenanted by wandering *Calmucks*; yet we afterwards found no cause of reasonable alarm, even in the very camps of that singular race of men. At *Paulovskoy*, they told us that the EMPEROR'S courier had been stopped with the mail. We doubted the fact in the first instance; but concluded, that if the mail had been really stolen, the theft was committed by the *Russians*, who raised the clamour, and not by the *Cossacks*, to whom the robbery had been imputed. In times of hostility the *Russians* found in the *Cossacks* a desperate and dangerous enemy; and many a bitter remembrance of chastisement and defeat induces them to vilify a people whom they fear. The *Cossacks* are therefore justified in acting towards them as they have uniformly done; that is to say, in withdrawing as much as possible from all communion with men whose association might corrupt, but could never promote, the welfare of their



society. After these remarks, it must nevertheless be confessed, that we were compelled to take an escort with us throughout the *Cossack* territory, and to place a guard over our carriage at night; precautions, doubtless, often calculated to excite the ridicule of the people among whom we travelled; yet even the *Cossacks* themselves sometimes urged the necessity of so doing,—“on account,” they said, “of the *Calmucks*.”

One evil consequence arising from attention paid to tales of danger, is the habit it occasions of putting a false construction upon the most harmless and most trivial incidents. The first night of our residence among the *Cossacks* we were full of idle fancies. The *Ataman* was intoxicated, and set off, accompanied by his wife, into the country; leaving us in possession of his house. As we had heard a violent altercation without doors, and saw our host, in a corner of the court, frequently whispering to other *Cossacks*, and pointing to our carriage, the effect of the silly stories we had heard began to operate, and we imagined some preparation was making to rob us; for which purpose it was necessary to get rid of the *Ataman* and his wife, as they might otherwise be made responsible for our safety. The apprehension of our servants did not diminish the suspicion thus

CHAP.  
XII.

excited; and we considered the plot as the more probable, because we knew that they had never before seen an equipage so attended. Since this happened, we had every reason to believe that the good old *Ataman* was only giving directions for our advantage, and, like all intoxicated persons, was making an important concern of the most trifling business, such as the cording and repairing our wheels, and a few other commissions which we wished to have executed. Travellers, so circumstanced, often raise an alarm about nothing; make a great stir to defend themselves against ideal danger; offend those who intended no injury; and finish, by congratulating themselves upon an escape, where there was no ground even for apprehension.

Voyage by  
Water.

We received a visit, on the evening of our arrival, from the *Ataman* of one of the neighbouring *stanitzas*, who chanced to be in the place. He represented the voyage down the *Don* to *Tcherkash* as a pleasant, but a tedious undertaking; saying, that it would require at least a month for its performance. The mosquitoes also are very troublesome upon the water; and the passage is liable to impediments, from the frequent shallows of the river.

Below the town, which stands upon the western bank of the *Don*, we beheld this river, augmented to a most magnificent piece of water, rolling in a full and copious tide, and marking its progress, through a country otherwise sterile, by clumps of trees and flowers, and by an abundant vegetation near to its sloping sides: but all beyond is bare and desolate. We bathed frequently, and found the current very rapid. The fine sterlets caught here were often brought to regale us during our stay. We preserved one of them tolerably well; but they have been often engraved; and, were this not the case, a young sturgeon will give a very good representation of their appearance. Another sort of fish, of large size, is also taken in this river; it is like the bream in shape, but quite equal to the sterlet in flavour. We had one served at our table, weighing half a *poud* (eighteen pounds).

The women of this place are very beautiful. The shops are supplied with several articles of luxury, such as loaf-sugar, ribbands, costly silks, and other wares of large towns. Among the more numerous articles offered for sale were sabres. The *Cossacks* call this weapon *SABLA*; the *Poles* and *Mato-Russians*, *SABEL*. We observed the *bag-pipe* frequently in use. A kind

CHAP.  
XII.Amuse-  
ments and  
Dances of  
the People.

of puppets, common in *Calabria*, which are carried by the inhabitants of that part of *Italy* over all *Europe*, were much in vogue here, consisting of two small figures suspended by a string: this the piper fastens to his knee, or to one of his fingers; while the other end is held by a gimlet screwed into a table or floor; and, by the motion of the knee, the figures are made to dance to the tune. The *Calabrians* manage them with great dexterity, and often collect a crowd in the streets of *London* and *Paris*. We saw also the *Cossack* dance, which much resembles the dance of the *Gipsies* in *Russia*, and our *English* hornpipe. Like every other national dance, it is licentious. As the female recedes or approaches, the male dancer expresses his desire or his disappointment; yet so adapted is the figure of this dance to the small rooms of their houses, that the performers hardly move from one spot. The expression is conveyed by movements of the body, especially of the arms and head, accompanied by short and sudden shrieks, and by whistling. The method they exhibited of moving the head from one shoulder to the other, while the hands are held up near the ears, is common to the dances of all the *Tahtars*, *Chinese*, and even to the inhabitants of the islands in the *Pacific Ocean*.

In the evening of *June 16th*, we left this hospitable *stanitza*, crossing the *Don* upon a raft. The people of the house, where we had been so comfortably lodged, positively refused to accept of any payment for the trouble we had given them. "*Cossacks*," said they, "*do not sell their hospitality*!"

CHAP.  
XII.  
Departure.

The view of *Kasankaia*, from the southern side of the river, is very fine. Its large church, with numerous domes, stands in the center: to the right and left are numerous and neat wooden houses. The *Don* flows below, exhibiting, in front, the busy raft, which is constantly employed conveying caravans across the ferry. In all parts of the river above *Kasankaia*, it seems to flow over a bed of *chalk*; and its banks, gently swelling upwards from the water, rise like the *South Downs* of *Sussex*, often disclosing the *chalk* whereof they consist. Farther down, and near to the water's edge, low copses of wood almost always accompany its course; but these diminish as it draws nearer to *Tcherkask*, the inhabitants of

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(1) "L'hospitalité est en usage par toute la *Petite Russie*; et un étranger qui y voyage n'a jamais besoin de faire de la dépense pour son logement et sa nourriture." *Scherer Annales de la Petite Russie*, tome I. p. 103. Paris, 1788.

CHAP. which town derive all their wood from the  
XII. *Volga.*

As soon as we had left *Kasankaia*, we entered the *steppes* in good earnest, with a view to traverse them, in their whole extent, to *Tcherkash*. They are not cultivated; but, bleak and desolate as their appearance during winter may be, they have during summer the aspect of a wild continued meadow. The herbage, rising as high as the knee, is full of flowers, and exhibits a very interesting collection of plants. No one collects or cuts this herbage. The soil, although neglected, is very fine. We passed some *oaks*, in the first part of our journey, with the largest leaves we had ever seen. The *Cossacks* composing our escort galloped before us, bearing their long lances; and were of great use in clearing the road of caravans, and in tracing the best track where a carriage might expeditiously pass. We were pleased in surveying our little armed band, going at full speed; but thought it would avail us little, if the stories we had heard of *banditti* in the *steppes* were really true. For ourselves, we were destitute of any defensive weapons, excepting our sabres; and these were under lock and key, in the sword-case. We relied therefore solely on the *Cossacks*, who seemed quite



delighted even with the thought of a skirmish: proud of their employment, they scoured the plains, armed with pistols, sabres, and lances twelve feet in length. CHAP.  
XII.

Thus escorted and accoutred<sup>1</sup>, we proceeded to the distance of thirty *versts* before the evening; and passed the night in a spot full of swamps, stinking fens, and muddy pools. Near to these stagnant waters, a number of caravans had also halted. Mosquitoes were here in great number, and very troublesome. Our *Cossacks* passed the whole night upon the damp ground, and in the open air, almost naked, around our carriage. The atmosphere of such a country must in summer be pestilential. It resembled the *Pontine Marshes* in *Italy*; being full of reeds, bulrushes, and tall flags, in which was heard the constant clamour of frogs and toads, whose croaking overpowered every other sound during the night. But in the morning, the chorus of a great variety of birds, with the humming of innumerable insects, and the pleasing appearance of a flowery wilderness, gave a liveliness to the flat and wide prospect. The name of this place was *Tichaia*; and hereabouts the river *Lazovay* has its source. We followed

River  
Lazovay.

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(1) See the *Vignette* to this Chapter.

CHAP.  
XII.

its tardy and almost stagnant waters through the *steppes*, to a place named from it, *Verchnia Lazovaia*. On its banks we observed the *Sinapis nigra* and *Convolvulus arvensis*, plants common in England.

Visit to  
a Camp of  
*Calmucks*.

We afterwards saw a camp of *Calmucks*, in the plain towards the right of our route. As we much wished to visit this people, it was thought prudent to send a part of our *Cossack* escort before, in order to apprise them of our inclination, and to ask their permission. The sight of our carriage, and of the party approaching with it, seemed to throw them into great confusion. We observed them running backwards and forwards from one tent to another, and moving several of their goods. As we drew near, on foot, about half-a-dozen gigantic figures came towards us, stark naked, excepting a cloth bound about the waist, with greasy, shining, and almost black skins, and black hair braided into a long queue behind. They began talking very fast, in so loud a tone, and in so uncouth a language, that we were a little intimidated. We shook hands however with the foremost, which seemed to pacify them, and we were invited into a large tent. Near to its entrance hung a quantity of horse-flesh, with the limbs of dogs, cats, marmots,

rats, &c. drying in the sun, and quite black. Within the tent we found some women, although it were difficult to distinguish the sexes, so horrid and inhuman was their appearance. Two of them, covered with grease, were lousing each other; and it surprised us, that they did not discontinue their work, nor even look up as we entered. Through a grated lattice, in the side of the tent, we saw some younger women peeping, of more handsome features, but truly *Calmuck*, with long black hair, hanging in thick braids on each side of the face, and fastened at the end with bits of lead or tin. In their ears they wore shells, and large pearls of a very irregular shape, or some substance much resembling pearl. The old women were eating raw horse-flesh, tearing it off from large bones which they held in their hands. Others, squatted on the ground within their tents, were smoking tobacco, with pipes not two inches in length, much after the manner of *Laplanders*. In other respects, the two people, although both of *Eastern* origin, and both *nomade* tribes, bear little resemblance. The manner of living among the *Calmucks* is much superior to that of the *Laplanders*. The tents of the former are better constructed, stronger, more spacious, and contain many of the luxuries of life; such as very warm and good beds, handsome carpets

CHAP.  
XII.

and mats, domestic utensils, and many instruments of art and science, painting and writing<sup>1</sup>. The *Calmuck* is a giant, the *Laplander* a dwarf: both are filthy in their persons; but the *Calmuck* more so, perhaps, than the inhabitant of any other nation. We are not otherwise authorized in comparing together tribes so remote from all connection with each other, than by asserting, from our own observation, that both are *Oriental*, and that both are characterized by some habits and appearances in common; deferring, at the same time, all further illustration of the subject until a more appropriate opportunity. We shall have occasion to speak at large of the *Laplanders*, in another part of our Travels<sup>2</sup>.

Of Brandy  
distilled  
from the  
Milk of  
Mares.

Every one has heard of the *koumiss*, and the brandy, which the *Calmucks* are said to distil from the milk of mares. The manner of preparing these liquors has been differently related, and perhaps is not always the same.

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(1) Those tents are of a circular form, with a hole at the top: they are constructed of canes, and covered with a thick felt made of camel's hair. In the *Calmuck* language they are called *Khabitha*; and being placed upon waggons during their migrations, have given their name to the summer vehicles of *Russia*.

(2) The *Esquimaux* Indians of *America*, the *Greenlanders*, and the *Laplanders*, speak the same language, and have the same swarthy complexion. When the *Moravians* effected their settlement in *Labrador*, the *Greenland* language was used, by their interpreter, with the natives.

They assured us that the brandy was merely distilled from butter-milk. The milk which they collect overnight is churned in the morning into butter; and the butter-milk is distilled over a fire made with the dung of their cattle, particularly of the dromedary, which makes a steady and clear fire, like peat. But other accounts have been given, both of the *koumiss* and of the brandy. It has been usual to confound them, and to consider the *koumiss* as their appellation for the brandy so obtained. By every information we could obtain, not only here, but in many other camps, which we afterwards visited, they are different modifications of the same thing, although different liquors; the *koumiss* being a kind of sour milk, like the *Yowrt* of the *Turks*, and the beverage so much used by the *Laplanders*, called *Pima*; and the brandy, an ardent spirit obtained from *koumiss* by distillation. In making the *koumiss*, they sometimes employ the milk of cows; but never, if mare's milk can be had; as the *koumiss* from the latter yields three times as much brandy as that made from cow's milk. The manner of preparing the *koumiss* is, by combining one-sixth part of warm water with any given quantity of warm mare's milk. To this they further add, as a leaven, a little old *koumiss*, and agitate the mass till fermentation ensues. To produce

CHAP.  
XII.

the vinous fermentation, artificial heat and more agitation is sometimes necessary. This affords what is called *houmiss*. A subsequent process of distillation afterwards obtains an ardent spirit from the *houmiss*. They gave us this last beverage in a wooden bowl, calling it *vina*. In their own language it bears the very remarkable appellation of *rack*, and *racky*, doubtless nearly allied to the names of our *East-India* spirit, *rack*, and *arrack*. We brought away a quart bottle of it, and considered it as very weak bad brandy, not unlike the common spirit distilled by the *Swedes* and other *Northern* nations. Some of their women were busied making it in an adjoining tent. The simplicity of the operation, and of their machinery, was very characteristic of the antiquity of this chemical process. Their still was constructed of mud, or of very coarse clay; and for the neck of the retort they employed a cane. The receiver of the still was entirely covered by a coating of wet clay. The brandy had already passed over. The woman who had the management of the distillery, wishing to give us a taste of the spirit, thrust a stick, with a small tuft of camel's hair at its extremity, through the external covering of clay; and thus collecting a small quantity of the brandy, she drew out the stick, dropped a portion upon the retort, and, waving the instru-



ment above her head, scattered the remaining liquor in the air. We asked the meaning of this ceremony, and were answered, that it is a religious custom, to give always the first drop of the brandy from the receiver to their *God*. The stick was then plunged into the receiver a second time; when more brandy adhering to the camel's hair, she squeezed it into the palm of her dirty and greasy hand, and, having tasted the liquor, presented it to our lips. CHAP.  
XII.

The covering of their tents consists of neat and well-made mats, such as we see brought from *India*; and also of felt, or coarse woollen cloths. Whenever a *Calmuck* marries, he must build one of these tents, and one also for every child he has by that marriage. If a husband die, his widow becomes the property of his brother, provided the latter choose to accept of her. A distinction between married and unmarried women is exhibited in the manner of dressing their hair. A married woman wears her hair braided, falling over her shoulders, and on each side of her face; but a virgin has only a single braid hanging down the middle of her back. Their tents were all of a circular form. Near to these we observed a party of their children, from the age of five to fourteen, playing at the antient *Grecian* game (before mentioned as

CHAP.  
XII.



common in *Russia*) with knuckle-bones<sup>1</sup>. We delighted them by making a scramble with a few *copeeks*. They were quite naked, and perfectly black. Farther off, a herd of their dromedaries were grazing.

Personal  
Appear-  
ance of  
*Calmucks*.

Of all the inhabitants of the *Russian* empire, the *Calmucks* are the most distinguished by peculiarity of feature and manners. In personal appearance, they are athletic and revolting. Their hair is coarse and black; their language harsh and guttural. They inhabit *Thibet*, *Bucharia*, and the countries lying to the north of *Persia*, *India*, and *China*; but, from their vagrant habits, they may be found in all the southern parts of *Russia*, even to the banks of the *Dnieper*. The *Cossacks* alone esteem them, and intermarry with them<sup>2</sup>. This union sometimes produces

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(1) The *Astragalismus*; in which game we find the origin of *dice*, *chess*, *nine-pins*, &c.

(2) In opposition to this remark, it is stated in Mr. *Heber's Journal*, that " *Calmuck* servants are greatly esteemed all over *Russia*, for their intelligence and fidelity;" and we recollect seeing some of them in that capacity among *English* families in *Petersburg*. The most remarkable instance ever known of an expatriated *Calmuck*, was that of an artist employed by the *Earl of Elgin*, whom we saw (a second *Anacharsis*, from the plains of *Scythia*) executing most beautiful designs among the Ruins of *Athens*. Some *Russian* family had previously sent him to finish his studies in *Rome*, where he acquired the highest perfection in design. He had the peculiar features, and many of the manners, of the *nomade Calmucks*.

women of very great beauty ; although nothing is more hideous than a *Calmuck*. High, prominent, and broad cheek-bones ; very little eyes, widely separated from each other ; a flat and broad nose ; coarse, greasy, jet black hair ; scarcely any eye-brows ; and enormous prominent ears ; compose no very inviting countenance : however, we may strive to do it justice.



Their women are uncommonly hardy ; and on horseback outstrip their male companions in the race. The stories related of their placing pieces of horse-flesh under the saddle, in order to prepare them for food, are true. They acknowledged that this practice was common among them during a journey, and that a stake so dressed became tender and palatable. In their large camps, they have cutlers, and other

CHAP.  
XII.



Armour, &  
Weapons.

artificers in copper, brass, and iron; sometimes goldsmiths, who make trinkets for their women, idols of gold and silver, and vessels for their altars; also persons expert at inlaid work, enamelling, and many arts vainly believed peculiar to nations in a state of refinement. One very remarkable 'fact, confirming the observations of other travellers', may bear repetition; namely, that, from time immemorial, the more Oriental tribes of *Calmucks* have possessed the art of making gunpowder. They boil the efflorescence of *nitrate of potass* in a strong lye of poplar and birch ashes, and leave it to crystallize; after this they pound the crystals with two parts of sulphur, and as much charcoal; then, wetting the mixture, they place it in a caldron over a charcoal fire, until the powder begins to granulate. The generality of *Calmucks*, when equipped for war, protect the head by a helmet of steel with a gilded crest: to this is fixed a net-work of iron rings, falling over the neck and shoulders, and hanging as low as the eyebrows in front. They wear upon their body, after the *Eastern* manner, a tissue of similar work, formed of iron or steel rings matted together: this adapts itself to the shape, and yields readily to all positions of the body; and

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(1) *Journal des Savans Voyageurs*, p. 434.

ought therefore rather to be called a *shirt*, than a *coat*, of mail. The most beautiful of these are manufactured in *Persia*, and valued at the price of fifty horses. The cheaper sort are made of scales of tin, and sell only for six or eight horses each; but these are more common among the *Chinese*, and in the *Mogul* territory. Their other arms are lances, bows and arrows, poignards, and sabres. Only the richer *Calmucks* carry fire-arms: these are therefore always regarded as marks of distinction, and kept, with the utmost care, in cases made of badgers' skins. Their most valuable bows are constructed of the wild-goat's horn, or of whalebone; the ordinary sort, of maple, or thin slips of elm or fir, fastened together, and bound with a covering of linden or birch bark.

Their amusements are, hunting, wrestling, archery, and horse-racing. They are not addicted to drunkenness, although they hold drinking parties, continuing for half-a-day at a time, without interruption. Upon such occasions, every one brings his share of brandy and *houmiss*; and the whole stock is placed upon the ground, in the open air; the guests forming a circle, seated around it. One of them, squatted by the vessels containing the liquor, performs the office of cup-bearer. The young

Recrea-  
tions and  
Condition  
of Life.

women place themselves by the men, and begin songs of love or war, of fabulous adventure, or heroic achievement. Thus the *fête* is kept up; the guests passing the cup round, and singing the whole time, until the stock of liquor is expended. During all this ceremony, no one is seen to rise from the party; nor does any one interrupt the harmony of the assembly, by riot or intoxication. In the long nights of winter, the young people of both sexes amuse themselves with music, dancing, and singing. Their most common musical instrument is the *bala-laika*, or two-stringed lyre; often represented in their paintings. These paintings preserve very curious memorials of the antient superstition of *Eastern nations*; exhibiting objects of *Pagan* worship which were common to the earliest mythology of *Egypt* and of *Greece*. The arts of *Painting* and *Music* may be supposed to have continued little liable to alteration among the *Calmucks*, from the remotest periods of their history. As for their dances, these consist more in movements of the hands and arms, than of the feet. In winter they play at cards, draughts, backgammon, and chess. Their love of gambling is so great, that they will spend entire nights at play; and lose in a single sitting the whole of what they possess, even to the clothes upon their body. In short, it may



be said of the *Calmucks*, that the greatest part of their life is spent in amusement. Wretched and revolting as they seem, they would be indeed miserable, if compelled to change their mode of living for that of a more civilized people. Both *Gmelin* and *Pallas* relate, that they deem a residence in houses so insupportable, that to be shut up in the confined air of a close apartment, even for a short time, when under the necessity of going into towns, and making visits of embassy or commerce, is considered by them with a degree of horror. Among the diseases caused by their diet and want of cleanliness, may be mentioned the *itch*: to this they are very subject. Malignant fevers are often fatal to them during the heat of summer. The venereal disease causes great ravages: it is said to prevail chiefly in those camps where their princes reside, and not to be often found among the lower orders. They give to this disorder a name very expressive of the estimation in which they hold their mode of life, by calling it "*The house disease*¹." Having occasion hereafter to notice this people, we shall only now add the observations of one of the celebrated travellers before mentioned; who, after considering the privations

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(1) Or, rather, "*derived from those who live in houses.*"

CHAP.  
XII.

to which they are exposed, places their situation in a point of view more favourable, perhaps, than we have done. "For the rest," says he, "to whatsoever degree of wretchedness the poorest of the *Calmucks* may be reduced, it is very rare to behold them dejected by sorrow, and they are never subdued by despair. The generality, notwithstanding a mode of life apparently so adverse to health, attain to a robust and very old age. Their disorders are neither very frequent, nor very dangerous. Few become grey-headed at forty or fifty. Persons from eighty to a hundred years of age are by no means uncommon among them; and at that advanced period of life they still sustain with great ease the fatigue of horsemanship. A simple and uniform diet<sup>1</sup>; the free air they uninterruptedly respire; inured, vigorous, and healthy bodies; continual exercise, without care, without laborious employment; such are the natural causes of these felicitous effects."

Leaving this encampment, we continued to traverse the *steppes* in a south-westerly direction,

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(1) It is difficult to reconcile this statement with the real diet of the *Calmucks*. Can that properly be deemed *simple*, which consists of the grossest animal food of all kinds, without admixture of vegetable diet, without bread, or any of the fruits of the earth?

and passed a very neat village belonging to a wealthy *Greek*, who, to our great surprise, had established a residence in the midst of these desolate plains. As we advanced, we perceived that wheresoever rivers intersect the *steppes*, there are villages, and a numerous population. A manuscript map of *Tcherkask* confirmed the truth of this observation. No maps have been hitherto published in *Europe* giving an accurate notion of the country. A stranger crossing the *Cossack* territory might suppose himself to be in a desert, although surrounded by villages. From the road, it is true, he will not often see these settlements; but frequently, when we were crossing a river, after believing ourselves to be in the midst of an uninhabited country, we beheld villages to the right and left of us, that had been concealed by the banks of the river; not a single house nor church of which would have been otherwise discerned<sup>2</sup>. We were approaching, in an oblique direction, the *Lazovai*, now aug-

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(2) "Erected, or rather concealed," says GIBBON, accurately describing the dwellings of their forefathers, "in the depth of forests, on the banks of rivers, or the edge of morasses, we may not perhaps, without flattery, compare them to the architecture of the beaver; which they resembled in a double issue, to the land and water, for the escape of the savage inhabitant, an animal less cleanly, less diligent, and less social, than that marvellous quadruped." *History of the Roman Empire*, chap. xlii.

CHAP.  
XII.

mented to a considerable river. As we drew near, its opposite banks rose considerably higher than the ordinary appearance of the country with fine clusters of trees. Before we arrived at *Acenovskaia*, the country was even mountainous. On its western side we beheld a neat village, called *Jernvchaia*, pleasingly situate beneath the hills, with a new and handsome church. Indeed, the churches are everywhere good, and much superior to what we find in our country villages in *England*, both as to architecture and interior decoration. At the top of the mountainous elevation\* on the western side of the river, stood one of the largest of those *tumuli* which abound over all this country. They become more numerous, and appear of greater magnitude, nearer to the *Don* and to the *Sea of Azof*. Finding the water clear, and the current rapid, we had the opportunity of bathing; and recommend the practice to all travellers, as essential to the preservation of health<sup>1</sup>.

*Acenov-  
skaia.*

From *Acenovskaia*, we continued our route over *steppes* apparently destitute of any habitation. Dromedaries were feeding, the sole

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(1) *Acerbi* informed us, that by constant bathing he escaped the fever to which travellers are liable from the bad air and heat of *Lapland* during summer.

tenants of these wide pastures. Mr. *Cripps* got upon the back of one of them, as the animal was kneeling: it rose immediately, and, with a very majestic pace, bore him towards the carriage. Our horses were so terrified at the sight, that they broke the ropes, and we had great difficulty in tranquillizing them. The dromedary, having passed, made off into the plain, with his head erect, prepared, no doubt, to undertake an expedition to very distant regions; when, having satisfied his curiosity, Mr. *Cripps* descended from his lofty back, as from the roof of a house, and fell with some violence upon the ground; leaving the dromedary to prosecute his voluntary journey, which he continued as far as our eyes could follow him.

Innumerable inhabitants, of a smaller race, people these immense plains. Among the number of them, is an animal which the natives call *Suroke*; the *Arctomys Bobac* of zoölogists<sup>2</sup>. It grows here to the size of a large badger;

Of the  
*Suroke*, or  
*Bobac*, of  
the *Sicppæ*.

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(2) See *Shaw's Zoölogy*, vol. III. p. 126. Pl. 144.—In the first edition we had described this animal as the *S'pine Marmot*, with which naturalists have sometimes confounded it.—The holes, or receptacles, of the *Bobac* are lined with the finest hay; and it is said that the quantity found in one nest is sufficient for a night's provender for a horse.—The *Bobac* is the *Mus Arctomys* of *Pallas*.

CHAP.  
XII.

and so much resembles the *bear* in its manner and appearance, that, until we became acquainted with its real history, we considered it as a non-descript animal, and called it *Ursa minima subterranea*. Such mistakes are not uncommon in zoölogy. Naturalists frequently add to the nomenclature of animals by superfluous appellations. A beautiful little quadruped, called *Jerboa* in *Egypt*, has been described in other countries as a distinct animal, under the various names of *Mus jaculus*, *Subterraneous Hare*, *Vaulting Rat*, *Leaper*, &c. &c. but it is the same creature everywhere, and bears to the *kangaroo* the same degree of relationship that a *lizard* has to the *crocodile*. We shall describe it more minutely hereafter. Our present business is with the *Suroke*; this is seen in all parts of the *steppes*; sitting erect, near to its burrow, whistling very loud upon the slightest alarm, and observing all around. It makes such extensive subterraneous chambers, that the ground is perforated in all directions, and the land is destroyed wheresoever this animal is found. Its colour is a greyish brown: it has five fingers upon each of its paws; these very much resemble human hands, and are used after the same manner. The mouth, teeth, and head, are like those of the *squirrel*; but the ears are shorter. Its fine eyes are round, full, dark,



and bright: the tail is short; the belly generally protuberant, and very large. It devours almost every thing it finds, with the greatest voracity; and remains in a state of torpor half the time of its existence. Many of the peasants keep *surokes* tame in their houses.. We purchased no less than four: they lived and travelled with us in our carriage, thereby enabling us to study their habits. They were always playing, or sleeping, beneath our feet, to the great annoyance of our little pug-dog<sup>1</sup>. The

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(1) Having mentioned this little animal, it may be well to say something of the importance of its presence with us, for the advantage of other travellers. The precaution was first recommended to us by a Polish traveller in *Denmark*. Any small dog (the more diminutive the better, because the more portable, and generally the more petulant) will prove a valuable guardian, in countries where the traveller is liable to attacks from midnight robbers, and especially from pirates by water, as in the *Archipelago*. They generally sleep during the day, and sound their shrill alarum upon the most distant approach of danger, during the night. The author remembers an instance of one that enabled a party of mariners to steer clear of some shallows, by barking at a buoy, which, in the darkness of the night, they had not perceived. The instances in which our little dog was useful, it is needless to relate. But it may gratify curiosity to be informed, that, being naturally afraid of water, and always averse from entering it, he crossed all the rivers and lakes of *Lapland, Sweden, and Norway*, after his masters; accompanied them, during three years, in different climates, although detesting bodily exercise; and ultimately performed a journey on foot, keeping up with horses, from *Athens*, through all *Greece, Macedonia, and Thrace*; making the tour of the *Archipelago*, to *Constantinople*; and thence, in the same manner, through *Bulgaria, and Wallachia, to Bück*.

CHAP.  
XII.

peasants universally give them the name of *Wasky*. They told us, that in the month of *September* their tame *surokes* retire to some hiding-place, and do not make their appearance again before the beginning of *April*. They either descend into some burrow, or conceal themselves where they may remain the least liable to observation, and sleep during the whole winter. To awaken them, during the season of their somnolency, materially injures their health, and sometimes kills them. They are most destructive animals; for they will gnaw every thing they find in their way; shoes, books, wooden planks, and all kinds of roots, fruit, or vegetables. They made havoc with the lining of our carriage; which was of morocco leather. As soon as they have done eating, they become so drowsy, that they even fall asleep in your hands, in any posture or situation, or under any circumstances of jolting noise or motion. When awake, they are very active; and they surpass every other animal in the rapidity with which they burrow in the earth. They resemble guinea-pigs in making a grunting noise; and when surprised, or much pleased, or in any degree frightened, they utter loud and short squeaks, resembling the sound of a person whistling.

Other animals common in the *steppes* are wolves and bears; also a quadruped called *Biroke*, of a grey colour, something like a wolf, very ferocious, and daring enough to attack men. The *Cossack* peasants, armed with their lances, sally forth, on horseback, in pursuit of this animal. It has a long full tail, reaching to the ground. From the accounts given of it by the peasants, we suspected it to be the same animal described by Professor *Pallas*, as found in the environs of *Astrachan*, under the appellation *Chakal*, and said to be between a wolf and a dog; but whether it be the same kind of *Jackal* which is found in *Syria* and in *Egypt*, or not, we did not learn.

CHAP.  
XII.The *Biroke*.

The most numerous of all the quadrupeds of the *steppes*, the whole way from *Woronetz* to *Tcherkash*, are the *Suslics*: by this name they are called throughout the country. Near the course of the *Don*, they absolutely swarm, and may be taken in any number. This interesting little animal is supposed to be the *Mus Citillus* of *Buffon*; and a description of it will now prove whether this be really the case or not. It makes a whistling noise, like the *suroke*; but it is much smaller, not being larger than a small *weazel*. It constructs its habitation under

The *Suslic*.

CHAP.  
XII.

ground with incredible quickness; excavating, first of all, a small cylindrical hole or well, perpendicularly, to the depth of three feet; thence, like a correct miner, it shoots out a level, although rather in an ascending direction, to prevent being incommoded by water. At the extremity of this little gallery it forms a very spacious chamber; and to this, as to a granary, it brings, every morning and evening, all it can collect of favourite herbage, of corn (if it can be found), of roots, and of other food. Nothing is more amusing than to observe its habits. If any one approach, it is seen sitting, at the entrance of its little dwelling, erect, upon its hinder feet, like the *surake*, carefully noticing whatsoever is going on around it. In the beginning of winter, previously to retiring for the season, it carefully closes with sand the entrance to its subterraneous abode, to keep out the snow; as nothing annoys it more than water, which is all the *Calmucks* and *Cossacks* use in taking them; for the instant water is poured into their burrows, they run out, and are easily caught. The *Calmucks* are very fond of them as an article of food; but they are rarely eaten by the *Cossacks*. Their greatest enemy is the falcon: this bird makes a constant breakfast and supper of *suslics*. They have from two to

ten young ones at a time; and it is supposed, from the hoard prepared, that the *suslic* does not sleep, like the *suroke*, during winter. All the upper part of its body is of a deep yellow, spotted with white. Its neck is beautifully white, the breast yellowish, and the belly a mixed colour of yellow and grey: it has, moreover, a black forehead, reddish white temples, and a white chin. The rest of its head is of an ash-coloured yellow; and the ears are remarkably small. Among the feathered race in the *steppes*, we particularly noticed, during this part of our journey, certain birds called *Staritchi*, or *Elders*, which appear in flocks: they are held by the people in superstitious veneration. One of these birds is about the size of a snipe: its colour is brown; but the breast is white; and its shape is very elegant.

Such are the observations which we made during the second day of our journey across the *steppes*. We halted at a place called *Suchovskaia*, and proceeded afterwards to *Rossochinskaia*, a single hut in the middle of the waste. Yet such are often the villages, not to say towns and cities, which figure in the Russian maps. This place consisted of a single

Nature of  
Villages  
named in  
Russian  
Maps.

CHAP.  
XII.  
}

dwelling, built of a few pieces of wood, and thatched by weeds and sedge, carelessly heaped. The surrounding hovels are out-houses for the post-horses. During summer, its *Cossack* inhabitants sleep upon the roof, among the thatch.

As it grew dark, a tremendous thunder-storm came on, and a very interesting spectacle was disclosed by the vivid flashes of lightning. The *Cossack* guard, as well as the people of the place, had collected themselves upon different parts of the thatched covering of the hut and adjoining hovels, to pass the night. Every flash of lightning served to exhibit their martial figures, standing upright, in groupes, upon the roof of the buildings, bowing their heads, and crossing themselves, beneath the awful canopy the sky then presented. All around was desolate and silent. Perhaps no association could serve to render a scene of devotion more striking. It is customary among the *Cossacks*, before they consign themselves to sleep, to make the sign of the cross, facing respectively the four quarters of the globe. A similar superstition, respecting four cardinal points of worship, exists among ignorant people, even in our own country. The author, when a child,



was taught by an old woman to offer the following singular prayer :

CHAP.  
XII.

“ Four corners to my bed,  
Four angels over head :  
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on.”

A party of *Cossacks* arrived as pilgrims, returning homeward from the war in *Italy*. We afterwards met numbers, who had traversed on foot the whole of the immense territory from the *Alps* to the *Don*, and who arrived with scarcely a rag to their backs. They were loud in complaints against their unprincipled commanders. Some of them had learned a little of the Italian language ; and made use of it in telling us that the Russian officers, having first stripped them of every thing they had, turned them adrift upon the frontier of *Italy*, to find their way home on foot. One of them assured us, that he had begged during the whole journey ; and that before he left the Russian army, they had taken away his watch, and even his clothes. We gave them a little brandy ; and the poor people of the hut brought them some broth, made with fish and wild herbs. They sat around it in a circle, eating all out of one bowl ; and having ended their

Stragglers  
from the  
Army.

CHAP. supper, began to sing.—So relative is human  
XII. happiness!

Distinction  
between  
Cossacks of  
the Steppes  
and of the  
Don.

We left *Rossochinskaia* on the *eighteenth* of *June*. All the *Cossack* inhabitants of the *steppes*, from *Kasankaia* to *Tcherhask*, have light brown hair, and are a different race from the genuine *Cossacks* of the capital, and those dwelling in *stanitzas* along the *Don*. Lieutenant-Colonel *Papof*, a *Cossack* officer of the highest merit and talent, of whom we shall hereafter speak, told us that the people of the *steppes* were emigrants, of recent date, from *Poland*.

It would be tedious to notice, upon every occasion, the extraordinary number of *tumuli*, seen during the whole route; but the Reader is requested to bear in mind the curious fact of their being everywhere in view. Close to the post-house at *Pichovskaia*, the first place where we halted this day, there were two mounds of a very remarkable size; one on each side of the road. The horses here were without shoes, and the road was as excellent as it is possible to imagine. The whole country resembled one vast verdant lawn. Stories of danger were renewed: the lances of our *Cossack* escort were twelve feet in length; and an

unusual degree of caution prevailed among them, as to their means of defence. They provided themselves with fire-arms: these they said were now necessary; and a very sharp look-out was made, the *Calmucks* increasing in number as we advanced more into the interior.

CHAP.  
XII.

We arrived at *Kamenskaia*, a *stanitza* upon the *Danaetz*, generally written *Donetz*: we crossed this river by means of a floating bridge, as the post-house was upon the opposite side. The town made a great figure, as we descended towards the valley wherein it was situate; owing to its fine church, and its numerous gardens: the river itself, also, exhibiting a broad stream winding among the trees, had a noble appearance. We observed in the streets a kind of gingerbread for sale, which is common in our English fairs, and it is made into the same form. The *Ataman* was at his country-seat; and we were told, that all the principal *Cossacks* had their houses for summer residence in the country. Just before entering the town, a young *Calmuck* woman met us, sitting astride upon a horse laden with raw horse-flesh, which hung like carrion before her on either side. She was grinning for joy at the treasure she

*Kamen-  
skaia.*

CHAP.  
XII.

had obtained: this we afterwards found to be really carrion. A dead horse, lying in the ditch surrounding the town on the land side, had attracted about thirteen dogs, which we found greedily devouring what remained; the *Calmuck* having contested the prize with them a few minutes before, and helped herself to as much of the mangled carcase as she could carry away. The post-master kept a tame *suroke*, as large as a common terrier, perfectly domesticated. This animal, he told us, only remained with him one half of the year; that it constantly retired, for the other six months, to a hole in the ground, near the house, and there buried itself. Upon the approach of spring, it regularly returned to its patron; resuming its former habits, sitting upright, and begging for bread and herbs as before. It would always come to him, during the summer, when called by the name of *Wasky*; but all the bawling he could use, at the mouth of its burrow, never drew it forth in the winter season.

Iron Foundries of  
*Lugan*.

Higher up the *Danaetz*, near the spot where it receives the *Lugan*, are the *Lugan iron-works* and *cannon-foundry*, belonging to the Crown: these, at the time we travelled in the *Cossack*

territory, were under the direction of Sir *Charles Gascoigne*<sup>1</sup>. From thence the Emperor's artillery passes by water to the *Black Sea*. Sir *Charles* found very excellent coal at *Lugan*: in consequence of this discovery, and the convenience of situation for water-carriage, the foundry was there established.

CHAP.  
XII.

The remarkable appellation of the river at *Kamenskaia* has perhaps already excited philological notice. In our maps it is written *Donnez*; and in those of Germany, *Donetz*. We paid the greatest attention to the pronunciation of the natives; particularly of those *Cossack* officers who, by their education, were capable of determining the mode of orthography best suited to the manner in which the word is spoken; and always found it to be *Danaetz*, although frequently pronounced, as if a *T* was before the *D*, *Tdanaetz*, or *Tanaets*. But this is the name, or nearly so, that was given by the Antient

Etymology  
of the word  
*Tanaïs*.

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(1) The author is desirous to correct here an error of the former edition. There was nothing in the manner of Sir *Charles Gascoigne's* leaving his country, to warrant the notion entertained by some persons in *Russia* of his being exempted from the benefit of the British laws. He was formerly Director of the *Carron Works* in *Scotland*: and was solicited by the late Empress CATHERINE, through the medium of Admiral *Greig*, her First Lord of the Admiralty, to enter into her service: to this he agreed, and left *Great Britain* for *Russia* in 1786.

## DON COSSACKS.

CHAP.  
XII.

Greeks to the Don, *Tanaïs*. The reason of this may now be explained. When the word *Tanaïs* was introduced into their language, it had reference to another river, and not to the *Don*. The subject is curious; but it requires a better knowledge of the geography of the country, and better documents concerning the course of the rivers, than any map yet published can afford. We shall therefore accompany our own observations by an outline, faithfully copied from the latest surveys deposited in the Chancery at *Tcherkash*. Had it not been for the jealousy of the *Russian* police, we might have published another more extensive view of the whole territory of the *Don Cossacks*; calculated to manifest the prevailing ignorance concerning the courses of the rivers, and the general geography of all the country bordering the *Sea of Azof*. It was prepared for us, in consequence of an order from the Governor of the district, by a party of officers belonging to the *Cossack* army: but some agents of the police, apprized of the circumstance, endeavoured to excite a suspicion that we were spies, and we were not permitted to profit by their intended liberality.

In the first place, the Reader is requested, before he examines this Map, to suppose him-

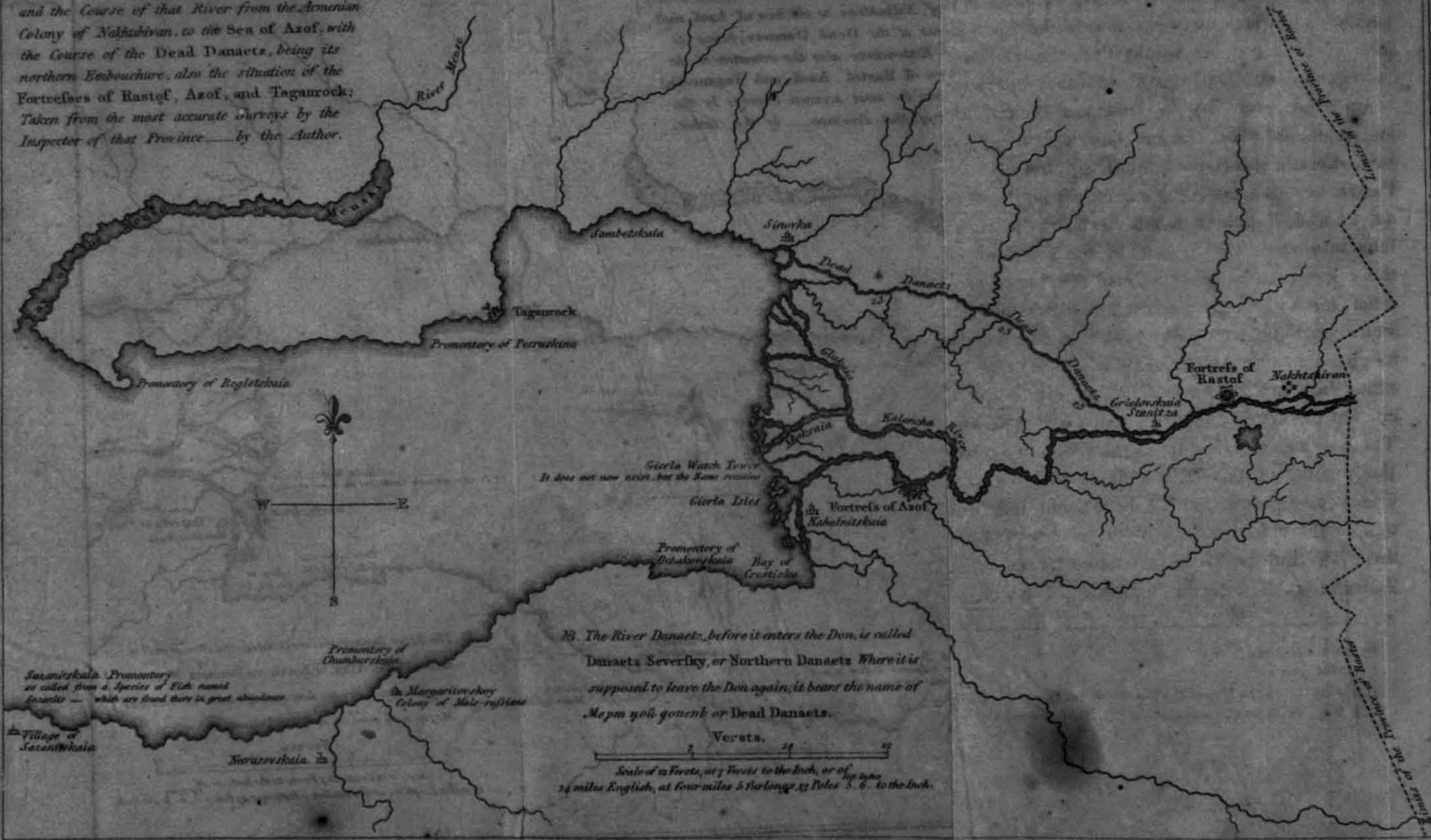


PART OF THE  
PROVINCE of RASTOF.

in the Government of

NOVOGOROD SEVERSKY:

Showing all the different Mouths of the Don,  
and the Course of that River from the Acmerian  
Colony of Nakhshivan, to the Sea of Azof, with  
the Course of the Dead Danaets, being its  
northern Embouchure, also the situation of the  
Fortresses of Rastof, Azof, and Taganrock;  
Taken from the most accurate Surveys by the  
Inspector of that Province — by the Author.



NB. The River Danaets, before it enters the Don, is called  
Danaets Seversky, or Northern Danaets. Where it is  
supposed to leave the Don again, it bears the name of  
Mepm non gonent, or Dead Danaets.

Versta.

Scale of 12 Versta, or 7 Fverts to the Inch, or of  
24 miles English, at four miles 5 furlongs 32 Poles 3. 6. to the Inch.

self entering the mouth of the *Don*, and proceeding up the river, to the distance of about ninety-nine miles<sup>1</sup> from its *embouchure*, and rather more than forty-six<sup>2</sup> above the town of *Tcherhask*. Here he would find the *Danaetz*, falling into the *Don* by two mouths separated from each other by a distance of ten or twelve miles. But the people have, for time immemorial, entertained a notion, that, before the *Danaetz* reaches the sea, it leaves the *Don* again, and, taking a north-westerly direction, falls into the *Palus Mæotis*, to the north of all the other mouths of the *Don*. This northernmost mouth of the *Don* (represented in the annexed Map<sup>3</sup>), owing to the river whose waters its channel is supposed peculiarly to contain, is called *Danaetz*, and, to express either its sluggish current or its lapse into the sea, *Dead Danaetz*. The Greeks, steering from the *Crimea* towards the mouths of the *Don*, and, as their custom was, keeping close to the shore<sup>4</sup>, entered first this northernmost mouth of the river. It bore then, as it does now, the name of *Danaetz*, *Tdanaetz*, or *Tanaetz*; it matters not which of

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(1) One hundred and forty *versts*

(2) Seventy *versts*.

(3) See Fig. 53. in the Map of the Mouths of the *Don*.

(4) It is still a mode of navigation in the *Black Sea* and the *Sea of Azof*.

CHAP. XII. these; for it will readily be admitted, that from any one of these appellations the word *Tanaïs* would be derived'. Even in the present day, the analogy between the words is so striking, that, in hearing *Tahtars* and *Cossacks* name this branch of the *Don*, particularly if uttered with quickness and volubility, it seemed as frequently pronounced *Tanaïs* as *Tanaetz*. To distinguish this branch of the *Don* from the *Danaetz*, properly so called, they add to each an epithet; the latter being called the *Northern*, and the former the *Dead Danaetz*.

Camps of  
*Calmucks*.

We traversed continued *steppes*, from *Kamenshaia*. Camps of *Calmucks* were often stationed near the road. We visited several; but obtained little information worth adding to the description before given of this people. In one of those camps, containing not more than four tents, we found women only, busied in the distillation of brandy from milk. The men were all absent; perhaps upon some predatory excursion. The women confirmed what we had heard before, concerning the materials used for distillation: having made butter, they said, they were distilling the butter-milk for brandy. We could

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(1) The change from *D* into *T*, and *vice versa*, is one of the most common modifications to which language is exposed.

hardly conceive that brandy might be so obtained; but to prove it, they tapped the still, as upon a former occasion, presenting a tuft of camel's hair soaked in brandy, that we might taste, and be convinced. During the latter part of this day's journey, we observed many dromedaries, grazing. We halted for horses at *Dubovskaia*. Immense caravans were passing towards the *Ukraine*. The very sight of their burden is sufficient to prove the importance of cultivating the *steppes*, where Nature only requires solicitation, in order to pour forth her choicest treasures. We noticed trains of from sixty to a hundred waggons, laden entirely with dried fish, to feed the inhabitants of the *South of Russia*, who might be supplied with better food from their own land than from all the rivers of the *Cossacks*.

CHAP.  
XII.

We proceeded to *Grivinskaia*, and here passed the night; having travelled sixty-eight miles<sup>2</sup> this day, notwithstanding the delays curiosity had occasioned. In the morning of *June 19th*, we came to *Tchestibaloshnia*, meeting frequent parties of *Calmucks*; and through *Tuslovskaia*, to the town of *Axay*, upon the *Don*, a settlement

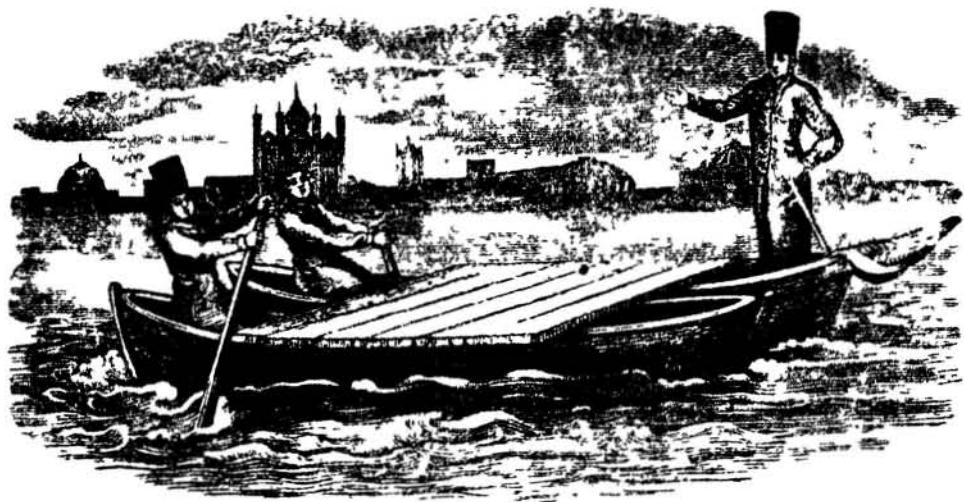
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(2) One hundred and two *versts*.

CHAP.  
XII.

belonging to the *Cossacks* of *Tcherhask*. As we drew nearer the river, the *steppes* were entirely alive with swarms of the beautiful little quadruped before described under the name of *Súslic*: some of these were white. Approaching *Áxay*, numerous camps of *Calmucks* appeared in every direction, over all the country around the town. Some of their tents were pitched close to the place. Others, more distant, covered the lofty eminences above the *Don*.





## CHAP. XIII.

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### CAPITAL OF THE DON COSSACKS.

*Arrival at Ayray—Public Entry—Reception by the Don Cossacks—Population of their Territory—View of the Den—Celebration of a Court Festival—Mode of Fasting—Analogy between the Don and the Nile—Natural Curiosities and Antiquities—Fishes—Extraordinary Appearance of Tcherkask—Inhabitants and Public Buildings—Origin of the Cossacks—Causes of their Increase—Emigrations—Foundation of their Capital—Circassians—Commerce of Tcherkask—Polished Manners of the People—Remarkable Wager—Survey of the Town—Entire Houses moved—Diseases of the People—Greek Impostor—Departure from Tcherkask.*

THE Postmaster of *Tuslovskaja* met us, as we drew near to *Ayray*. He had, without our

CHAP.  
XIII.



CHAP.  
XIII.Arrival at  
*Axay*.Public  
Entry.Reception  
by the *Don*  
*Cossacks*.

knowledge, passed us upon the road, and given very absurd notice to the inhabitants, that a great General from *England* was upon the road to the town. A party of *Cossack* cavalry, armed with very long lances, came out to meet us, and, joining our escort, took their station in the van. The Postmaster, with his drawn sabre, rode bare-headed by the carriage-side; and in this conspicuous manner we made our entry. As the annual inundation of the *Don* had laid the streets of *Tcherhash* under water, its Chancery had been removed to this place, and almost all the principal families were in *Axay*. We found the inhabitants waiting our arrival, and the *Cossack* officers drawn out to witness it. The *Ataman* of *Axay* came to us immediately; and we took care to undeceive him with regard to our supposed *generalship*. It seemed to make no alteration, either in the respect paid to us, or the welcome they were disposed to give. Every possible attention and politeness were manifested. We expressed an inclination to proceed as far as *Tcherhash* the same evening. The *Ataman* observed, that the day was far advanced; that the current of the *Don*, swoln by the inundation, was extremely rapid and turbulent; and that he could not undertake to be responsible for our safety, if we persisted in our determination. He had

already provided excellent *quarters*, in a spacious and clean apartment, with numerous windows, a balcony commanding a view of the *Don*, and every protection that an host of saints, virgins, and bishops, whose pictures covered the walls, could afford. Their General was at his country-seat, ten miles from the town<sup>1</sup>: an express was therefore sent to him, for his instructions concerning our future reception. In the mean time, sentinels were stationed at our carriage; and an officer, with *Cossack* soldiers, paraded constantly before our door. During the whole time we remained in their country, the same honours were paid to us; and although we frequently remonstrated against the confinement thus occasioned to the young officers, we never went out without finding the sentinels in waiting, and the officer at his post. The *Ataman* came frequently to offer his services; and the constant endeavour of the people seemed to be, who

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(1) "Most of the richer *Cossacks* have houses in *Tcherkask*, which they make their metropolis; but pass the greater part of their time in their farms, on the northern bank of the river. *Platof*, the *Ataman*, said he kept there two hundred brood mares. He had, however, no land in tillage, though he possessed a vineyard a little to the east of *Ary*. Of the wine produced from these vineyards, they vaunted greatly. The best always struck me as mixed with Greek wine, or raisins. The ordinary wines are very poor, and tasteless. Spirits are very cheap, and much drunk. *Platof* himself took a glass of brandy, with a spoonful of salt in it; as if brandy was hardly strong enough."

CHAP.  
XIII.

should shew us the greatest degree of kindness. Hearing us complain of the inaccuracy of the Russian maps, they brought from their Chancery (without any of those degrading suspicions which had so often insulted us) their own accurate surveys of the country, and allowed us free access, at all times, to their most authentic documents. The secretaries of the Chancery were ultimately ordered by their General to copy for us a survey of the whole territory of the *Don Cossacks*. That we were instigated to accept of the offer by any other motive than a desire of adding to the public stock of geographical knowledge, may perhaps require no proof. The Procurator<sup>1</sup> employed by the Russian Government, however, thought otherwise; it being a maxim in the policy of that country, that “to enlighten, is to betray.” This liberal intention of the hospitable *Cossacks* was therefore thwarted; although no menace of the Russian police can now prevent an acknowledgment, which would equally have been made if we had been enabled to communicate more interesting and valuable

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(1) “The *Procureur* (Procurator) is a kind of comptroller, or visitor; appointed to watch over the execution of the laws; to examine the decision of courts of justice; to visit the prisons; attend the executions, &c. He is generally a native of a different province from that wherein he is stationed. At *Tcherkask*, he is always a Russian, at least not a *Cossack*.”

*Heber's Journal.*

information to the geographers of Europe. It is some consolation that we were allowed to delineate the different channels of the *Don*, towards its *embouchure*: this will be found a faithful representation. For the rest, it may be said, the course of the *Don* itself is not accurately given in our best maps; and of the other rivers falling into it, not even the names are noticed. Those *steppes* which are described as being so desolate, and which appear like a vast geographical blank in every atlas, are filled with inhabitants. *Stanitzas* are stationed along the numerous rivers traversing them; although the common route, by not following the course of any of those rivers, afford no knowledge of the number of the people. They contain one hundred *stanitzas*, or settlements, and two hundred thousand *Cossack* inhabitants<sup>2</sup>. Of this number, thirty-five thousand are in arms. There are also, in the territory of the *Don Cossacks*, thirty thousand *Calmuks*: five thousand bearing arms, as persons who are ready at all times for actual service. The last are not permitted to leave the country, although it be extraordinary how persons of their vagrant inclination and habits

Population  
of their  
Territory.

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(2) For a further account of their population, see the *Note*, extracted from *Mr. Heber's MS. Journal*, in a subsequent page, containing much valuable information.

CHAP.  
XIII.

can be restrained. It was before said of the *Cossacks*, that they are attached to the *Calmucks*, and even intermarry with them; but a *Calmuck* can never be taught to endure a domestic life. If compelled to live within walls, he would die of the spleen; and always exhibits uneasiness if there be any disposition towards confining him in a house.

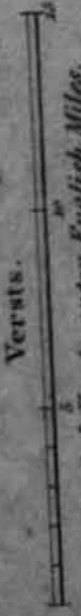
View of  
the *Don*.

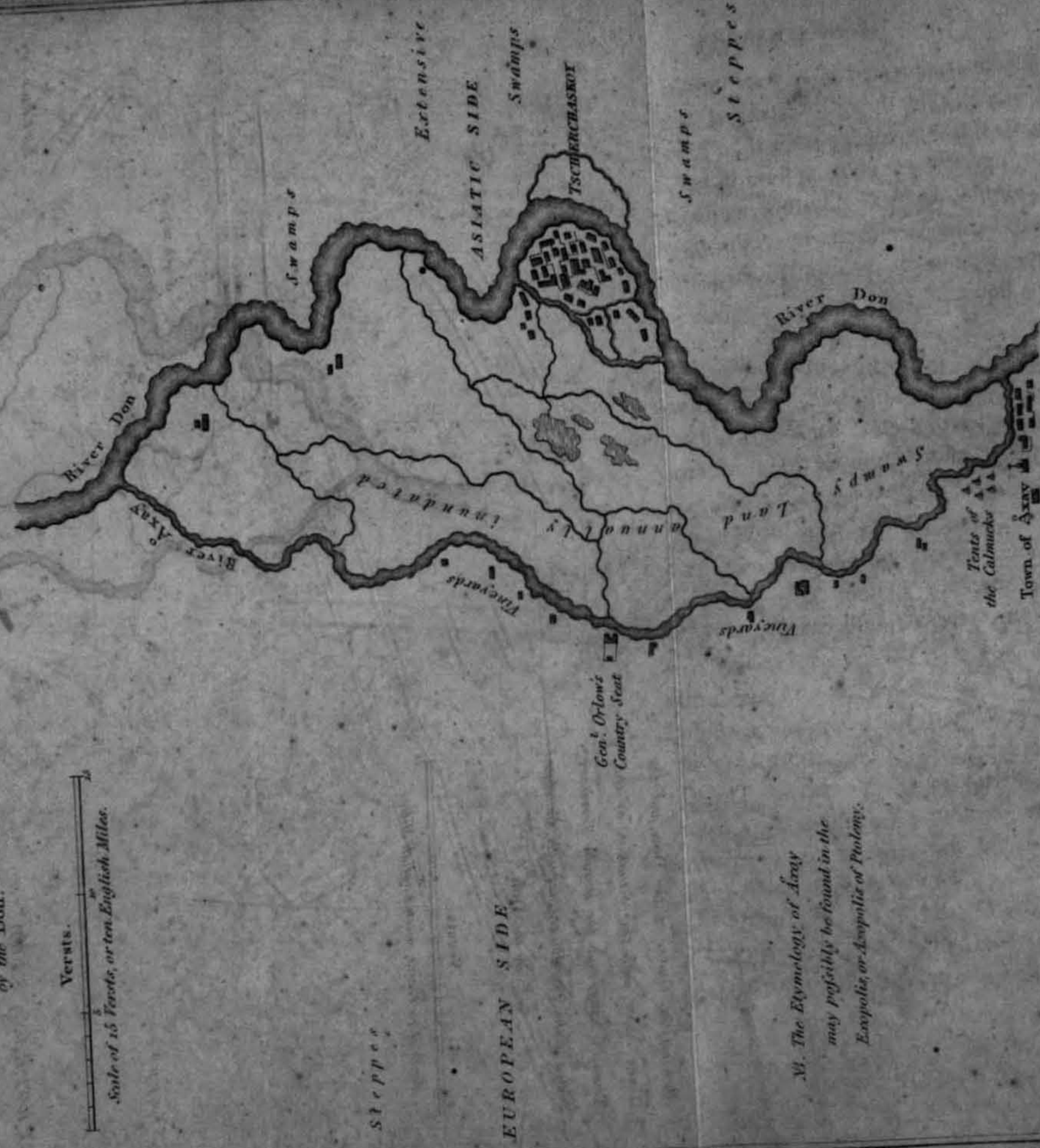
We had never beheld an acre of *Asiatic* territory; therefore the land upon the south side of the *Don*, although it consisted of flat and dreary marshes, afforded to us an interesting prospect. From our balcony we had a commanding view of the river: it appeared broad and rapid, extending towards those marshes. At a distance eastward, we beheld *Tcherhash*, with its numerous spires, rising, as it were, out of the water. Upon the *European* side we observed a neighbouring *stanitza* of considerable magnitude, stationed, like *Áxay*, upon a lofty eminence above the water. The name *Áxay* is a *Tahtar* word, signifying *white water*. The *Don*, in this part of its course, exhibits two colours. Near to *Áxay* it appears white, because it is here shallow. A similar appearance may be observed from the Castle of *Coblentz* in *Germany*, where the *Moselle* falls into the *Rhine*: for some distance after the junction, the two rivers appear



Plan of the  
Island and Town of TSCHERCHASKOY  
the Capital of the

DON Cossacks,  
Shewing the Course of the Don, and the  
River Äxay with the Situation of the  
Town of Äxay, and the marshy Territory  
between the two Rivers, annually inundated  
by the Don.

Versts.   
Scale of 15 Versts, or ten English Miles.



At. The Etymology of Äxay  
may possibly be found in the  
Enxopolis, or Asxopolis of Ptolemy.



flowing parallel to each other; exhibiting a distinct and different colour which is peculiar to the respective water of each current. In the shallows of the *Don*, the *Typha palustris* flourishes luxuriantly. We found the inhabitants of *Axay*, and afterwards those of *Tcherhask*, devouring this plant raw, with as much avidity as if this article of diet had been connected with some religious observance. The stalks appeared in all the streets, and in every house, bound into little fascines about three feet in length, as our gardeners bind asparagus: these bundles were hawked about, or sold in the shops. The season for eating this vegetable had just commenced. The *Cossacks*, peeling off the outer cuticle, select near the root of the plant a tender white part of the stem; which, for about the length of eighteen inches, affords a crisp, cooling, and very pleasant article of food. We ate of it heartily, and became as fond of it as were the *Cossacks*; with whom, young or old, rich or poor, it is a most favourite repast. The taste is somewhat insipid; but in hot climates, this cool and pleasant vegetable would be highly esteemed. The *Cossack* officers, however, who had been in other countries, said that it is only fit for food when it grows in the marshes of the *Don*.

CHAP.  
XIII.Celebration of a  
Court  
Festival.

The morning after our arrival, the General, who was Commander-in-chief over all the district, including the town of *Tcherhask*, as the metropolis, came to *Axay*. The day was to be celebrated as a festival, in honour of the recovery of one of the Emperor's children from the small-pox inoculation. He invited us to dinner; and in the forenoon we accompanied him, with all the staff-officers, to a public ceremony in the church. Entering this building, we were much surprised by its internal magnificence. The screen of the altar was painted of a green colour, and adorned with gold: before it was suspended a very large chandelier, filled with tapers of green wax. This screen, and all the interior of the church, were covered with pictures; some of them being tolerably well executed, and all of them curious, owing to their singularity, and to the extraordinary figures they served to represent. Here were no seats, as in other *Russian* churches. The General placed himself against a wall on the right hand facing the sacristy, standing upon a step covered with a carpet, which was raised about four inches from the level of the floor. We were directed to place ourselves by his right hand. The other *Cossacks*, whether in military or civil dresses, stood promiscuously in the body of the church.

The priest, in very rich robes, with his back towards the people, was elevated upon a kind of throne, placed beneath the chandelier, and raised three steps from the platform, facing the great doors of the sacristy, which were shut. Over these doors there was a picture of the *Virgin*; and before it, suspended by a string, were two wooden angels, joined back to back, like the figures of *Janus*, bearing candles in their hands. Whenever the doors of the sacristy were thrown open, the wooden angels were lowered before the centre of the entrance: here they were whirled about in a most ludicrous manner.

As soon as the ceremony commenced, the priest, standing upon the throne, loosened a girdle, bound across his breast and shoulders, whereon was an embroidered representation of the cross. This he held between his forefinger and thumb, repeating the service aloud, and touching his forehead with it; while the people chaunted responses, and were busied in crossing themselves. The vocal part of the ceremony was very solemn. The clear shrill voices of children placed among the choristers, reaching to the dome of the church, and seeming to die away in the air, had a most pleasing effect. It is the same in all the *Russian* churches;

CHAP.  
XIII.

and perhaps there is nothing with which it may be more aptly compared than the sounds produced by an *Æolian* harp. The words they use are *Russian*; and these are everywhere the same, "*Lord have mercy upon us!*"<sup>1</sup> We did not find them altered even among the *Cossacks*; it was still "*Ghospodi pomilui!*" but trilled

"In notes with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out."

At last there was an interval of silence: after this, other voices, chaunting solemn airs, were heard within the sacristy. The doors were then thrown open; and a priest, bearing upon his head a silver chalice, containing the consecrated bread, covered with a white napkin, made his appearance. He was preceded by others, who advanced with censers, dispersing incense over the doors of the sacristy, the pictures, the priests, the General, the officers, and the people. After some other ceremonies, bread was distributed among the congregation: then those who came out of the sacristy having retired, its doors were again closed, and prayers were read for all the Royal family;

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(1) It is an antient Heathen prayer. *Vossius* says that *Κύριε ἰλίσσον* was a usual form of prayer among the Gentiles as well as the Jews. So *Arrian*, *Τὸν Θεὸν ἱπικαλούμενος, δέόμεθα αὐτοῦ, Κύριε ἰλίσσον*. "*Calling upon God, we pray, Lord have mercy upon us!*" *Arrian. Epict. lib. ii. c. 7.*

their names being enumerated in a tone of voice and manner resembling that of a corporal or a serjeant at a roll-call. Passages were also read from the Psalms; but the method of reading, in *Russian* churches, cannot easily be described. The young priests who officiate, pride themselves upon mouthing it over with all possible expedition, so as to be unintelligible, even to the *Russians*; striving to give to a whole lesson the appearance of a single word of numberless syllables. Some notion may be formed of this bruiting, by hearing the crier in one of our courts of justice, when he administers the oath to a jury.

CHAP.  
XIII.

The dinner given by the General, after this ceremony, served to prove, that among *Cossacks*, as elsewhere, religious abstinence by no means implies privation as to eating and drinking. We were taught to expect a meagre diet; but we found the table covered with all sorts of fish, with tureens of sterlet soup, with the rich wines of the *Don*, and with copious goblets of delicious hydromel or mead, flavoured by juices of different fruits. We took this opportunity to request the General's permission to open one of the *tumuli* in the neighbourhood. It was granted, and an order was given for thirty of the *Cossack* soldiers to assist us in the under-

Mode of  
fasting.

CHAP.  
XIII.

taking: but afterwards, when we had assembled our workmen, an alarm was spread, and speedily increased, by the observations of an ignorant physician, that the plague might be thus communicated to the people: in consequence of which we were forced to abandon the design. Several of the *Cossacks*, nevertheless, assured us that they had formerly opened several mounds; and affirmed that they had found in them bones of men and of horses. Sometimes, they said, (and this, if true, would be indeed remarkable,) that gun-barrels were discovered in these tombs, exhibiting very antient workmanship. A *Cossack* officer shewed to us a very extraordinary weapon of this nature, which he declared had been discovered in one of the mounds in the *steppes*. But, notwithstanding all that may be urged concerning any knowledge which the *Chinese* and *Oriental hordes* are supposed to have possessed of gun-powder before its use in Europe, it must appear evident that such weapons were derived from the inhabitants of *Poland*, who employed them with matchlocks; yet the officer alluded to had no motive for deviating from truth. Other things, (such as vessels of *terra-cotta*, and instruments of war, common to antient nations,) said to have been found in these heaps, are more consistent with probability.



In the evening of this day we embarked upon the *Don* for *Tcherkash*, accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel *Alexi Gregorivitch Papof*. To this officer we were indebted for instances of hospitality and polite attention, such as strangers might vainly expect in more enlightened cities of Europe. His education had been liberal, although received in the marshes of the *Don*; and his accomplishments might have graced the most refined society, although acquired among the natives of *Tcherkash*<sup>1</sup>.

In almost all its characteristics, the *Don* bears resemblance to the *Nile*. It has the same regular annual inundation, which covers a

Analogy  
between  
the *Don*  
and the  
*Nile*.

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(1) Colonel *Papof* has since published an account of the *Don Cossacks*, in a work which was printed at *Charkof* in 1814. Mr. *Heber*, in his observations on *Aray*, has offered a genuine tribute to the enlightened minds of the *Cossacks* of the *Don*. "There is here a very decent *Kabak*, with a billiard-table, and a room adorned with many German engravings; and one English print, that of The Death of Chevalier Bayard. The *Cossacks*, having never heard of the *Chevalier sans reproche*, called it The Death of Darius. On my asking if Bourbon was *Alexandro Macedonsky*, they answered, to my surprise, that he was not present at the death of Darius, and shewed themselves well skilled in his history, which one would hardly expect." *Heber's MS. Journal*.

"Education among the *Cossacks* is not so low as is generally thought, and it improves daily. All the children of officers are sent to the academy of *Tcherkash*, and learn French, German, &c. It was holiday-time when we were there; but their progress was well spoken of." *Ibid*.

great extent of territory. Over this we now passed by water to *Tcherkash*. The water retires in the month of *July* or *August*. The same aquatic plants are found in both rivers; tall flags, reeds, and bulrushes, sometimes rising to the height of twenty feet. The manner of their entrance into the sea, by several mouths, is also the same; forming small islands, as in the *Delta*, with fens and morasses. Both one and the other serve as boundaries to two principal quarters of the globe. When the waters retire, the astonishing variety of insects might induce a zealous entomologist to visit the *Don*, if it were only on their account. During the inundation, when the waters were at the highest, we observed above thirty different kinds of flies, at the same instant, upon the tables of our apartment. Many of these we collected, but they were too much injured in the subsequent journey to be delineated. The whole course of the *Don* is about six hundred and sixty-six miles<sup>1</sup>. It rises near *Tula*, in a lake called *Ivan Ozero*, or *St. John's Sea*. Below *Woronetz*, it is from three hundred to six hundred fathoms broad; and of sufficient depth for ships of burthen, from the middle of *April* to

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(1) One thousand *versts*.