

De Quincey's Revolt of the Tartars eBook

De Quincey's Revolt of the Tartars by Thomas de Quincey

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

De Quincey's Revolt of the Tartars eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	8
Page 4.....	9
Page 5.....	10
Page 6.....	11
Page 7.....	12
Page 8.....	13
Page 9.....	14
Page 10.....	15
Page 11.....	16
Page 12.....	18
Page 13.....	19
Page 14.....	20
Page 15.....	21
Page 16.....	22
Page 17.....	23
Page 18.....	24
Page 19.....	25
Page 20.....	26
Page 21.....	27
Page 22.....	28



[Page 23..... 29](#)

[Page 24..... 30](#)

[Page 25..... 31](#)

[Page 26..... 32](#)

[Page 27..... 33](#)

[Page 28..... 34](#)

[Page 29..... 35](#)

[Page 30..... 36](#)

[Page 31..... 37](#)

[Page 32..... 38](#)

[Page 33..... 39](#)

[Page 34..... 40](#)

[Page 35..... 41](#)

[Page 36..... 42](#)

[Page 37..... 43](#)

[Page 38..... 44](#)

[Page 39..... 45](#)

[Page 40..... 46](#)

[Page 41..... 47](#)

[Page 42..... 48](#)

[Page 43..... 49](#)

[Page 44..... 50](#)

[Page 45..... 51](#)

[Page 46..... 52](#)

[Page 47..... 53](#)

[Page 48..... 54](#)



Page 49..... 55
Page 50..... 56
Page 51..... 57
Page 52..... 58
Page 53..... 59
Page 54..... 61
Page 55..... 62
Page 56..... 63
Page 57..... 64
Page 58..... 65
Page 59..... 66
Page 60..... 67
Page 61..... 68
Page 62..... 70
Page 63..... 72
Page 64..... 74
Page 65..... 76
Page 66..... 78
Page 67..... 80
Page 68..... 82
Page 69..... 83
Page 70..... 85
Page 71..... 87



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
INTRODUCTION.		1
FOOTNOTES:		11
HOW TO READ DE QUINCEY.		11
REVOLT OF THE TARTARS;		12
FOOTNOTES:		53
NOTES.		54
FOOTNOTES:		69
ADVERTISEMENTS		69
THE ATHENAEUM PRESS SERIES		70
THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES ARE NOW READY:		70



Page 1

INTRODUCTION.

Thomas De Quincey is one of the eccentric figures in English literature. Popularly he is known as the English Opium-Eater and as the subject of numerous anecdotes which emphasize the oddities of his temperament and the unconventionality of his habits. That this man of distinguished genius was the victim—pitifully the victim—of opium is the lamentable fact; that he was morbidly shy and shunned intercourse with all except a few intimate, congenial friends; that he was comically indifferent to the fashion of his dress; that he was the most unpractical and childlike of men; that he was often betrayed, because of these peculiarities, into many ridiculous embarrassments, such as are described by Mr. Findlay, Mr. Hogg, and Mr. Burton,—of all this there can be no doubt; but these idiosyncrasies are, after all, of minor importance, the accidents, not the essentials in the life and personality of this remarkable man. The points that should attract our notice, the qualities that really give distinction to De Quincey, are the broad sweep of his knowledge, almost unlimited in its scope and singularly accurate in its details, a facility of phrasing and a word supply that transformed the mere power of discriminating expression into a fine art, and a style that, while it lapsed occasionally from the standard of its own excellence, was generally self-corrective and frequently forsook the levels of commonplace excellence for the highest reaches of impassioned prose. Nor is this all. His pages do not lack in humor—humor of the truest and most delicate type; and if De Quincey is at times impelled beyond the bounds of taste, even these excursions demonstrate his power, at least in handling the grotesque. His sympathies, however, are always genuine, and often are profound. The pages of his autobiographic essays reveal the strength of his affections, while in the interpretation of such a character as that of Joan of Arc, or in allusions like those to the pariahs,—defenceless outcasts from society, by whose wretched lot his heart was often wrung,—he writes in truest pathos.

Now sympathy is own child of the imagination, whether expressed in the language of laughter or in the vernacular of tears; and the most distinctive quality in the mental make-up of De Quincey was, after all, this dominant imagination which was characteristic of the man from childhood to old age. The Opium-Eater once defined the *great scholar* as “not one who depends simply on an infinite memory, but also on an infinite and electrical power of combination, bringing together from the four winds, like the angel of the resurrection, what else were dust from dead men’s bones, into the unity of breathing life.” Such was De Quincey himself. He was a scholar born, gifted with a mind apt for the subtleties of metaphysics, a memory well-nigh inexhaustible in the recovery of facts; in one respect, at least, he was

Page 2

a *great* scholar, for his mind was dominated by an imagination as vigorous as that which created Macaulay's *England*, almost as sensitive to dramatic effect as that which painted Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Therefore when he wrote narrative, historical narrative, or reminiscence, he lived in the experiences he pictured, as great historians do; perhaps living over again the scenes of the past, or for the first time making real the details of occurrences with which he was only recently familiar.

The *Revolt of the Tartars* is a good illustration of his power. Attracted by the chance reading of an obscure French missionary and traveller to the dramatic possibilities of an episode in Russian history, De Quincey built from the bare notes thus discovered, supplemented by others drawn from a matter-of-fact German archaeologist, a narrative which for vividness of detail and truthfulness of local color belongs among the best of those classics in which fancy helps to illuminate fact, and where the imagination is invoked to recreate what one feels intuitively must have been real.

The *Revolt of the Tartars*, while not exhibiting the highest achievement of the author's power, nevertheless belongs in the group of writings wherein his peculiar excellences are fairly manifested. The obvious quality of its realism has been pointed out already; the masterly use of the principles of suspense and stimulated interest will hardly pass unnoticed. A negative excellence is the absence of that discursiveness in composition, that tendency to digress into superfluous comment, which is this author's one prevailing fault. De Quincey was gifted with a fine appreciation of harmonious sound, and in those passages where his spirit soars highest not the least of their beauties is found in the melodiousness of their tone and the rhythmic sweetness of their motion.

It is as a master of rhetoric that De Quincey is distinguished among writers. Some hints of his ability are seen in the opening and closing passages of this essay, but to find him at his best one must turn to the *Confessions* and to the other papers which describe his life, particularly those which recount his marvellous dreams. In these papers we find the passages where De Quincey's passion rises to the heights which few other writers have ever reached in prose, a loftiness and grandeur which is technically denominated as "sublime." In his *Essay on Style*, published in *Blackwood's*, 1840, he deprecates the usual indifference to form, on the part of English writers, "the tendency of the national mind to value the matter of a book not only as paramount to the manner, but even as distinct from it and as capable of a separate insulation." As one of the great masters of prose style in this century, De Quincey has so served the interests of art in this regard, that in his own case the charge is sometimes reversed: his own works are read

Page 3

rather to observe his manner than to absorb his thought. Yet when this is said, it is not to imply that the material is unworthy or the ideas unsound; on the contrary, his sentiment is true and his ideas are wholesome; but many of the topics treated lie outside the deeper interests of ordinary life, and fail to appeal to us so practically as do the writings of some lesser men. Of the "one hundred and fifty magazine articles" which comprise his works, there are many that will not claim the general interest, yet his writings as a whole will always be recognized by students of rhetoric as containing excellences which place their author among the English classics. Nor can De Quincey be accused of subordinating matter to manner; in spite of his taste for the theatrical and a tendency to extravagance, his expression is in keeping with his thought, and the material of those passages which contain his most splendid flights is appropriate to the treatment it receives. One effective reason, certainly, why we take pleasure in the mere style of De Quincey's work is because that work is so thoroughly inspired with the Opium-Eater's own genial personality, because it so unmistakably suggests that inevitable "smack of individuality" which gives to the productions of all great authors their truest distinction if not their greatest worth.

Thomas De Quincey was born in Manchester, August 15, 1785. His father was a well-to-do merchant of literary taste, but of him the children of the household scarcely knew; he was an invalid, a prey to consumption, and during their childhood made his residence mostly in the milder climate of Lisbon or the West Indies. Thomas was seven years old when his father was brought home to die, and the lad, though sensitively impressed by the event, felt little of the significance of relationship between them. Mrs. De Quincey was a somewhat stately lady, rather strict in discipline and rigid in her views. There does not seem to have been the most complete sympathy between mother and son, yet De Quincey was always reverent in his attitude, and certainly entertained a genuine respect for her intelligence and character. There were eight children in the home, four sons and four daughters; Thomas was the fifth in age, and his relations to the other members of this little community are set forth most interestingly in the opening chapters of his *Autobiographic Sketches*.

De Quincey's child life was spent in the country; first at a pretty rustic dwelling known as "The Farm," and after 1792 at a larger country house near Manchester, built by his father, and given by his mother the pleasantly suggestive name of "Greenhay," *hay* meaning hedge, or hedgerow. The early boyhood of Thomas De Quincey is of more than ordinary interest, because of the clear light it throws upon the peculiar temperament and endowments of the man. Moreover, we have the best of authority in our study of this period, namely, the author himself, who in



Page 4

the *Sketches* already mentioned, and in his most noted work, *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, has told the story of these early years in considerable detail and with apparent sincerity. De Quincey was not a sturdy boy. Shy and dreamy, exquisitely sensitive to impressions of melancholy and mystery, he was endowed with an imagination abnormally active even for a child. It is customary to give prominence to De Quincey's pernicious habit of opium-eating, in attempting to explain the grotesque fancies and weird flights of his marvellous mind in later years; yet it is only fair to emphasize the fact that the later achievements of that strange creative faculty were clearly foreshadowed in youth. For example, the earliest incident in his life that he could afterwards recall, he describes as "a remarkable dream of terrific grandeur about a favorite nurse, which is interesting to myself for this reason—that it demonstrates my dreaming tendencies to have been constitutional, and not dependent upon laudanum." [1] Again he tells us how, when six years old, upon the death of a favorite sister three years older, he stole unobserved upstairs to the death chamber; unlocking the door and entering silently, he stood for a moment gazing through the open window toward the bright sunlight of a cloudless day, then turned to behold the angel face upon the pillow. Awed in the presence of death, the meaning of which he began vaguely to understand, he stood listening to a "solemn wind" that began to blow—"the saddest that ear ever heard." What followed should appear in De Quincey's own words: "A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up forever. I, in spirit, rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft forever; and the billows seemed to pursue the throne of God; but *that* also ran on before us and fled away continually. The flight and the pursuit seemed to go on forever and ever. Frost gathering frost, some sarsar wind of death, seemed to repel me; some mighty relation between God and death dimly struggled to evolve itself from the dreadful antagonism between them; shadowy meanings even yet continued to exercise and torment, in dreams, the deciphering oracle within me. I slept—for how long I cannot say: slowly I recovered my self-possession; and, when I woke, found myself standing as before, close to my sister's bed." [2] Somewhat similar in effect were the fancies that came to this dreamy boy on Sunday mornings during service in the fine old English church. Through the wide central field of uncolored glass, set in a rich framework of gorgeous color,—for the side panes of the great windows were pictured with the stories of saints and martyrs,—the lad saw "white fleecy clouds sailing over the azure depths of the sky." Straightway the picture changed in his imagination, and visions of young children, lying on white beds of sickness and of death, rose before his eyes, ascending slowly and softly into heaven, God's arms descending from



Page 5

the heavens that He might the sooner take them to Himself and grant release. Such are not infrequently the dreams of children. De Quincey's experience is not unique; but with him imagination, the imagination of childhood, remained unimpaired through life. It was not wholly opium that made him the great dreamer of our literature, any more than it was the effect of a drug that brought from his dying lips the cry of "Sister, sister, sister!"—an echo from this sacred chamber of death, where he had stood awed and entranced nearly seventy years before.

Not all of De Quincey's boyhood, however, was passed under influences so serious and mystical as these. He was early compelled to undergo what he is pleased to call his "introduction to the world of strife." His brother William, five years the senior of Thomas, appears to have been endowed with an imagination as remarkable as his own. "His genius for mischief," says Thomas, "amounted to inspiration." Very amusing are the chronicles of the little autocracy thus despotized by William. The assumption of the young tyrant was magnificent. Along with the prerogatives and privileges of seniority, he took upon himself as well certain responsibilities more galling to his half-dozen uneasy subordinates, doubtless, than the undisputed hereditary rights of age. William constituted himself the educational guide of the nursery, proclaiming theories, delivering lectures, performing experiments, asserting opinions upon subjects diverse and erudite. Indeed, a vigorous spirit was housed in William's body, and but for his early death, this lad also might have brought lustre to the family name.

A real introduction to the world of strife came with the development of a lively feud between the two brothers on the one side, and on the other a crowd of young belligerents employed in a cotton factory on the road between Greenhay and Manchester, where the boys now attended school. Active hostilities occurred daily when the two "aristocrats" passed the factory on their way home at the hour when its inmates emerged from their labor. The dread of this encounter hung like a cloud over Thomas, yet he followed William loyally, and served with all the spirit of a cadet of the house. Imagination played an important part in this campaign, and it is for that reason primarily that to this and the other incidents of De Quincey's childhood prominence is here given; in no better way can we come to an understanding of the real nature of this singular man.

In 1796 the home at Greenhay was broken up. The irrepressible William was sent to London to study art; Mrs. De Quincey removed to Bath, and Thomas was placed in the grammar school of that town; a younger brother, Richard, in all respects a pleasing contrast to William, was a sympathetic comrade and schoolmate. For two years De Quincey remained in this school, achieving a great reputation in the study of Latin, and living a congenial, comfortable life. This



Page 6

was followed by a year in a private school at Winkfield, which was terminated by an invitation to travel in Ireland with young Lord Westport, a lad of De Quincey's own age, an intimacy having sprung up between them a year earlier at Bath. It was in 1800 that the trip was made, and the period of the visit extended over four or five months. After this long recess De Quincey was placed in the grammar school at Manchester, his guardians expecting that a three years' course in this school would bring him a scholarship at Oxford. However, the new environment proved wholly uncongenial, and the sensitive boy who, in spite of his shyness and his slender frame, possessed grit in abundance, and who was through life more or less a law to himself, made up his mind to run away. His flight was significant. Early on a July morning he slipped quietly off—in one pocket a copy of an English poet, a volume of Euripides in the other. His first move was toward Chester, the seventeen-year-old runaway deeming it proper that he should report at once to his mother, who was now living in that town. So he trudged overland forty miles and faced his astonished and indignant parent. At the suggestion of a kind-hearted uncle, just home from India, Thomas was let off easily; indeed, he was given an allowance of a guinea a week, with permission to go on a tramp through North Wales, a proposition which he hailed with delight. The next three months were spent in a rather pleasant ramble, although the weekly allowance was scarcely sufficient to supply all the comforts desired. The trip ended strangely. Some sudden fancy seizing him, the boy broke off all connection with his friends and went to London. Unknown, unprovided for, he buried himself in the vast life of the metropolis. He lived a precarious existence for several months, suffering from exposure, reduced to the verge of starvation, his whereabouts a mystery to his friends. The cloud of this experience hung darkly over his spirit, even in later manhood; perceptions of a true world of strife were vivid; impressions of these wretched months formed the material of his most sombre dreams.

Rescued at last, providentially, De Quincey spent the next period of his life, covering the years 1803-7, in residence at Oxford. His career as a student at the university is obscure. He was a member of Worcester College, was known as a quiet, studious man, and lived an isolated if not a solitary life. With a German student, who taught him Hebrew, De Quincey seems to have had some intimacy, but his circle of acquaintance was small, and no contemporary has thrown much light on his stay. In 1807 he disappeared from Oxford, having taken the written tests for his degree, but failing to present himself for the necessary oral examination.

Page 7

The year of his departure from Oxford brought to De Quincey a long-coveted pleasure—acquaintance with two famous contemporaries whom he greatly admired, Coleridge and Wordsworth. Characteristic of De Quincey in many ways was his gift, anonymously made, of £300 to his hero, Coleridge. This was in 1807, when De Quincey was twenty-two, and was master of his inheritance. The acquaintance ripened into intimacy, and in 1809 the young man, himself gifted with talents which were to make him equally famous with these, took up his residence at Grasmere, in the Lake country, occupying for many years the cottage which Wordsworth had given up on his removal to ampler quarters at Rydal Mount. Here he spent much of his time in the society of the men who were then grouped in distinguished neighborhood; besides Wordsworth and Coleridge, the poet Southey was accessible, and a frequent visitor was John Wilson, later widely known as the “Christopher North” of *Blackwood’s Magazine*. Nor was De Quincey idle; his habits of study were confirmed; indeed, he was already a philosopher at twenty-four. These were years of hard reading and industrious thought, wherein he accumulated much of that metaphysical wisdom which was afterward to win admiring recognition.

In 1816 De Quincey married Margaret Simpson, a farmer’s daughter living near. There is a pretty scene painted by the author himself,^[3] in which he gives us a glimpse of his domestic life at this time. Therein he pictures the cottage, standing in a valley, eighteen miles from any town; no spacious valley, but about two miles long by three-quarters of a mile in average width. The mountains are real mountains, between 3000 and 4000 feet high, and the cottage a real cottage, white, embowered with flowering shrubs, so chosen as to unfold a succession of flowers upon the walls, and clustering around the windows, through all the months of spring, summer, and autumn, beginning, in fact, with May roses and ending with jasmine. It is in the winter season, however, that De Quincey paints his picture, and so he describes a room, seventeen feet by twelve, and not more than seven and one-half feet high. This is the drawing-room, although it might more justly be termed the library, for it happens that books are the one form of property in which the owner is wealthy. Of these he has about 5000, collected gradually since his eighteenth year. The room is, therefore, populous with books. There is a good fire on the hearth. The furniture is plain and modest, befitting the unpretending cottage of a scholar. Near the fire stands a tea table; there are only two cups and saucers on the tray. It is an “eternal” teapot that the artist would like us to imagine, for he usually drinks tea from eight o’clock at night to four in the morning. There is, of course, a companion at the tea table, and very lovingly does the husband suggest the pleasant personality of his young wife. One other important feature is included in the scene; upon the table there rests also a decanter, in which sparkles the ruby-colored laudanum.



Page 8

De Quincey's experience with opium had begun while he was a student at the university, in 1804. It was first taken to obtain relief from neuralgia, and his use of the drug did not at once become habitual. During the period of residence at Grasmere, however, De Quincey became confirmed in the habit, and so thoroughly was he its victim that for a season his intellectual powers were well-nigh paralyzed; his mind sank under such a cloud of depression and gloom that his condition was pitiful in the extreme. Just before his marriage, in 1816, De Quincey, by a vigorous effort, partially regained his self-control and succeeded in materially reducing his daily allowance of the drug; but in the following year he fell more deeply than ever under its baneful power, until in 1818-19 his consumption of opium was something almost incredible. Thus he became truly enough the great English Opium-Eater, whose Confessions were later to fill a unique place in English literature. It was finally the absolute need of bettering his financial condition that compelled De Quincey to shake off the shackles of his vice; this he practically accomplished, although perhaps he was never entirely free from the habit. The event is coincident with the beginning of his career as a public writer. In 1820 he became a man of letters.

As a professional writer it is to be noted that De Quincey was throughout a contributor to the periodicals. With one or two exceptions all his works found their way to the public through the pages of the magazines, and he was associated as contributor with most of those that were prominent in his time. From 1821 to 1825 we find him residing for the most part in London, and here his public career began. It was De Quincey's most distinctive work which first appeared. The *London Magazine*, in its issue for September, 1821, contained the first paper of the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. The novelty of the subject was sufficient to obtain for the new writer an interested hearing, and there was much discussion as to whether his apparent frankness was genuine or assumed. All united in applause of the masterly style which distinguished the essay, also of the profundity and value of the interesting material it contained. A second part was included in the magazine for October. Other articles by the Opium-Eater followed, in which the wide scholarship of the author was abundantly shown, although the topics were of less general interest.

In 1826 De Quincey became an occasional contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, and this connection drew him to Edinburgh, where he remained, either in the city itself or in its vicinity, for the rest of his life. The grotesquely humorous *Essay on Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* appeared in *Blackwood's* in 1827. In 1832 he published a series of articles on Roman History, entitled *The Caesars*. It was in July, 1837, that the *Revolt of the Tartars* appeared; in 1840



Page 9

his critical paper upon *The Essenes*. Meanwhile De Quincey had begun contributions to *Tait's Magazine*, another Edinburgh publication, and it was in that periodical that the *Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater* began to appear in 1834, running on through several years. These sketches include the chapters on Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, and Southey as well as those *Autobiographic Sketches* which form such a charming and illuminating portion of his complete works.

The family life was sadly broken in 1837 by the death of De Quincey's wife. He who was now left as guardian of the little household of six children, was himself so helpless in all practical matters that it seemed as though he were in their childish care rather than protector of them. Scores of anecdotes are related of his odd and unpractical behavior. One of his curious habits had been the multiplication of lodgings; as books and manuscripts accumulated about him so that there remained room for no more, he would turn the key upon his possessions and migrate elsewhere to repeat the performance later on. It is known that as many as four separate rents were at one and the same time being paid by this odd, shy little man, rather than allow the disturbance or contraction of his domain. Sometimes an anxious journey in search of a manuscript had to be made by author and publisher in conjunction before the missing paper could be located. The home life of this eccentric yet lovable man of genius seems to have been always affectionate and tender in spite even of his bondage to opium; it was especially beautiful and childlike in his latest years. His eldest daughter, Margaret, assumed quietly the place of headship, and with a discretion equal to her devotion she watched over her father's welfare. With reference to De Quincey's circumstances at this time, his biographer, Mr. Masson, says: "Very soon, if left to himself, he would have taken possession of every room in the house, one after another, and 'snowed up' each with his papers; but, that having been gently prevented, he had one room to work in all day and all night to his heart's content. The evenings, or the intervals between his daily working time and his nightly working time, or stroll, he generally spent in the drawing-room with his daughters, either alone or in company with any friends that chanced to be with him. At such times, we are told, he was unusually charming. 'The newspaper was brought out, and he, telling in his own delightful way, rather than reading, the news, would, on questions from this one or that one of the party, often including young friends of his children, neighbors, or visitors from distant places, illuminate the subject with such a wealth of memories, of old stories of past or present experiences, of humor, of suggestion, even of prophecy, as by its very wealth makes it impossible to give any taste of it.' The description is by



Page 10

one of his daughters; and she adds a touch which is inimitable in its fidelity and tenderness. 'He was not,' she says, 'a reassuring man for nervous people to live with, as those nights were exceptional on which he did not set something on fire, the commonest incident being for some one to look up from book or work, to say casually, *Papa, your hair is on fire*; of which a calm *Is it, my love?* and a hand rubbing out the blaze was all the notice taken.'"[4]

Of his personal appearance Professor Minto says:

"He was a slender little man, with small, clearly chiselled features, a large head, and a remarkably high, square forehead. There was a peculiarly high and regular arch in the wrinkles of his brow, which was also slightly contracted. The lines of his countenance fell naturally into an expression of mild suffering, of endurance sweetened by benevolence, or, according to the fancy of the interpreter, of gentle, melancholy sweetness. All that met him seem to have been struck with the measured, silvery, yet somewhat hollow and unearthly tones of his voice, the more impressive that the flow of his talk was unhesitating and unbroken."

* * * * *

The literary labors were continuous. In 1845 the beautiful *Suspiria de Profundis* (Sighs from the Depths) appeared in *Blackwood's*; *The English Mail Coach* and *The Vision of Sudden Death*, in 1849. Among other papers contributed to *Tait's Magazine*, the *Joan of Arc* appeared in 1847. During the last ten years of his life, De Quincey was occupied chiefly in preparing for the publishers a complete edition of his works. Ticknor & Fields, of Boston, the most distinguished of our American publishing firms, had put forth, 1851-55, the first edition of De Quincey's collected writings, in twenty volumes. The first British edition was undertaken by Mr. James Hogg, of Edinburgh, in 1853, with the co-operation of the author, and under his direction; the final volume of this edition was not issued until the year following De Quincey's death.

In the autumn of 1859 the frail physique of the now famous Opium-Eater grew gradually feeble, although suffering from no definite disease. It became evident that his life was drawing to its end. On December 8, his two daughters standing by his side, he fell into a doze. His mind had been wandering amid the scenes of his childhood, and his last utterance was the cry, "Sister, sister, sister!" as if in recognition of one awaiting him, one who had been often in his dreams, the beloved Elizabeth, whose death had made so profound and lasting an impression on his imagination as a child.

* * * * *



Page 11

The authoritative edition of *De Quincey's Works* is that edited by David Masson and published in fourteen volumes by Adam and Charles Black (Edinburgh). For American students the *Riverside Edition*, in twelve volumes (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston), will be found convenient. The most satisfactory *Life of De Quincey* is the one by Masson in the *English Men of Letters* series. Of a more anecdotal type are the *Life of De Quincey*, by H.A. Page, whose real name is Alexander H. Japp (2 vols., New York, 1877), and *De Quincey Memorials* (New York, 1891), by the same author. Very interesting is the brief volume, *Recollections of Thomas De Quincey*, by John R. Findlay (Edinburgh, 1886), who also contributes the paper on *De Quincey* to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. *De Quincey and his Friends*, by James Hogg (London, 1895), is another volume of recollections, souvenirs, and anecdotes, which help to make real their subject's personality. Besides the editor, other writers contribute to this volume: Richard Woodhouse, John R. Findlay, and John Hill Burton, who has given under the name "Papaverius," a picturesque description of the Opium-Eater. The student should always remember that De Quincey's own chapters in the *Autobiographic Sketches*, and the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, which are among the most charming and important of his writings, are also the most authoritative and most valuable sources of our information concerning him. In reading about De Quincey, do not fail to read De Quincey himself.

The best criticism of the Opium-Eater's work is found in William Minto's *Manual of English Prose Literature* (Ginn & Co.). A shorter essay is contained in Saintsbury's *History of Nineteenth Century Literature*. A very valuable list of all De Quincey's writings, in chronological order, is given by Fred N. Scott, in his edition of De Quincey's essays on *Style, Rhetoric, and Language* (Allyn & Bacon). Numerous magazine articles may be found by referring to Poole's Index.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Autobiographic Sketches*, Chap. I.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, Part II.

[4] *De Quincey (English Men of Letters)*, David Masson, p. 110.

HOW TO READ DE QUINCEY.

"De Quincey's sixteen volumes of magazine articles are full of brain from beginning to end. At the rate of about half a volume a day, they would serve for a month's reading, and a month continuously might be worse expended. There are few courses of reading



from which a young man of good natural intelligence would come away more instructed, charmed, and stimulated, or, to express the matter as definitely as possible, with his mind more *stretched*. Good



Page 12

natural intelligence, a certain fineness of fibre, and some amount of scholarly education, have to be presupposed, indeed, in all readers of De Quincey. But, even for the fittest readers, a month's complete and continuous course of De Quincey would be too much. Better have him on the shelf, and take down a volume at intervals for one or two of the articles to which there may be an immediate attraction. An evening with De Quincey in this manner will always be profitable."

DAVID MASSON, *Life of De Quincey*, Chap. XI.

REVOLT OF THE TARTARS;

OR, FLIGHT OF THE KALMUCK KHAN AND HIS PEOPLE FROM THE RUSSIAN TERRITORIES TO THE FRONTIERS OF CHINA.

There is no great event in modern history, or, perhaps it may be said more broadly, none in all history, from its earliest records, less generally known, or more striking to the imagination, than the flight eastwards of a principal Tartar nation across the boundless steppes of Asia in the 5 latter half of the last century. The *terminus a quo* of this flight and the *terminus ad quem* are equally magnificent—the mightiest of Christian thrones being the one, the mightiest of pagan the other; and the grandeur of these two terminal objects is harmoniously supported by the 10 romantic circumstances of the flight. In the abruptness of its commencement and the fierce velocity of its execution we read an expression of the wild, barbaric character of the agents. In the unity of purpose connecting this myriad of wills, and in the blind but unerring aim at a 15 mark so remote, there is something which recalls to the mind those almighty instincts that propel the migrations of the swallow and the leeming or the life-withering marches of the locust. Then, again, in the gloomy vengeance of Russia and her vast artillery, which hung upon the rear 20 and the skirts of the fugitive vassals, we are reminded of Miltonic images—such, for instance, as that of the solitary hand pursuing through desert spaces and through ancient chaos a rebellious host, and overtaking with volleying thunders those who believed themselves already within the security of darkness and of distance.

I shall have occasion, farther on, to compare this event with other great national catastrophes as to the magnitude 5 of the suffering. But it may also challenge a comparison with similar events under another relation,—viz. as to its dramatic capabilities. Few cases, perhaps, in romance or history, can sustain a close collation with this as to the *complexity* of its separate interests. The great outline of 10 the enterprise, taken in connection with the operative motives, hidden or avowed, and the religious sanctions under which it was pursued, give to the case a triple character: 1st, That of a *conspiracy*, with as close a unity in the incidents, and as much of

Page 13

a personal interest in 15 the moving characters, with fine dramatic contrasts, as belongs to “Venice Preserved” or to the “Fiesco” of Schiller. 2dly, That of a great military expedition offering the same romantic features of vast distances to be traversed, vast reverses to be sustained, untried routes, 20 enemies obscurely ascertained, and hardships too vaguely prefigured, which mark the Egyptian expedition of Cambyses—the anabasis of the younger Cyrus, and the subsequent retreat of the ten thousand, the Parthian expeditions of the Romans, especially those of Crassus 25 and Julian—or (as more disastrous than any of them, and, in point of space, as well as in amount of forces, more extensive) the Russian anabasis and katabasis of Napoleon. 3dly, That of a religious *Exodus*, authorized by an oracle venerated throughout many nations of Asia, 30 —an Exodus, therefore, in so far resembling the great Scriptural Exodus of the Israelites, under Moses and Joshua, as well as in the very peculiar distinction of carrying along with them their entire families, women, children, slaves, their herd of cattle and of sheep, their horses and their camels.

This triple character of the enterprise naturally invests it with a more comprehensive interest; but the dramatic interest which we ascribed to it, or its fitness for a stage 5 representation, depends partly upon the marked variety and the strength of the personal agencies concerned, and partly upon the succession of scenical situations. Even the steppes, the camels, the tents, the snowy and the sandy deserts are not beyond the scale of our modern representative 10 powers, as often called into action in the theatres both of Paris and London; and the series of situations unfolded,—beginning with the general conflagration on the Wolga—passing thence to the disastrous scenes of the flight (as it *literally* was in its commencement)—to 15 the Tartar siege of the Russian fortress Koulagina—the bloody engagement with the Cossacks in the mountain passes at Ouchim—the surprisal by the Bashkirs and the advanced posts of the Russian army at Torgau—the private conspiracy at this point against the Khan—the 20 long succession of running fights—the parting massacres at the Lake of Tengis under the eyes of the Chinese—and, finally, the tragical retribution to Zebek-Dorchi at the hunting lodge of the Chinese Emperor;—all these situations communicate a *scenical* animation to the wild 25 romance, if treated dramatically; whilst a higher and a philosophic interest belongs to it as a case of authentic history, commemorating a great revolution, for good and for evil, in the fortunes of a whole people—a people semi-barbarous, but simple-hearted, and of ancient descent. 30

* * * * *



Page 14

On the 21st of January, 1761, the young Prince Oubacha assumed the sceptre of the Kalmucks upon the death of his father. Some part of the power attached to this dignity he had already wielded since his fourteenth year, in quality of Vice-Khan, by the express appointment and with the avowed support of the Russian Government. He was now about eighteen years of age, amiable in his personal character, and not without titles to respect in his public character as a sovereign prince. In times more peaceable, and amongst a people more entirely civilized or more humanized by religion, it is even probable that he might have discharged his high duties with considerable distinction; but his lot was thrown upon stormy 10 times, and a most difficult crisis amongst tribes whose native ferocity was exasperated by debasing forms of superstition, and by a nationality as well as an inflated conceit of their own merit absolutely unparalleled; whilst the circumstances of their hard and trying position under 15 the jealous *surveillance* of an irresistible lord paramount, in the person of the Russian Czar, gave a fiercer edge to the natural unamiableness of the Kalmuck disposition, and irritated its gloomier qualities into action under the restless impulses of suspicion and permanent distrust. No 20 prince could hope for a cordial allegiance from his subjects or a peaceful reign under the circumstances of the case; for the dilemma in which a Kalmuck ruler stood at present was of this nature: *wanting* the support and sanction of the Czar, he was inevitably too weak from 25 without to command confidence from his subjects or resistance to his competitors. On the other hand, *with* this kind of support, and deriving his title in any degree from the favor of the Imperial Court, he became almost in that extent an object of hatred at home and within the 30 whole compass of his own territory. He was at once an object of hatred for the past, being a living monument of national independence ignominiously surrendered; and an object of jealousy for the future, as one who had already advertised himself to be a fitting tool for the ultimate purposes (whatsoever those might prove to be) of the Russian Court. Coming himself to the Kalmuck sceptre under the heaviest weight of prejudice from the unfortunate circumstances of his position, it might have been 5 expected that Oubacha would have been pre-eminently an object of detestation; for, besides his known dependence upon the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, the direct line of succession had been set aside, and the principle of inheritance violently suspended, in favor of his own 10 father, so recently as nineteen years before the era of his own accession, consequently within the lively remembrance of the existing generation. He, therefore, almost equally with his father, stood within the full current of the national prejudices,

Page 15

and might have anticipated the 15 most pointed hostility. But it was not so: such are the caprices in human affairs that he was even, in a moderate sense, popular—a benefit which wore the more cheering aspect and the promises of permanence, inasmuch as he owed it exclusively to his personal qualities of kindness 20 and affability, as well as to the beneficence of his government. On the other hand, to balance this unlooked-for prosperity at the outset of his reign, he met with a rival in popular favor—almost a competitor—in the person of Zebek-Dorchi, a prince with considerable pretensions to 25 the throne, and, perhaps it might be said, with equal pretensions. Zebek-Dorchi was a direct descendant of the same royal house as himself, through a different branch. On public grounds, his claim stood, perhaps, on a footing equally good with that of Oubacha, whilst his personal 30 qualities, even in those aspects which seemed to a philosophical observer most odious and repulsive, promised the most effectual aid to the dark purposes of an intriguer or a conspirator, and were generally fitted to win a popular support precisely in those points where Oubacha was most defective. He was much superior in external appearance to his rival on the throne, and so far better qualified to win the good opinion of a semi-barbarous people; whilst his dark intellectual qualities of Machiavelian 5 dissimulation, profound hypocrisy, and perfidy which knew no touch of remorse, were admirably calculated to sustain any ground which he might win from the simple-hearted people with whom he had to deal and from the frank carelessness of his unconscious competitor. 10

At the very outset of his treacherous career, Zebek-Dorchi was sagacious enough to perceive that nothing could be gained by open declaration of hostility to the reigning prince: the choice had been a deliberate act on the part of Russia, and Elizabeth Petrowna was not the 15 person to recall her own favors with levity or upon slight grounds. Openly, therefore, to have declared his enmity toward his relative on the throne, could have had no effect but that of arming suspicions against his own ulterior purposes in a quarter where it was most essential to his 20 interest that, for the present, all suspicions should be hoodwinked. Accordingly, after much meditation, the course he took for opening his snares was this:—He raised a rumor that his own life was in danger from the plots of several Saissang (that is, Kalmuck nobles), who 25 were leagued together under an oath to assassinate him; and immediately after, assuming a well-counterfeited alarm, he fled to Tcherkask, followed by sixty-five tents. From this place he kept up a correspondence with the Imperial Court, and, by way of soliciting his cause more 30 effectually, he soon repaired in person to St. Petersburg. Once admitted to personal conferences with the cabinet,



Page 16

he found no difficulty in winning over the Russian councils to a concurrence with some of his political views, and thus covertly introducing the point of that wedge which was finally to accomplish his purposes. In particular, he persuaded the Russian Government to make a very important alteration in the constitution of the Kalmuck State Council which in effect reorganized the whole political condition of the state and disturbed the balance of power as previously adjusted. Of this council—in the Kalmuck language called Sarga—there were eight members, called Sargatchi; and hitherto it had been the custom that these eight members should be entirely subordinate to the Khan; holding, in fact, the ministerial character of secretaries and assistants, but in no respect ranking as co-ordinate authorities. That had produced some inconveniences in former reigns; and it was easy for Zebek-Dorchi to point the jealousy of the Russian Court to others more serious which might arise in future circumstances of war or other contingencies. It was resolved, therefore, to place the Sargatchi henceforward on a footing of perfect independence, and, therefore (as regarded responsibility), on a footing of equality with the Khan. Their independence, however, had respect only to their own sovereign; for toward Russia they were placed in a new attitude of direct duty and accountability by the creation in their favor of small pensions (300 roubles a year), which, however, to a Kalmuck of that day were more considerable than might be supposed, and had a further value as marks of honorary distinction emanating from a great empress. Thus far the purposes of Zebek-Dorchi were served effectually for the moment: but, apparently, it was only for the moment; since, in the further development of his plots, this very dependency upon Russian influence would be the most serious obstacle in his way. There was, however, another point carried, which outweighed all inferior considerations, as it gave him a power of setting aside discretionally whatsoever should arise to disturb his plots: he was himself appointed President and Controller of the Sargatchi. The Russian Court had been aware of his high pretensions by birth, and hoped by this promotion to satisfy the ambition which, in some degree, was acknowledged to be a reasonable passion for any man occupying his situation.

Having thus completely blindfolded the Cabinet of Russia, Zebek-Dorchi proceeded in his new character to fulfil his political mission with the Khan of the Kalmucks. So artfully did he prepare the road for his favorable reception at the court of this prince that he was at once and universally welcomed as a public benefactor. The pensions of the councillors were so much additional wealth poured into the Tartar exchequer; as to the ties of dependency thus created, experience had



Page 17

not yet enlightened these simple tribes as to that result. And that he himself should be the chief of these mercenary councillors was so far from being charged upon Zebek as any offence or any ground of suspicion, that his relative the Khan returned him hearty thanks for his services, under the belief that he could have accepted this appointment only with a view to keep out other and more unwelcome pretenders, who would not have had the same motives of consanguinity or friendship for executing its duties in a spirit of kindness to the Kalmucks. The first use which he made of his new functions about the Khan's person was to attack the Court of Russia, by a romantic villainy not easily to be credited, for those very acts of interference with the council which he himself had prompted. This was a dangerous step: but it was indispensable to his farther advance upon the gloomy path which he had traced out for himself. A triple vengeance was what he meditated: 1, upon the Russian Cabinet, for having undervalued his own pretensions to the throne; 2, upon his amiable rival, for having supplanted him; and 3, upon all those of the nobility who had manifested their sense of his weakness by their neglect or their sense of his perfidious character by their suspicions. Here was a colossal outline of wickedness; and by one in his situation, feeble (as it might seem) for the accomplishment of its humblest parts, how was the total edifice to be reared in its comprehensive grandeur? He, a worm as he was, could he venture to assail the mighty behemoth of Muscovy, the potentate who counted three hundred languages around the footsteps of his throne, and from whose "lion ramp" recoiled alike "baptized and infidel"—Christendom on the one side, strong by her intellect and her organization, and the "barbaric East" on the other, with her unnumbered numbers? The match was a monstrous one; but in its very monstrosity there lay this germ of encouragement—that it could not be suspected. The very hopelessness of the scheme grounded his hope; and he resolved to execute a vengeance which should involve as it were, in the unity of a well-laid tragic fable, all whom he judged to be his enemies. That vengeance lay in detaching from the Russian empire the whole Kalmuck nation and breaking up that system of intercourse which had thus far been beneficial to both. This last was a consideration which moved him but little. True it was that Russia to the Kalmucks had secured lands and extensive pasturage; true it was that the Kalmucks reciprocally to Russia had furnished a powerful cavalry; but the latter loss would be part of his triumph, and the former might be more than compensated in other climates, under other sovereigns. Here was a scheme which, in its final accomplishment, would avenge him bitterly on the Czarina, and in the course of



Page 18

its accomplishment might furnish him with ample occasions for removing his other enemies. It may be readily supposed, indeed, that he who could deliberately raise his eyes to the Russian autocrat as an antagonist 5 in single duel with himself was not likely to feel much anxiety about Kalmuck enemies of whatever rank. He took his resolution, therefore, sternly and irrevocably, to effect this astonishing translation of an ancient people across the pathless deserts of Central Asia, intersected continually by rapid rivers rarely furnished with bridges, 10 and of which the fords were known only to those who might think it for their interest to conceal them, through many nations inhospitable or hostile: frost and snow around them (from the necessity of commencing their flight in winter), famine in their front, and the sabre, or 15 even the artillery of an offended and mighty empress hanging upon their rear for thousands of miles. But what was to be their final mark—the port of shelter after so fearful a course of wandering? Two things were evident: it must be some power at a great distance from Russia, 20 so as to make return even in that view hopeless, and it must be a power of sufficient rank to insure them protection from any hostile efforts on the part of the Czarina for reclaiming them or for chastising their revolt. Both conditions were united obviously in the person of Kien 25 Long, the reigning Emperor of China, who was further recommended to them by his respect for the head of their religion. To China, therefore, and, as their first rendezvous, to the shadow of the Great Chinese Wall, it was settled by Zebek that they should direct their flight. 30

Next came the question of time—*when* should the flight commence? and, finally, the more delicate question as to the choice of accomplices. To extend the knowledge of the conspiracy too far was to insure its betrayal to the Russian Government. Yet, at some stage of the preparations, it was evident that a very extensive confidence must be made, because in no other way could the mass of the Kalmuck population be persuaded to furnish their families with the requisite equipments for so long a 5 migration. This critical step, however, it was resolved to defer up to the latest possible moment, and, at all events, to make no general communication on the subject until the time of departure should be definitely settled. In the meantime, Zebek admitted only three 10 persons to his confidence; of whom Oubacha, the reigning prince, was almost necessarily one; but him, for his yielding and somewhat feeble character, he viewed rather in the light of a tool than as one of his active accomplices. Those whom (if anybody) he admitted to an unreserved 15 participation in his counsels were two only: the great Lama among the Kalmucks, and his own father-in-law, Erempel, a ruling prince of some tribe in the neighborhood

Page 19

of the Caspian Sea, recommended to his favor not so much by any strength of talent corresponding to 20 the occasion as by his blind devotion to himself and his passionate anxiety to promote the elevation of his daughter and his son-in-law to the throne of a sovereign prince. A titular prince Zebek already was: but this dignity, without the substantial accompaniment of a sceptre, 25 seemed but an empty sound to both of these ambitious rebels. The other accomplice, whose name was Loosang-Dchaltzan, and whose rank was that of Lama, or Kalmuck pontiff, was a person of far more distinguished pretensions; he had something of the same 30 gloomy and terrific pride which marked the character of Zebek himself, manifesting also the same energy, accompanied by the same unfaltering cruelty, and a natural facility of dissimulation even more profound. It was by this man that the other question was settled as to the time for giving effect to their designs. His own pontifical character had suggested to him that, in order to strengthen their influence with the vast mob of simple-minded 5 men whom they were to lead into a howling wilderness, after persuading them to lay desolate their own ancient hearths, it was indispensable that they should be able, in cases of extremity, to plead the express sanction of God for their entire enterprise. This could only be done by addressing themselves to the great head of 10 their religion, the Dalai-Lama of Tibet. Him they easily persuaded to countenance their schemes: and an oracle was delivered solemnly at Tibet, to the effect that no ultimate prosperity would attend this great Exodus unless it were pursued through the years of the *tiger* and the 15 *hare*. Now the Kalmuck custom is to distinguish their years by attaching to each a denomination taken from one of twelve animals, the exact order of succession being absolutely fixed, so that the cycle revolves of course through a period of a dozen years. Consequently, if the 20 approaching year of the *tiger* were suffered to escape them, in that case the expedition must be delayed for twelve years more; within which period, even were no other unfavorable changes to arise, it was pretty well foreseen that the Russian Government would take most 25 effectual means for bridling their vagrant propensities by a ring-fence of forts or military posts; to say nothing of the still readier plan for securing their fidelity (a plan already talked of in all quarters) by exacting a large body of hostages selected from the families of the most influential 30 nobles. On these cogent considerations, it was solemnly determined that this terrific experiment should be made in the next year of the *tiger*, which happened to fall upon the Christian year 1771. With respect to the month, there was, unhappily for the Kalmucks, even less latitude allowed to their choice than with



Page 20

respect to the year. It was absolutely necessary, or it was thought so, that the different divisions of the nation, which pastured their flocks on both banks of the Wolga, should have the 5 means of effecting an instantaneous junction, because the danger of being intercepted by flying columns of the imperial armies was precisely the greatest at the outset. Now, from the want of bridges or sufficient river craft for transporting so vast a body of men, the sole means 10 which could be depended upon (especially where so many women, children, and camels were concerned) was *ice*; and this, in a state of sufficient firmness, could not be absolutely counted upon before the month of January. Hence it happened that this astonishing Exodus of a 15 whole nation, before so much as a whisper of the design had begun to circulate amongst those whom it most interested, before it was even suspected that any man's wishes pointed in that direction, had been definitely appointed for January of the year 1771. And almost up to the 20 Christmas of 1770 the poor simple Kalmuck herdsmen and their families were going nightly to their peaceful beds without even dreaming that the *fiat* had already gone forth from their rulers which consigned those quiet abodes, together with the peace and comfort which reigned 25 within them, to a withering desolation, now close at hand.

Meantime war raged on a great scale between Russia and the Sultan; and, until the time arrived for throwing off their vassalage, it was necessary that Oubacha should 30 contribute his usual contingent of martial aid. Nay, it had unfortunately become prudent that he should contribute much more than his usual aid. Human experience gives ample evidence that in some mysterious and unaccountable way no great design is ever agitated, no matter how few or how faithful may be the participators, but that some presentiment—some dim misgiving—is kindled amongst those whom it is chiefly important to blind. And, however it might have happened, certain it 5 is that already, when as yet no syllable of the conspiracy had been breathed to any man whose very existence was not staked upon its concealment, nevertheless some vague and uneasy jealousy had arisen in the Russian Cabinet as to the future schemes of the Kalmuck Khan: and 10 very probable it is that, but for the war then raging, and the consequent prudence of conciliating a very important vassal, or, at least, of abstaining from what would powerfully alienate him, even at that moment such measures would have been adopted as must forever have intercepted 15 the Kalmuck schemes. Slight as were the jealousies of the Imperial Court, they had not escaped the Machiavelian eyes of Zebek and the Lama. And under their guidance, Oubacha, bending to the circumstances of the moment, and meeting the jealousy of the Russian 20 Court with a policy corresponding to their own, strove by unusual zeal to efface the Czarina's unfavorable impressions. He enlarged the scale of his contributions, and *that* so prodigiously that he absolutely carried to headquarters a force of 35,000 cavalry, fully equipped: some 25 go further, and rate the amount beyond 40,000; but the smaller estimate is, at all events, *within* the truth.



Page 21

With this magnificent array of cavalry, heavy as well as light, the Khan went into the field under great expectations; and these he more than realized. Having the 30 good fortune to be concerned with so ill-organized and disorderly a description of force as that which at all times composed the bulk of a Turkish army, he carried victory along with his banners; gained many partial successes; and at last, in a pitched battle, overthrew the Turkish force opposed to him, with a loss of 5000 men left upon the field.

These splendid achievements seemed likely to operate in various ways against the impending revolt. Oubacha 5 had now a strong motive, in the martial glory acquired, for continuing his connection with the empire in whose service he had won it, and by whom only it could be fully appreciated. He was now a great marshal of a great empire, one of the Paladins around the imperial throne; 10 in China he would be nobody, or (worse than that) a mendicant alien, prostrate at the feet, and soliciting the precarious alms, of a prince with whom he had no connection. Besides, it might reasonably be expected that the Czarina, grateful for the really efficient aid given by the Tartar 15 prince, would confer upon him such eminent rewards as might be sufficient to anchor his hopes upon Russia, and to wean him from every possible seduction. These were the obvious suggestions of prudence and good sense to every man who stood neutral in the case. But they were 20 disappointed. The Czarina knew her obligations to the Khan, but she did not acknowledge them. Wherefore? That is a mystery perhaps never to be explained. So it was, however. The Khan went unhonored; no *ukase* ever proclaimed his merits; and, perhaps, had he even 25 been abundantly recompensed by Russia, there were others who would have defeated these tendencies to reconciliation. Erempel, Zebek, and Loosang the Lama were pledged life-deep to prevent any accommodation; and their efforts were unfortunately seconded by those of 30 their deadliest enemies. In the Russian Court there were at that time some great nobles preoccupied with feelings of hatred and blind malice toward the Kalmucks quite as strong as any which the Kalmucks could harbor toward Russia, and not, perhaps, so well founded. Just as much as the Kalmucks hated the Russian yoke, their galling assumption of authority, the marked air of disdain, as toward a nation of ugly, stupid, and filthy barbarians, which too generally marked the Russian bearing and 5 language, but, above all, the insolent contempt, or even outrages, which the Russian governors or great military commandants tolerated in their followers toward the barbarous religion and superstitious mummeries of the Kalmuck priesthood—precisely in that extent did the ferocity 10 of the Russian resentment, and their wrath at seeing the trampled worm turn or

Page 22

attempt a feeble retaliation, react upon the unfortunate Kalmucks. At this crisis, it is probable that envy and wounded pride, upon witnessing the splendid victories of Oubacha and Momotbacha over the 15 Turks and Bashkirs, contributed strength to the Russian irritation. And it must have been through the intrigues of those nobles about her person who chiefly smarted under these feelings that the Czarina could ever have lent herself to the unwise and ungrateful policy pursued 20 at this critical period toward the Kalmuck Khan. That Czarina was no longer Elizabeth Petrowna; it was Catharine II. —a princess who did not often err so injuriously (injuriously for herself as much as for others) in the measures of her government. She had soon ample reason for 25 repenting of her false policy. Meantime, how much it must have co-operated with the other motives previously acting upon Oubacha in sustaining his determination to revolt, and how powerfully it must have assisted the efforts of all the Tartar chieftains in preparing the minds of their 30 people to feel the necessity of this difficult enterprise, by arming their pride and their suspicions against the Russian Government, through the keenness of their sympathy with the wrongs of their insulted prince, may be readily imagined. It is a fact, and it has been confessed by candid Russians themselves when treating of this great dismemberment, that the conduct of the Russian Cabinet throughout the period of suspense, and during the crisis of hesitation in the Kalmuck Council, was exactly such 5 as was most desirable for the purposes of the conspirators; it was such, in fact, as to set the seal to all their machinations, by supplying distinct evidences and official vouchers for what could otherwise have been at the most matters of doubtful suspicion and indirect presumption. 10

Nevertheless, in the face of all these arguments, and even allowing their weight so far as not at all to deny the injustice or the impolicy of the imperial ministers, it is contended by many persons who have reviewed the affair with a command of all the documents bearing on the case, 15 more especially the letters or minutes of council subsequently discovered in the handwriting of Zebek-Dorchi, and the important evidence of the Russian captive, Weseloff, who was carried off by the Kalmucks in their flight, that beyond all doubt Oubacha was powerless for any 20 purpose of impeding or even of delaying the revolt. He himself, indeed, was under religious obligations of the most terrific solemnity never to flinch from the enterprise or even to slacken in his zeal; for Zebek-Dorchi, distrusting the firmness of his resolution under any unusual 25 pressure of alarm or difficulty, had, in the very earliest stage of the conspiracy, availed himself of the Khan's well-known superstition, to engage him, by means of previous concert with the priests



Page 23

and their head, the Lama, in some dark and mysterious rites of consecration, terminating 30 in oaths under such terrific sanctions as no Kalmuck would have courage to violate. As far, therefore, as regarded the personal share of the Khan in what was to come, Zebek was entirely at his ease; he knew him to be so deeply pledged by religious terrors to the prosecution of the conspiracy that no honors within the Czarina's gift could have possibly shaken his adhesion; and then, as to threats from the same quarter, he knew him to be sealed against those fears by others of a gloomier character, 5 and better adapted to his peculiar temperament. For Oubacha was a brave man, as respected all bodily enemies or the dangers of human warfare, but was as sensitive and timid as the most superstitious of old women in facing the frowns of a priest or under the vague anticipations 10 of ghostly retributions. But had it been otherwise, and had there been any reason to apprehend an unsteady demeanor on the part of this prince at the approach of the critical moment, such were the changes already effected in the state of their domestic politics amongst 15 the Tartars by the undermining arts of Zebek-Dorchi, and his ally the Lama, that very little importance would have attached to that doubt. All power was now effectually lodged in the hands of Zebek-Dorchi. He was the true and absolute wielder of the Kalmuck sceptre; all measures 20 of importance were submitted to his discretion, and nothing was finally resolved but under his dictation. This result he had brought about, in a year or two, by means sufficiently simple: first of all, by availing himself of the prejudice in his favor, so largely diffused amongst 25 the lowest of the Kalmucks, that his own title to the throne in quality of great-grandson in a direct line from Ajouka, the most illustrious of all the Kalmuck Khans, stood upon a better basis than that of Oubacha, who derived from a collateral branch; secondly, with respect 30 to the sole advantage which Oubacha possessed above himself in the ratification of his title, by improving this difference between their situations to the disadvantage of his competitor, as one who had not scrupled to accept that triumph from an alien power at the price of his independence, which he himself (as he would have it understood) disdained to court; thirdly, by his own talents and address, coupled with the ferocious energy of his moral character; fourthly—and perhaps in an equal 5 degree—by the criminal facility and good nature of Oubacha; finally (which is remarkable enough, as illustrating the character of the man), by that very new modelling of the Sarga, or Privy Council, which he had used as a principal topic of abuse and malicious insinuation 10 against the Russian Government, whilst, in reality, he first had suggested the alteration to the Empress, and he chiefly appropriated the political

Page 24

advantages which it was fitted to yield. For, as he was himself appointed the chief of the Sargatchi, and as the pensions of the inferior 15 Sargatchi passed through his hands, whilst in effect they owed their appointments to his nomination, it may be easily supposed that, whatever power existed in the state capable of controlling the Khan, being held by the Sarga under its new organization, and this body being completely 20 under his influence, the final result was to throw all the functions of the state, whether nominally in the prince or in the council, substantially into the hands of this one man; whilst, at the same time, from the strict league which he maintained with the Lama, all the thunders 25 of the spiritual power were always ready to come in aid of the magistrate, or to supply his incapacity in cases which he could not reach.

But the time was now rapidly approaching for the mighty experiment. The day was drawing near on which 30 the signal was to be given for raising the standard of revolt, and, by a combined movement on both sides of the Wolga, for spreading the smoke of one vast conflagration that should wrap in a common blaze their own huts and the stately cities of their enemies over the breadth and length of those great provinces in which their flocks were dispersed. The year of the *tiger* was now within one little month of its commencement; the fifth morning of that year was fixed for the fatal day when the fortunes 5 and happiness of a whole nation were to be put upon the hazard of a dicer's throw; and as yet that nation was in profound ignorance of the whole plan. The Khan, such was the kindness of his nature, could not bring himself to make the revelation so urgently required. It was clear, 10 however, that this could not be delayed; and Zebek-Dorchi took the task willingly upon himself. But where or how should this notification be made, so as to exclude Russian hearers? After some deliberation the following plan was adopted:—Couriers, it was contrived, should 15 arrive in furious haste, one upon the heels of another, reporting a sudden inroad of the Kirghises and Bashkirs upon the Kalmuck lands, at a point distant about 120 miles. Thither all the Kalmuck families, according to immemorial custom, were required to send a separate representative; 20 and there, accordingly, within three days, all appeared. The distance, the solitary ground appointed for the rendezvous, the rapidity of the march, all tended to make it almost certain that no Russian could be present. Zebek-Dorchi then came forward. He did 25 not waste many words upon rhetoric. He unfurled an immense sheet of parchment, visible from the outermost distance at which any of this vast crowd could stand; the total number amounted to 80,000; all saw, and many heard. They were told of the oppressions of Russia; 30 of her pride and haughty disdain,

Page 25

evidenced toward them by a thousand acts; of her contempt for their religion; of her determination to reduce them to absolute slavery; of the preliminary measures she had already taken by erecting forts upon many of the great rivers of their neighborhood; of the ulterior intentions she thus announced to circumscribe their pastoral lands, until they would all be obliged to renounce their flocks, and to collect in towns like Sarepta, there to pursue mechanical and servile trades of shoemaker, tailor, and weaver, such as the free-born Tartar had always disdained. "Then again," said the subtle prince, "she increases her military levies upon our population every year. We pour out our blood as young men in her defence, or, more often, in support of her insolent aggressions; and, as old men, we reap nothing from our sufferings nor benefit by our survivorship where so many are sacrificed." At this point of his harangue Zebek produced several papers (forged, as it is generally believed, by himself and the Lama), containing projects of the Russian Court for a general transfer of the eldest sons, taken *en masse* from the greatest Kalmuck families, to the Imperial Court. "Now, let this be once accomplished," he argued, "and there is an end of all useful resistance from that day forwards. Petitions we might make, or even remonstrances; as men of words, we might play a bold part; but for deeds; for that sort of language by which our ancestors were used to speak—holding us by such a chain, Russia would make a jest of our wishes, knowing full well that we should not dare to make any effectual movement."

Having thus sufficiently roused the angry passions of his vast audience, and having alarmed their fears by this pretended scheme against their firstborn (an artifice which was indispensable to his purpose, because it met beforehand every form of amendment to his proposal coming from the more moderate nobles, who would not otherwise have failed to insist upon trying the effect of bold addresses to the Empress before resorting to any desperate extremity), Zebek-Dorchi opened his scheme of revolt, and, if so, of instant revolt; since any preparations reported at St. Petersburg would be a signal for the armies of Russia to cross into such positions from all parts of Asia as would effectually intercept their march. It is remarkable, however, that with all his audacity and his reliance upon the momentary excitement of the Kalmucks, the subtle prince did not venture, at this stage of his seduction, to make so startling a proposal as that of a flight to China. All that he held out for the present was a rapid march to the Temba or some other great river, which they were to cross, and to take up a strong position on the farther bank, from which, as from a post of conscious security, they could hold a bolder language to the Czarina, and one which would have a better chance of winning a favorable audience.



Page 26

These things, in the irritated condition of the simple Tartars, passed by acclamation; and all returned homeward to push forward with the most furious speed the preparations for their awful undertaking. Rapid and 20 energetic these of necessity were; and in that degree they became noticeable and manifest to the Russians who happened to be intermingled with the different hordes, either on commercial errands, or as agents officially from the Russian Government, some in a financial, others in a 25 diplomatic character.

Among these last (indeed, at the head of them) was a Russian of some distinction, by name Kichinskoi—a man memorable for his vanity, and memorable also as one of the many victims to the Tartar revolution. This Kichinskoi 30 had been sent by the Empress as her envoy to overlook the conduct of the Kalmucks. He was styled the Grand Pristaw, or Great Commissioner, and was universally known amongst the Tartar tribes by this title. His mixed character of ambassador and of political *surveillant*, combined with the dependent state of the Kalmucks, gave him a real weight in the Tartar councils, and might have given him a far greater had not his outrageous self-conceit and his arrogant confidence in his own 5 authority, as due chiefly to his personal qualities for command, led him into such harsh displays of power, and menaces so odious to the Tartar pride, as very soon made him an object of their profoundest malice. He had publicly insulted the Khan; and, upon making a communication 10 to him to the effect that some reports began to circulate, and even to reach the Empress, of a design in agitation to fly from the imperial dominions, he had ventured to say, “But this you dare not attempt; I laugh at such rumors; yes, Khan, I laugh at them to the Empress; 15 for you are a chained bear, and that you know.” The Khan turned away on his heel with marked disdain; and the Pristaw, foaming at the mouth, continued to utter, amongst those of the Khan’s attendants who stayed behind to catch his real sentiments in a moment of unguarded 20 passion, all that the blindest frenzy of rage could suggest to the most presumptuous of fools. It was now ascertained that suspicion *had* arisen; but, at the same time, it was ascertained that the Pristaw spoke no more than the truth in representing himself to have discredited 25 these suspicions. The fact was that the mere infatuation of vanity made him believe that nothing could go on undetected by his all-piercing sagacity, and that no rebellion could prosper when rebuked by his commanding presence. The Tartars, therefore, pursued their preparations, confiding 30 in the obstinate blindness of the Grand Pristaw as in their perfect safeguard, and such it proved—to his own ruin as well as that of myriads beside.



Page 27

Christmas arrived; and, a little before that time, courier upon courier came dropping in, one upon the very heels of another, to St. Petersburg, assuring the Czarina that beyond all doubt the Kalmucks were in the very crisis of departure. These dispatches came from the Governor of Astrachan, and copies were instantly forwarded to 5 Kichinskoi. Now, it happened that between this governor—a Russian named Beketoff—and the Pristaw had been an ancient feud. The very name of Beketoff inflamed his resentment; and no sooner did he see that hated name attached to the dispatch than he felt himself 10 confirmed in his former views with tenfold bigotry, and wrote instantly, in terms of the most pointed ridicule, against the new alarmist, pledging his own head upon the visionariness of his alarms. Beketoff, however, was not to be put down by a few hard words, or by ridicule: he 15 persisted in his statements; the Russian ministry were confounded by the obstinacy of the disputants; and some were beginning even to treat the Governor of Astrachan as a bore, and as the dupe of his own nervous terrors, when the memorable day arrived, the fatal 5th of January, 20 which forever terminated the dispute and put a seal upon the earthly hopes and fortunes of unnumbered myriads. The Governor of Astrachan was the first to hear the news. Stung by the mixed furies of jealousy, of triumphant vengeance, and of anxious ambition, he sprang into his 25 sledge, and, at the rate of 300 miles a day, pursued his route to St. Petersburg—rushed into the Imperial presence—announced the total realization of his worst predictions; and, upon the confirmation of this intelligence by subsequent dispatches from many different posts on 30 the Wolga, he received an imperial commission to seize the person of his deluded enemy and to keep him in strict captivity. These orders were eagerly fulfilled; and the unfortunate Kichinskoi soon afterwards expired of grief and mortification in the gloomy solitude of a dungeon—a victim to his own immeasurable vanity and the blinding self-delusions of a presumption that refused all warning.

The Governor of Astrachan had been but too faithful a prophet. Perhaps even *he* was surprised at the suddenness 5 with which the verification followed his reports. Precisely on the 5th of January, the day so solemnly appointed under religious sanctions by the Lama, the Kalmucks on the east bank of the Wolga were seen at the earliest dawn of day assembling by troops and 10 squadrons and in the tumultuous movement of some great morning of battle. Tens of thousands continued moving off the ground at every half hour's interval. Women and children, to the amount of two hundred thousand and upward, were placed upon wagons or upon camels, and 15 drew off by masses of twenty thousand at once—placed under suitable escorts, and continually swelled in numbers by other



Page 28

outlying bodies of the horde,—who kept falling in at various distances upon the first and second day's march. From sixty to eighty thousand of those who were the best mounted stayed behind the rest of the tribes, with purposes of devastation and plunder more violent than prudence justified or the amiable character of the Khan could be supposed to approve. But in this, as in other instances, he was completely overruled by the malignant counsels of Zebek-Dorchi. The first tempest of the desolating fury of the Tartars discharged itself upon their own habitations. But this, as cutting off all infirm looking backward from the hardships of their march, had been thought so necessary a measure by all the chieftains that even Oubacha himself was the first to authorize the act by his own example. He seized a torch previously prepared with materials the most durable as well as combustible, and steadily applied it to the timbers of his own palace. Nothing was saved from the general wreck except the portable part of the domestic utensils and that part of the woodwork which could be applied to the manufacture of the long Tartar lances. This chapter in their memorable day's work being finished, and the whole of their villages throughout a district of ten thousand square miles in one simultaneous blaze, the Tartars waited for further orders.

These, it was intended, should have taken a character of valedictory vengeance, and thus have left behind to the Czarina a dreadful commentary upon the main motives of their flight. It was the purpose of Zebek-Dorchi that all the Russian towns, churches, and buildings of every description should be given up to pillage and destruction, and such treatment applied to the defenceless inhabitants as might naturally be expected from a fierce people already infuriated by the spectacle of their own outrages, and by the bloody retaliations which they must necessarily have provoked. This part of the tragedy, however, was happily intercepted by a providential disappointment at the very crisis of departure. It has been mentioned already that the motive for selecting the depth of winter as the season of flight (which otherwise was obviously the very worst possible) had been the impossibility of effecting a junction sufficiently rapid with the tribes on the west of the Wolga, in the absence of bridges, unless by a natural bridge of ice. For this one advantage the Kalmuck leaders had consented to aggravate by a thousand-fold the calamities inevitable to a rapid flight over boundless tracts of country with women, children, and herds of cattle—for this one single advantage; and yet, after all, it was lost. The reason never has been explained satisfactorily, but the fact was such. Some have said that the signals were not properly concerted for marking the moment of absolute departure—that



Page 29

is, for signifying whether the settled intention of the Eastern Kalmucks might not have been suddenly interrupted by adverse intelligence. Others have supposed that the ice might not be equally strong on both sides of the river, and 5 might even be generally insecure for the treading of heavy and heavily laden animals such as camels. But the prevailing notion is that some accidental movements on the 3d and 4th of January of Russian troops in the neighborhood of the Western Kalmucks, though really 10 having no reference to them or their plans, had been construed into certain signs that all was discovered, and that the prudence of the Western chieftains, who, from situation, had never been exposed to those intrigues by which Zebek-Dorchi had practised upon the pride of the Eastern 15 tribes, now stepped in to save their people from ruin. Be the cause what it might, it is certain that the Western Kalmucks were in some way prevented from forming the intended junction with their brethren of the opposite bank; and the result was that at least one hundred 20 thousand of these Tartars were left behind in Russia. This accident it was which saved their Russian neighbors universally from the desolation which else awaited them. One general massacre and conflagration would assuredly have surprised them, to the utter extermination of their 25 property, their houses, and themselves, had it not been for this disappointment. But the Eastern chieftains did not dare to put to hazard the safety of their brethren under the first impulse of the Czarina's vengeance for so dreadful a tragedy; for, as they were well aware of too many 30 circumstances by which she might discover the concurrence of the Western people in the general scheme of revolt, they justly feared that she would thence infer their concurrence also in the bloody events which marked its outset.

Little did the Western Kalmucks guess what reasons they also had for gratitude, on account of an interposition so unexpected, and which at the moment they so generally deplored. Could they but have witnessed the thousandth part of the sufferings which overtook their Eastern brethren 5 in the first month of their sad flight, they would have blessed Heaven for their own narrow escape; and yet these sufferings of the first month were but a prelude or foretaste comparatively slight of those which afterward succeeded. 10

For now began to unroll the most awful series of calamities, and the most extensive, which is anywhere recorded to have visited the sons and daughters of men. It is possible that the sudden inroads of destroying nations, such as the Huns, or the Avars, or the Mongol 15 Tartars, may have inflicted misery as extensive; but there the misery and the desolation would be sudden, like the flight of volleying lightning. Those who were



Page 30

spared at first would generally be spared to the end; those who perished would perish instantly. It is possible that the 20 French retreat from Moscow may have made some nearer approach to this calamity in duration, though still a feeble and miniature approach; for the French sufferings did not commence in good earnest until about one month from the time of leaving Moscow; and though it is true 25 that afterward the vials of wrath were emptied upon the devoted army for six or seven weeks in succession, yet what is that to this Kalmuck tragedy, which lasted for more than as many months? But the main feature of horror, by which the Tartar march was distinguished from 30 the French, lies in the accompaniment of women[5] and children. There were both, it is true, with the French army, but so few as to bear no visible proportion to the total numbers concerned. The French, in short, were merely an army—a host of professional destroyers, whose regular trade was bloodshed, and whose regular element 5 was danger and suffering. But the Tartars were a nation carrying along with them more than two hundred and fifty thousand women and children, utterly unequal, for the most part, to any contest with the calamities before them. The Children of Israel were in the same circumstances 10 as to the accompaniment of their families; but they were released from the pursuit of their enemies in a very early stage of their flight; and their subsequent residence in the Desert was not a march, but a continued halt and under a continued interposition of Heaven for their 15 comfortable support. Earthquakes, again, however comprehensive in their ravages, are shocks of a moment's duration. A much nearer approach made to the wide range and the long duration of the Kalmuck tragedy may have been in a pestilence such as that which visited 20 Athens in the Peloponnesian war, or London in the reign of Charles II. There, also, the martyrs were counted by myriads, and the period of the desolation was counted by months. But, after all, the total amount of destruction was on a smaller scale; and there was this feature of 25 alleviation to the *conscious* pressure of the calamity—that the misery was withdrawn from public notice into private chambers and hospitals. The siege of Jerusalem by Vespasian and his son, taken in its entire circumstances, comes nearest of all—for breadth and depth of suffering, 30 for duration, for the exasperation of the suffering from without by internal feuds, and, finally, for that last most appalling expression of the furnace heat of the anguish in its power to extinguish the natural affections even of maternal love. But, after all, each case had circumstances of romantic misery peculiar to itself—circumstances 5 without precedent, and (wherever human nature is ennobled by Christianity), it may be confidently hoped, never to be repeated.



Page 31

The first point to be reached, before any hope of repose could be encouraged, was the River Jaik. This was not 10 above 300 miles from the main point of departure on the Wolga; and, if the march thither was to be a forced one and a severe one, it was alleged, on the other hand, that the suffering would be the more brief and transient; one summary exertion, not to be repeated, and all was 15 achieved. Forced the march was, and severe beyond example: there the forewarning proved correct; but the promised rest proved a mere phantom of the wilderness—a visionary rainbow, which fled before their hope-sick eyes, across these interminable solitudes, for seven months 20 of hardship and calamity, without a pause. These sufferings, by their very nature and the circumstances under which they arose, were (like the scenery of the steppes) somewhat monotonous in their coloring and external features; what variety, however, there was, will be most 25 naturally exhibited by tracing historically the successive stages of the general misery exactly as it unfolded itself under the double agency of weakness still increasing from within and hostile pressure from without. Viewed in this manner, under the real order of development, it is remarkable 30 that these sufferings of the Tartars, though under the moulding hands of accident, arrange themselves almost with a scenical propriety. They seem combined as with the skill of an artist; the intensity of the misery advancing regularly with the advances of the march, and the stages of the calamity corresponding to the stages of the route; so that, upon raising the curtain which veils the great catastrophe, we behold one vast climax of anguish, towering upward by regular gradations as if constructed 5 artificially for picturesque effect—a result which might not have been surprising had it been reasonable to anticipate the same rate of speed, and even an accelerated rate, as prevailing through the latter stages of the expedition. But it seemed, on the contrary, most reasonable to 10 calculate upon a continual decrement in the rate of motion according to the increasing distance from the headquarters of the pursuing enemy. This calculation, however, was defeated by the extraordinary circumstance that the Russian armies did not begin to close in very fiercely upon 15 the Kalmucks until after they had accomplished a distance of full 2000 miles: 1000 miles farther on the assaults became even more tumultuous and murderous: and already the great shadows of the Chinese Wall were dimly descried, when the frenzy and *acharnement* of the pursuers and the 20 bloody desperation of the miserable fugitives had reached its uttermost extremity. Let us briefly rehearse the main stages of the misery and trace the ascending steps of the tragedy, according to the great divisions of the route marked out by the central rivers of Asia. 25



Page 32

The first stage, we have already said, was from the Wolga to the Jaik; the distance about 300 miles; the time allowed seven days. For the first week, therefore, the rate of marching averaged about 43 English miles a day. The weather was cold, but bracing; and, at a more moderate pace, this part of the journey might have been accomplished without much distress by a people as hardy as the Kalmucks: as it was, the cattle suffered greatly from overdriving; milk began to fail even for the children; the sheep perished by wholesale; and the children themselves were saved only by the innumerable camels.

The Cossacks who dwelt upon the banks of the Jaik were the first among the subjects of Russia to come into collision with the Kalmucks. Great was their surprise at the suddenness of the irruption, and great also their consternation; for, according to their settled custom, by far the greater part of their number was absent during the winter months at the fisheries upon the Caspian. Some who were liable to surprise at the most exposed points fled in crowds to the fortress of Koulagina, which was immediately invested and summoned by Oubacha. He had, however, in his train only a few light pieces of artillery; and the Russian commandant at Koulagina, being aware of the hurried circumstances in which the Khan was placed, and that he stood upon the very edge, as it were, of a renewed flight, felt encouraged by these considerations to a more obstinate resistance than might else have been advisable with an enemy so little disposed to observe the usages of civilized warfare. The period of his anxiety was not long. On the fifth day of the siege he descried from the walls a succession of Tartar couriers, mounted upon fleet Bactrian camels, crossing the vast plains around the fortress at a furious pace and riding into the Kalmuck encampment at various points. Great agitation appeared immediately to follow: orders were soon after dispatched in all directions; and it became speedily known that upon a distant flank of the Kalmuck movement a bloody and exterminating battle had been fought the day before, in which one entire tribe of the Khan's dependents, numbering not less than 9000 fighting men, had perished to the last man. This was the *ouloss*, or clan, called Feka-Zechorr, between whom and the Cossacks there was a feud of ancient standing. In selecting, therefore, the points of attack, on occasion of the present hasty inroad, the Cossack chiefs were naturally eager so to direct their efforts as to combine with the service of the Empress some gratification to their own party hatreds, more especially as the present was likely to be their final opportunity for revenge if the Kalmuck evasion should prosper. Having, therefore, concentrated as large a body of Cossack cavalry as circumstances allowed, they attacked the hostile *ouloss* with a precipitation which

Page 33

denied to it all means for communicating with 10 Oubacha; for the necessity of commanding an ample range of pasturage, to meet the necessities of their vast flocks and herds, had separated this *ouloss* from the Khan's headquarters by an interval of 80 miles; and thus it was, and not from oversight, that it came to be thrown entirely 15 upon its own resources. These had proved insufficient: retreat, from the exhausted state of their horses and camels, no less than from the prodigious encumbrances of their live stock, was absolutely out of the question: quarter was disdained on the one side, and would not 20 have been granted on the other: and thus it had happened that the setting sun of that one day (the thirteenth from the first opening of the revolt) threw his parting rays upon the final agonies of an ancient *ouloss*, stretched upon a bloody field, who on that day's dawning had held and 25 stiled themselves an independent nation.

Universal consternation was diffused through the wide borders of the Khan's encampment by this disastrous intelligence, not so much on account of the numbers slain, or the total extinction of a powerful ally, as because 30 the position of the Cossack force was likely to put to hazard the future advances of the Kalmucks, or at least to retard and hold them in check until the heavier columns of the Russian army should arrive upon their flanks. The siege of Koulagina was instantly raised; and that signal, so fatal to the happiness of the women and their children, once again resounded through the tents—the signal for flight, and this time for a flight more rapid than ever. About 150 miles ahead of their 5 present position, there arose a tract of hilly country, forming a sort of margin to the vast, sealike expanse of champaign savannas, steppes, and occasionally of sandy deserts, which stretched away on each side of this margin both eastwards and westwards. Pretty nearly in the 10 centre of this hilly range lay a narrow defile, through which passed the nearest and the most practicable route to the River Torgau (the farther bank of which river offered the next great station of security for a general halt). It was the more essential to gain this pass before 15 the Cossacks, inasmuch as not only would the delay in forcing the pass give time to the Russian pursuing columns for combining their attacks and for bringing up their artillery, but also because (even if all enemies in pursuit were thrown out of the question) it was held, by 20 those best acquainted with the difficult and obscure geography of these pathless steppes—that the loss of this one narrow strait amongst the hills would have the effect of throwing them (as their only alternative in a case where so wide a sweep of pasturage was required) upon a circuit 25 of at least 500 miles extra; besides that, after all, this circuitous

Page 34

route would carry them to the Torgau at a point unfitted for the passage of their heavy baggage. The defile in the hills, therefore, it was resolved to gain; and yet, unless they moved upon it with the velocity of light 30 cavalry, there was little chance but it would be found preoccupied by the Cossacks. They, it is true, had suffered greatly in the recent sanguinary action with the defeated *ouloss*; but the excitement of victory, and the intense sympathy with their unexampled triumph, had again swelled their ranks, and would probably act with the force of a vortex to draw in their simple countrymen from the Caspian. The question, therefore, of preoccupation was reduced to a race. The Cossacks were marching 5 upon an oblique line not above 50 miles longer than that which led to the same point from the Kalmuck headquarters before Koulagina; and therefore, without the most furious haste on the part of the Kalmucks, there was not a chance for them, burdened and “trashed”[6] as 10 they were, to anticipate so agile a light cavalry as the Cossacks in seizing this important pass.

Dreadful were the feelings of the poor women on hearing this exposition of the case. For they easily understood that too capital an interest (the *summa rerum*) 15 was now at stake to allow of any regard to minor interests, or what would be considered such in their present circumstances. The dreadful week already passed—their inauguration in misery—was yet fresh in their remembrance. The scars of suffering were impressed 20 not only upon their memories, but upon their very persons and the persons of their children; and they knew that, where no speed had much chance of meeting the cravings of the chieftains, no test would be accepted, short of absolute exhaustion, that as much had been accomplished 25 as could be accomplished. Weseloff, the Russian captive, has recorded the silent wretchedness with which the women and elder boys assisted in drawing the tent ropes. On the 5th of January all had been animation and the joyousness of indefinite expectation; now, on the contrary, 30 a brief but bitter experience had taught them to take an amended calculation of what it was that lay before them.

One whole day and far into the succeeding night had the renewed flight continued; the sufferings had been 5 greater than before, for the cold had been more intense, and many perished out of the living creatures through every class except only the camels—whose powers of endurance seemed equally adapted to cold and heat. The second morning, however, brought an alleviation to 10 the distress. Snow had begun to fall; and, though not deep at present, it was easily foreseen that it soon would be so, and that, as a halt would in that case become unavoidable, no plan could be better than that of staying where they were, especially

Page 35

as the same cause would 15 check the advance of the Cossacks. Here, then, was the last interval of comfort which gleamed upon the unhappy nation during their whole migration. For ten days the snow continued to fall with little intermission. At the end of that time, keen, bright, frosty weather succeeded; 20 the drifting had ceased. In three days the smooth expanse became firm enough to support the treading of the camels; and the flight was recommenced. But during the halt much domestic comfort had been enjoyed; and, for the last time, universal plenty. The cows and oxen 25 had perished in such vast numbers on the previous marches that an order was now issued to turn what remained to account by slaughtering the whole, and salting whatever part should be found to exceed the immediate consumption. This measure led to a scene 30 of general banqueting, and even of festivity amongst all who were not incapacitated for joyous emotions by distress of mind, by grief for the unhappy experience of the few last days, and by anxiety for the too gloomy future. Seventy thousand persons of all ages had already perished, exclusively of the many thousand allies who had been cut down by the Cossack sabre. And the losses in reversion were likely to be many more. For rumors began now to arrive from all quarters, by the mounted couriers whom 5 the Khan had dispatched to the rear and to each flank as well as in advance, that large masses of the imperial troops were converging from all parts of Central Asia to the fords of the River Torgau, as the most convenient point for intercepting the flying tribes; and it was already well 10 known that a powerful division was close in their rear, and was retarded only by the numerous artillery which had been judged necessary to support their operations. New motives were thus daily arising for quickening the motions of the wretched Kalmucks, and for exhausting 15 those who were previously but too much exhausted.

It was not until the 2d day of February that the Khan's advanced guard came in sight of Ouchim, the defile among the hills of Moulgaldchares, in which they anticipated so bloody an opposition from the Cossacks. 20 A pretty large body of these light cavalry had, in fact, preoccupied the pass by some hours; but the Khan, having two great advantages—namely, a strong body of infantry, who had been conveyed by sections of five on about two hundred camels, and some pieces of light 25 artillery which he had not yet been forced to abandon—soon began to make a serious impression upon this unsupported detachment; and they would probably at any rate have retired; but, at the very moment when they were making some dispositions in that view, Zebek-Dorchi 30 appeared upon their rear with a body of trained riflemen, who had distinguished themselves in the war with Turkey. These men had contrived to crawl



Page 36

unobserved over the cliffs which skirted the ravine, availing themselves of the dry beds of the summer torrents and other inequalities of the ground to conceal their movement. Disorder and trepidation ensued instantly in the Cossack files; the Khan, who had been waiting with the *elite* of his heavy cavalry, charged furiously upon them. Total overthrow followed to the Cossacks, and a slaughter such as in some measure avenged the recent bloody extermination of their allies, the ancient *ouloss* of Feka-Zechorr. The slight horses of the Cossacks were unable to support the weight of heavy Polish dragoons and a body of trained *cameleers* 10 (that is, cuirassiers mounted on camels); hardy they were, but not strong, nor a match for their antagonists in weight; and their extraordinary efforts through the last few days to gain their present position had greatly diminished their powers for effecting an escape. Very few, in fact, *did* 15 escape; and the bloody day of Ouchim became as memorable among the Cossacks as that which, about twenty days before, had signaled the complete annihilation of the Feka-Zechorr. [7]

The road was now open to the River Igritch, and as yet 20 even far beyond it to the Torgau; but how long this state of things would continue was every day more doubtful. Certain intelligence was now received that a large Russian army, well appointed in every arm, was advancing upon the Torgau under the command of General Trautenberg. This officer was to be joined on his route by ten thousand Bashkirs, and pretty nearly the 5 same amount of Kirghises—both hereditary enemies of the Kalmucks—both exasperated to a point of madness by the bloody trophies which Oubacha and Momotbacha had, in late years, won from such of their compatriots as served under the Sultan. The Czarina's yoke these wild 10 nations bore with submissive patience, but not the hands by which it had been imposed; and accordingly, catching with eagerness at the present occasion offered to their vengeance, they sent an assurance to the Czarina of their perfect obedience to her commands, and at the same time 15 a message significantly declaring in what spirit they meant to execute them—viz. “that they would not trouble her Majesty with prisoners.”

Here then arose, as before with the Cossacks, a race for the Kalmucks with the regular armies of Russia, and 20 concurrently with nations as fierce and semi-humanized as themselves, besides that they were stung into threefold activity by the furies of mortified pride and military abasement, under the eyes of the Turkish Sultan. The forces, and more especially the artillery, of Russia were 25 far too overwhelming to permit the thought of a regular opposition in pitched battles, even with a less dilapidated state of their resources than they could reasonably expect at the period of their arrival



Page 37

on the Torgau. In their speed lay their only hope—in strength of foot, as before, 30 and not in strength of arm. Onward, therefore, the Kalmucks pressed, marking the lines of their wide-extending march over the sad solitudes of the steppes by a never-ending chain of corpses. The old and the young, the sick man on his couch, the mother with her baby—all were left behind. Sights such as these, with the many rueful aggravations incident to the helpless condition of infancy—of disease and of female weakness abandoned to the wolves amidst a howling wilderness—continued to track their course through a space of full two thousand miles; for so much at the least it was likely to prove, including the circuits to which they were often compelled by rivers or hostile tribes, from the point of starting on the Wolga until they could reach their destined halting ground on the east bank of the Torgau. For the first seven weeks of this march their sufferings had been imbibed by the excessive severity of the cold; and every night—so long as wood was to be had for fires, either from the lading of the camels, or from the desperate sacrifice of their baggage wagons, or (as occasionally happened) from the forests which skirted the banks of the many rivers which crossed their path—no spectacle was more frequent than that of a circle, composed of men, women, and children, gathered by hundreds round a central fire, all dead and stiff at the return of morning light. Myriads were left behind from pure exhaustion, of whom none had a chance, under the combined evils which beset them, of surviving through the next twenty-four hours. Frost, however, and snow at length ceased to persecute; the vast extent of the march at length brought them into more genial latitudes, and the unusual duration of the march was gradually bringing them into more genial seasons of the year. Two thousand miles had at least been traversed; February, March, April, were gone; the balmy month of May had opened; vernal sights and sounds came from every side to comfort the heart-weary travellers; and at last, in the latter end of May, crossing the Torgau, they took up a position where they hoped to find liberty to repose themselves for many weeks in comfort as well as in security, and to draw such supplies from the fertile neighborhood as might restore their shattered forces to a condition for executing, with less of wreck and ruin, the large remainder of the journey.

Yes; it was true that two thousand miles of wandering had been completed, but in a period of nearly five months, and with the terrific sacrifice of at least two hundred and fifty thousand souls, to say nothing of herds and flocks past all reckoning. These had all perished: ox, cow, horse, mule, ass, sheep, or goat, not one survived—only the camels. These arid and adust creatures, looking



Page 38

like the mummies of some antediluvian animals, without the affections or sensibilities of flesh and blood—these only still erected their speaking eyes to the eastern heavens, and had to all appearance come out from this long tempest of trial unscathed and hardly diminished. The Khan, knowing how much he was individually answerable for the misery which had been sustained, must have wept tears even more bitter than those of Xerxes when he threw his eyes over the myriads whom he had assembled: for the tears of Xerxes were unmingled with compunction. Whatever amends were in his power, the Khan resolved to make, by sacrifices to the general good of all personal regards; and, accordingly, even at this point of their advance, he once more deliberately brought under review the whole question of the revolt. The question was formally debated before the Council, whether, even at this point, they should untread their steps, and, throwing themselves upon the Czarina's mercy, return to their old allegiance. In that case, Oubacha professed himself willing to become the scapegoat for the general transgression. This, he argued, was no fantastic scheme, but even easy of accomplishment; for the unlimited and sacred power of the Khan, so well known to the Empress, made it absolutely iniquitous to attribute any separate responsibility to the people. Upon the Khan rested the guilt—upon the Khan would descend the imperial vengeance. This proposal was applauded for its generosity, but was energetically opposed by Zebek-Dorchi. Were they to lose the whole journey of two thousand miles? Was their misery to perish without fruit? True it was that they had yet reached only the halfway house; but, in that respect, the motives were evenly balanced for retreat or for advance. Either way they would have pretty nearly the same distance to traverse, but with this difference—that, forwards, their route lay through lands comparatively fertile; backwards, through a blasted wilderness, rich only in memorials of their sorrow, and hideous to Kalmuck eyes by the trophies of their calamity. Besides, though the Empress might accept an excuse for the past, would she the less forbear to suspect for the future? The Czarina's *pardon* they might obtain, but could they ever hope to recover her *confidence*? Doubtless there would now be a standing presumption against them, an immortal ground of jealousy; and a jealous government would be but another name for a harsh one. Finally, whatever motives there ever had been for the revolt surely remained unimpaired by anything that had occurred. In reality the revolt was, after all, no revolt, but (strictly speaking) a return to their old allegiance; since, not above one hundred and fifty years ago (*viz.* in the year 1616), their ancestors had revolted from the Emperor of China. They had now tried both governments; and for them China was the land of promise, and Russia the house of bondage.

Page 39

Spite, however, of all that Zebek could say or do, the yearning of the people was strongly in behalf of the Khan's proposal; the pardon of their prince, they persuaded themselves, would be readily conceded by the Empress: and there is little doubt that they would at this time have thrown themselves gladly upon the imperial mercy; when suddenly all was defeated by the arrival of two envoys from Traubenberg. This general had reached the fortress of Orsk, after a very painful march, on the 12th of April; thence he set forward toward Oriembourg, which he reached upon the 1st of June, having been joined on his route at various times through the month of May by the Kirghises and a corps of ten thousand Bashkirs. From Oriembourg he sent forward his official offers to the Khan, which were harsh and peremptory, holding out no specific stipulations as to pardon or impunity, an exacting unconditional submission as the preliminary price of any cessation from military operations. The personal character of Traubenberg, which was anything but energetic, and the condition of his army, disorganized in a great measure by the length and severity of the march, made it probable that, with a little time for negotiation, a more conciliatory tone would have been assumed. But, unhappily for all parties, sinister events occurred in the meantime such as effectually put an end to every hope of the kind. 25

The two envoys sent forward by Traubenberg had reported to this officer that a distance of only ten days' march lay between his own headquarters and those of the Khan. Upon this fact transpiring, the Kirghises, by their prince Nourali, and the Bashkirs, entreated the Russian general to advance without delay. Once having placed his cannon in position, so as to command the Kalmuck camp, the fate of the rebel Khan and his people would be in his own hands, and they would themselves form his advanced guard. Traubenberg, however (*why* has not been certainly explained), refused to march; grounding his refusal upon the condition of his army and their absolute need of refreshment. Long and fierce was the altercation; but at length, seeing no chance of prevailing, and dreading above all other events the escape of their detested enemy, the ferocious Bashkirs went off in a body by forced marches. In six days they reached the Torgau, crossed by swimming their horses, and fell upon the Kalmucks, who were dispersed for many a league in search of food or provender for their camels. The first day's action was one vast succession of independent skirmishes, diffused over a field of thirty to forty miles in extent; one party often breaking up into three or four, and again (according to the accidents of ground) three or four blending into one; flight and pursuit, rescue and total overthrow, going on simultaneously, under all varieties of form,



Page 40

in all quarters of the plain. The Bashkirs had found themselves obliged, by the scattered state of the Kalmucks, to split up into 20 innumerable sections; and thus, for some hours, it had been impossible for the most practised eye to collect the general tendency of the day's fortune. Both the Khan and Zebek-Dorchi were at one moment made prisoners, and more than once in imminent danger of being cut 25 down; but at length Zebek succeeded in rallying a strong column of infantry, which, with the support of the camel corps on each flank, compelled the Bashkirs to retreat. Clouds, however, of these wild cavalry continued to arrive through the next two days and nights, followed 30 or accompanied by the Kirghises. These being viewed as the advanced parties of Traubenberg's army, the Kalmuck chieftains saw no hope of safety but in flight; and in this way it happened that a retreat, which had so recently been brought to a pause, was resumed at the very moment when the unhappy fugitives were anticipating a deep repose, without further molestation, the whole summer through.

It seemed as though every variety of wretchedness 5 were predestined to the Kalmucks, and as if their sufferings were incomplete unless they were rounded and matured by all that the most dreadful agencies of summer's heat could superadd to those of frost and winter. To this sequel of their story we shall immediately revert, 10 after first noticing a little romantic episode which occurred at this point between Oubacha and his unprincipled cousin, Zebek-Dorchi.

There was, at the time of the Kalmuck flight from the Wolga, a Russian gentleman of some rank at the court 15 of the Khan, whom, for political reasons, it was thought necessary to carry along with them as a captive. For some weeks his confinement had been very strict, and in one or two instances cruel; but, as the increasing distance was continually diminishing the chances of escape, 20 and perhaps, also, as the misery of the guards gradually withdrew their attention from all minor interests to their own personal sufferings, the vigilance of the custody grew more and more relaxed; until at length, upon a petition to the Khan, Mr. Weseloff was formally restored 25 to liberty; and it was understood that he might use his liberty in whatever way he chose; even for returning to Russia, if that should be his wish. Accordingly, he was making active preparations for his journey to St. Petersburg, when it occurred to Zebek-Dorchi that not 30 improbably, in some of the battles which were then anticipated with Traubenberg, it might happen to them to lose some prisoner of rank,—in which case the Russian Weseloff would be a pledge in their hands for negotiating an exchange. Upon this plea, to his own severe affliction, the Russian was detained until the further pleasure of the Khan. The Khan's name, indeed, was used through the

Page 41

whole affair, but, as it seemed, with so little concurrence on his part, that, when Weseloff in a private audience humbly remonstrated upon the injustice done him and the cruelty of thus sporting with his feelings by setting him at liberty, and, as it were, tempting him into dreams of home and restored happiness only for the purpose of blighting them, the good-natured prince disclaimed all participation in the affair, and went so far in proving his sincerity as even to give him permission to effect his escape; and, as a ready means of commencing it without raising suspicion, the Khan mentioned to Mr. Weseloff that he had just then received a message from the Hetman of the Bashkirs, soliciting a private interview on the banks of the Torgau at a spot pointed out. That interview was arranged for the coming night; and Mr. Weseloff might go in the Khan's *suite*, which on either side was not to exceed three persons. Weseloff was a prudent man, acquainted with the world, and he read treachery in the very outline of this scheme, as stated by the Khan—treachery against the Khan's person. He mused a little, and then communicated so much of his suspicions to the Khan as might put him on his guard; but, upon further consideration, he begged leave to decline the honor of accompanying the Khan. The fact was that three Kalmucks, who had strong motives for returning to their countrymen on the west bank of the Wolga, guessing the intentions of Weseloff, had offered to join him in his escape. These men the Khan would probably find himself obliged to countenance in their project, so that it became a point of honor with Weseloff to conceal their intentions, and therefore to accomplish the evasion from the camp (of which the first steps only would be hazardous) without risking the notice of the Khan.

The district in which they were now encamped abounded through many hundred miles with wild horses of a docile and beautiful breed. Each of the four fugitives had caught from seven to ten of these spirited creatures in the course of the last few days. This raised no suspicion, for the rest of the Kalmucks had been making the same sort of provision against the coming toils of their remaining route to China. These horses were secured by halters, and hidden about dusk in the thickets which lined the margin of the river. To these thickets, about ten at night, the four fugitives repaired. They took a circuitous path, which drew them as little as possible within danger of challenge from any of the outposts or of the patrols which had been established on the quarters where the Bashkirs lay; and in three-quarters of an hour they reached the rendezvous. The moon had now risen, the horses were unfastened; and they were in the act of mounting, when the deep silence of the woods was disturbed by a violent uproar and the clashing



Page 42

of arms. Weseloff fancied that he heard the voice of the Khan shouting for assistance. He remembered the communication made by that prince in the morning; and, 25 requesting his companions to support him, he rode off in the direction of the sound. A very short distance brought him to an open glade in the wood, where he beheld four men contending with a party of at least nine or ten. Two of the four were dismounted at the very instant of 30 Weseloff's arrival. One of these he recognized almost certainly as the Khan, who was fighting hand to hand, but at great disadvantage, with two of the adverse horsemen. Seeing that no time was to be lost, Weseloff fired and brought down one of the two. His companions discharged their carabines at the same moment; and then all rushed simultaneously into the little open area. The thundering sound of about thirty horses, all rushing at once into a narrow space, gave the impression that a 5 whole troop of cavalry was coming down upon the assailants, who accordingly wheeled about and fled with one impulse. Weseloff advanced to the dismounted cavalier, who, as he expected, proved to be the Khan. The man whom Weseloff had shot was lying dead; and both were 10 shocked, though Weseloff at least was not surprised, on stooping down and scrutinizing his features, to recognize a well-known confidential servant of Zebek-Dorchi. Nothing was said by either party. The Khan rode off, escorted by Weseloff and his companions; and for some 15 time a dead silence prevailed. The situation of Weseloff was delicate and critical. To leave the Khan at this point was probably to cancel their recent services; for he might be again crossed on his path, and again attacked, by the very party from whom he had just been delivered. Yet, on 20 the other hand, to return to the camp was to endanger the chances of accomplishing the escape. The Khan, also, was apparently revolving all this in his mind; for at length he broke silence and said: "I comprehend your situation; and, under other circumstances, I might feel it my duty to 25 detain your companions, but it would ill become me to do so after the important service you have just rendered me. Let us turn a little to the left. There, where you see the watch fire, is an outpost. Attend me so far. I am then safe. You may turn and pursue your enterprise; for 30 the circumstances under which you will appear as my escort are sufficient to shield you from all suspicion for the present. I regret having no better means at my disposal for testifying my gratitude. But tell me before we part—was it accident only which led you to my rescue? Or had you acquired any knowledge of the plot by which I was decoyed into this snare?" Weseloff answered very candidly that mere accident had brought him to the spot at which he heard the uproar; but that, *having* heard it, 5 and connecting it with the Khan's



Page 43

communication of the morning, he had then designedly gone after the sound in a way which he certainly should not have done, at so critical a moment, unless in the expectation of finding the Khan assaulted by assassins. A few minutes after 10 they reached the outpost at which it became safe to leave the Tartar chieftain; and immediately the four fugitives commenced a flight which is, perhaps, without a parallel in the annals of travelling. Each of them led six or seven horses besides the one he rode; and by 15 shifting from one to the other (like the ancient Desultores of the Roman circus), so as never to burden the same horse for more than half an hour at a time, they continued to advance at the rate of 200 miles in the twenty-four hours for three days consecutively. After that time, 20 considering themselves beyond pursuit, they proceeded less rapidly; though still with a velocity which staggered the belief of Weseloff's friends in after years. He was, however, a man of high principle, and always adhered firmly to the details of his printed report. One of the 25 circumstances there stated is that they continued to pursue the route by which the Kalmucks had fled, never for an instant finding any difficulty in tracing it by the skeletons and other memorials of their calamities. In particular, he mentions vast heaps of money as part of the 30 valuable property which it had been necessary to sacrifice. These heaps were found lying still untouched in the deserts. From these Weseloff and his companions took as much as they could conveniently carry; and this it was, with the price of their beautiful horses, which they afterward sold at one of the Russian military settlements for about L15 apiece, which eventually enabled them to pursue their journey in Russia. This journey, as regarded Weseloff in particular, was closed by a tragical catastrophe. 5 He was at that time young and the only child of a doting mother. Her affliction under the violent abduction of her son had been excessive, and probably had undermined her constitution. Still she had supported it. Weseloff, giving way to the natural impulses of his filial 10 affection, had imprudently posted through Russia to his mother's house without warning of his approach. He rushed precipitately into her presence; and she, who had stood the shocks of sorrow, was found unequal to the shock of joy too sudden and too acute. She died upon 15 the spot.

* * * * *

We now revert to the final scenes of the Kalmuck flight. These it would be useless to pursue circumstantially through the whole two thousand miles of suffering which remained; for the character of that suffering was 20 even more monotonous than on the former half of the flight, but also more severe. Its main elements were excessive heat, with the accompaniments of famine and thirst, but aggravated at every step by the murderous attacks of their cruel enemies, the Bashkirs and the 25 Kirghises.



Page 44

These people, “more fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea,” stuck to the unhappy Kalmucks like a swarm of enraged hornets. And very often, while *they* were attacking them in the rear, their advanced parties and 30 flanks were attacked with almost equal fury by the people of the country which they were traversing; and with good reason, since the law of self-preservation had now obliged the fugitive Tartars to plunder provisions and to forage wherever they passed. In this respect their condition was a constant oscillation of wretchedness; for sometimes, pressed by grinding famine, they took a circuit of perhaps a hundred miles, in order to strike into a land 5 rich in the comforts of life; but in such a land they were sure to find a crowded population, of which every arm was raised in unrelenting hostility, with all the advantages of local knowledge, and with constant preoccupation of all the defensible positions, mountain passes, or bridges. 10 Sometimes, again, wearied out with this mode of suffering, they took a circuit of perhaps a hundred miles, in order to strike into a land with few or no inhabitants. But in such a land they were sure to meet absolute starvation. Then, again, whether with or without this 15 plague of starvation, whether with or without this plague of hostility in front, whatever might be the “fierce varieties” of their misery in this respect, no rest ever came to their unhappy rear; *post equitem sedet atra cura*: it was a torment like the undying worm of conscience. 20 And, upon the whole, it presented a spectacle altogether unprecedented in the history of mankind. Private and personal malignity is not unfrequently immortal; but rare indeed is it to find the same pertinacity of malice in a nation. And what embittered the interest was that the 25 malice was reciprocal. Thus far the parties met upon equal terms; but that equality only sharpened the sense of their dire inequality as to other circumstances. The Bashkirs were ready to fight “from morn till dewy eve.” The Kalmucks, on the contrary, were always obliged to 30 run. Was it *from* their enemies as creatures whom they feared? No; but *towards* their friends—towards that final haven of China—as what was hourly implored by the prayers of their wives and the tears of their children. But, though they fled unwillingly, too often they fled in vain—being unwillingly recalled. There lay the torment. Every day the Bashkirs fell upon them; every day the same unprofitable battle was renewed; as a matter of course, the Kalmucks recalled part of their 5 advanced guard to fight them; every day the battle raged for hours, and uniformly with the same result. For, no sooner did the Bashkirs find themselves too heavily pressed, and that the Kalmuck march had been retarded by some hours, than they retired into the boundless 10 deserts, where all pursuit was hopeless.



Page 45

But if the Kalmucks resolved to press forwards, regardless of their enemies—in that case their attacks became so fierce and overwhelming that the general safety seemed likely to be brought into question; nor could any effectual remedy 15 be applied to the case, even for each separate day, except by a most embarrassing halt and by countermarches that, to men in their circumstances, were almost worse than death. It will not be surprising that the irritation of such a systematic persecution, superadded to a previous, 20 and hereditary hatred, and accompanied by the stinging consciousness of utter impotence as regarded all effectual vengeance, should gradually have inflamed the Kalmuck animosity into the wildest expression of downright madness and frenzy. Indeed, long before the 25 frontiers of China were approached, the hostility of both sides had assumed the appearance much more of a warfare amongst wild beasts than amongst creatures acknowledging the restraints of reason or the claims of a common nature. The spectacle became too atrocious; it 30 was that of a host of lunatics pursued by a host of fiends.

* * * * *

On a fine morning in early autumn of the year 1771, Kien Long, the Emperor of China, was pursuing his amusements in a wild frontier district lying on the outside of the Great Wall. For many hundred square leagues the country was desolate of inhabitants, but rich in woods of ancient growth, and overrun with game of every description. In a central spot of this solitary 5 region the Emperor had built a gorgeous hunting lodge, to which he resorted annually for recreation and relief from the cares of government. Led onwards in pursuit of game, he had rambled to a distance of 200 miles or more from his lodge, followed at a little distance by a 10 sufficient military escort, and every night pitching his tent in a different situation, until at length he had arrived on the very margin of the vast central deserts of Asia.[8] Here he was standing by accident, at an opening of his pavilion, enjoying the morning sunshine, when suddenly 15 to the westward there arose a vast, cloudy vapor, which by degrees expanded, mounted, and seemed to be slowly diffusing itself over the whole face of the heavens. By and by this vast sheet of mist began to thicken toward the horizon and to roll forward in billowy volumes. The 20 Emperor's suite assembled from all quarters; the silver trumpets were sounded in the rear; and from all the glades and forest avenues began to trot forwards towards the pavilion the yagers—half cavalry, half huntsmen—who composed the imperial escort. Conjecture was on 25 the stretch to divine the cause of this phenomenon; and the interest continually increased in proportion as simple curiosity gradually deepened into the anxiety of uncertain danger. At first

Page 46

it had been imagined that some vast troops of deer or other wild animals of the chase had been disturbed in their forest haunts by the Emperor's movements, or possibly by wild beasts prowling for prey, and might be fetching a compass by way of re-entering the forest grounds at some remoter points, secure from molestation. But this conjecture was dissipated by the slow increase of the cloud and the steadiness of its motion. In the course of two hours the vast phenomenon had advanced to a point which was judged to be within five miles of the spectators, though all calculations of distance were difficult, and often fallacious, when applied to the endless expanses of the Tartar deserts. Through the next hour, during which the gentle morning breeze had a little freshened, the dusty vapor had developed itself far and wide into the appearance of huge aerial draperies, hanging in mighty volumes from the sky to the earth; and at particular points, where the eddies of the breeze acted upon the pendulous skirts of these aerial curtains, rents were perceived, sometimes taking the form of regular arches, portals, and windows, through which began dimly to gleam the heads of camels "indorsed" with human beings, and at intervals the moving of men and horses in tumultuous array, and then through other openings, or vistas, at far-distant points, the flashing of polished arms. But sometimes, as the wind slackened or died away, all those openings, of whatever form, in the cloudy pall, would slowly close, and for a time the whole pageant was shut up from view; although the growing din, the clamors, the shrieks, and groans ascending from infuriated myriads, reported, in a language not to be misunderstood, what was going on behind the cloudy screen.

It was, in fact, the Kalmuck host, now in the last extremities of their exhaustion, and very fast approaching to that final stage of privation and killing misery beyond which few or none could have lived, but also, happily for themselves, fast approaching (in a literal sense) that final stage of their long pilgrimage at which they would meet hospitality on a scale of royal magnificence and full protection from their enemies. These enemies, however, as yet, still were hanging on their rear as fiercely as ever, though this day was destined to be the last of their hideous persecution. The Khan had, in fact, sent forward couriers with all the requisite statements and petitions, addressed to the Emperor of China. These had been duly received, and preparations made in consequence to welcome the Kalmucks with the most paternal benevolence. But as these couriers had been dispatched from the Torgau at the moment of arrival thither, and before the advance of Trautenberg had made it necessary for the Khan to order a hasty renewal of the flight, the Emperor had not looked for their arrival on his frontiers until



Page 47

full three months after the present time. The Khan had, indeed, expressly notified his intention to pass the summer heats on the banks of the Torgau, and to recommence his retreat about the beginning of September. The subsequent change of plan being unknown to Kien Long, 25 left him for some time in doubt as to the true interpretation to be put upon this mighty apparition in the desert: but at length the savage clamors of hostile fury and clangor of weapons unveiled to the Emperor the true nature of those unexpected calamities which had so prematurely 30 precipitated the Kalmuck measure.

Apprehending the real state of affairs, the Emperor instantly perceived that the first act of his fatherly care for these erring children (as he esteemed them), now returning to their ancient obedience, must be—to deliver them from their pursuers. And this was less difficult than might have been supposed. Not many miles in the rear was a body of well-appointed cavalry, with a strong detachment of artillery, who always attended the Emperor's 5 motions. These were hastily summoned. Meantime it occurred to the train of courtiers that some danger might arise to the Emperor's person from the proximity of a lawless enemy, and accordingly he was induced to retire a little to the rear. It soon appeared, however, to 10 those who watched the vapory shroud in the desert, that its motion was not such as would argue the direction of the march to be exactly upon the pavilion, but rather in a diagonal line, making an angle of full 45 degrees with that line in which the imperial *cortege* had been standing, 15 and therefore with a distance continually increasing. Those who knew the country judged that the Kalmucks were making for a large fresh-water lake about seven or eight miles distant. They were right; and to that point the imperial cavalry was ordered up; and it was precisely 20 in that spot, and about three hours after, and at noonday on the 8th of September, that the great Exodus of the Kalmuck Tartars was brought to a final close, and with a scene of such memorable and hellish fury as formed an appropriate winding up to an expedition in all its parts 25 and details so awfully disastrous. The Emperor was not personally present, or at least he saw whatever he *did* see from too great a distance to discriminate its individual features; but he records in his written memorial the report made to him of this scene by some of his own 30 officers.

The Lake of Tengis, near the frightful Desert of Kobi, lay in a hollow amongst hills of a moderate height, ranging generally from two to three thousand feet high. About eleven o'clock in the forenoon, the Chinese cavalry reached the summit of a road which led through a cradle-like dip in the mountains right down upon the margin of the lake. From this pass, elevated about two thousand feet above the level of the water, they continued to 5 descend,



Page 48

by a very winding and difficult road, for an hour and a half; and during the whole of this descent they were compelled to be inactive spectators of the fiendish spectacle below. The Kalmucks, reduced by this time from about six hundred thousand souls to two hundred and 10 sixty thousand, and after enduring for two months and a half the miseries we have previously described—outrageous heat, famine, and the destroying scimiter of the Kirghises and the Bashkirs—had for the last ten days been traversing a hideous desert, where no vestiges were 15 seen of vegetation, and no drop of water could be found. Camels and men were already so overladen that it was a mere impossibility that they should carry a tolerable sufficiency for the passage of this frightful wilderness. On the eighth day the wretched daily allowance, which had 20 been continually diminishing, failed entirely; and thus, for two days of insupportable fatigue, the horrors of thirst had been carried to the fiercest extremity. Upon this last morning, at the sight of the hills and the forest scenery, which announced to those who acted as guides 25 the neighborhood of the Lake of Tengis, all the people rushed along with maddening eagerness to the anticipated solace. The day grew hotter and hotter, the people more and more exhausted; and gradually, in the general rush forward to the lake, all discipline and command were lost—all 30 attempts to preserve a rear guard were neglected—the wild Bashkirs rode on amongst the encumbered people and slaughtered them by wholesale, and almost without resistance. Screams and tumultuous shouts proclaimed the progress of the massacre; but none heeded—none halted; all alike, pauper or noble, continued to rush on with maniacal haste to the waters—all with faces blackened by the heat preying upon the liver and with tongue drooping from the mouth. The cruel Bashkir was 5 affected by the same misery, and manifested the same symptoms of his misery, as the wretched Kalmuck; the murderer was oftentimes in the same frantic misery as his murdered victim—many, indeed (an ordinary effect of thirst), in both nations had become lunatic, and in this 10 state, whilst mere multitude and condensation of bodies alone opposed any check to the destroying scimiter and the trampling hoof, the lake was reached; and to that the whole vast body of enemies rushed, and together continued to rush, forgetful of all things at that moment 15 but of one almighty instinct. This absorption of the thoughts in one maddening appetite lasted for a single half hour; but in the next arose the final scene of parting vengeance. Far and wide the waters of the solitary lake were instantly dyed red with blood and gore: here rode a 20 party of savage Bashkirs, hewing off heads as fast as the swaths fall before the mower's scythe; there stood unarmed Kalmucks in a death grapple with their detested foes, both up to the middle in water,

Page 49

and oftentimes both sinking together below the surface, from weakness or from 25 struggles, and perishing in each other's arms. Did the Bashkirs at any point collect into a cluster for the sake of giving impetus to the assault? Thither were the camels driven in fiercely by those who rode them, generally women or boys; and even these quiet creatures were 30 forced into a share in this carnival of murder by trampling down as many as they could strike prostrate with the lash of their fore-legs. Every moment the water grew more polluted; and yet every moment fresh myriads came up to the lake and rushed in, not able to resist their frantic thirst, and swallowing large draughts of water, visibly contaminated with the blood of their slaughtered compatriots. Wheresoever the lake was shallow enough to allow of men raising their heads above the water, there, 5 for scores of acres, were to be seen all forms of ghastly fear, of agonizing struggle, of spasm, of death, and the fear of death—revenge, and the lunacy of revenge—until the neutral spectators, of whom there were not a few, now descending the eastern side of the lake, at length 10 averted their eyes in horror. This horror, which seemed incapable of further addition, was, however, increased by an unexpected incident. The Bashkirs, beginning to perceive here and there the approach of the Chinese cavalry, felt it prudent—wheresoever they were sufficiently 15 at leisure from the passions of the murderous scene—to gather into bodies. This was noticed by the governor of a small Chinese fort built upon an eminence above the lake; and immediately he threw in a broadside, which spread havoc among the Bashkir tribe. As often 20 as the Bashkirs collected into *globes* and *turms* as their only means of meeting the long line of descending Chinese cavalry, so often did the Chinese governor of the fort pour in his exterminating broadside; until at length the lake, at its lower end, became one vast seething 25 caldron of human bloodshed and carnage. The Chinese cavalry had reached the foot of the hills; the Bashkirs, attentive to *their* movements, had formed; skirmishes had been fought; and, with a quick sense that the contest was henceforward rapidly becoming hopeless, the Bashkirs 30 and Kirghises began to retire. The pursuit was not as vigorous as the Kalmuck hatred would have desired. But, at the same time, the very gloomiest hatred could not but find, in their own dreadful experience of the Asiatic deserts, and in the certainty that these wretched Bashkirs had to repeat that same experience a second time, for thousands of miles, as the price exacted by a retributory Providence for their vindictive cruelty—not the very gloomiest of the Kalmucks, or the least reflecting, 5 but found in all this a retaliatory chastisement more complete and absolute than any which their swords and lances could have obtained or human vengeance could have devised.



Page 50

* * * * *

Here ends the tale of the Kalmuck wanderings in the 10 Desert; for any subsequent marches which awaited them were neither long nor painful. Every possible alleviation and refreshment for their exhausted bodies had been already provided by Kien Long with the most princely munificence; and lands of great fertility were immediately 15 assigned to them in ample extent along the River Ily, not very far from the point at which they had first emerged from the wilderness of Kobi. But the beneficent attention of the Chinese Emperor may be best stated in his own words, as translated into French by one of the Jesuit 20 missionaries: “La nation des Torgotes (*savoir les Kalmuques*) arriva a Ily, toute delabree, n’ayant ni de quoi vivre, ni de quoi se vetir. Je l’avais prevu; et j’avais ordonne de faire en tout genre les provisions necessaires pour pouvoir les secourir promptement: c’est ce qui a ete 25 execute. On a fait la division des terres: et on a assigne a chaque famille une portion suffisante pour pouvoir servir a son entretien, soit en la cultivant, soit en y nourrissant des bestiaux. On a donne a chaque particulier des etoffes pour l’habiller, des grains pour se nourrir pendant l’espace 30 d’une annee, des ustensiles pour le menage et d’autres choses necessaires: et outre cela plusieurs onces d’argent, pour se pourvoir de ce qu’on aurait pu oublier. On a designe des lieux particuliers, fertiles en paturages; et on leur a donne des boeufs, moutons, *etc.*, pour qu’ils pussent dans la suite travailler par eux-memes a leur entretien et a leur bien-etre.”

These are the words of the Emperor himself, speaking 5 in his own person of his own paternal cares; but another Chinese, treating the same subject, records the munificence of this prince in terms which proclaim still more forcibly the disinterested generosity which prompted, and the delicate considerateness which conducted, this extensive 10 bounty. He has been speaking of the Kalmucks, and he goes on thus:—“Lorsqu’ils arriverent sur nos frontieres (au nombre de plusieurs centaines de mille, quoique la fatigue extreme, la faim, la soif, et toutes les autres incommodites inseparables d’une tres-longue et 15 tres-penible route en eussent fait perir presque autant), ils etaient reduits a la derniere misere; ils manquaient de tout. Il” (viz. l’empereur, Kien Long) “leur fit preparer des logemens conformes a leur maniere de vivre; il leur fit distribuer des alimens et des habits; il leur fit 20 donner des boeufs, des moutons, et des ustensiles, pour les mettre en etat de former des troupeaux et de cultiver la terre, et tout cela a ses propres frais, qui se sont montes a des sommes immenses, sans compter l’argent qu’il a donne a chaque chef-de-famille, pour pouvoir a la 25 subsistance de sa femme et de ses enfans.”



Page 51

Thus, after their memorable year of misery, the Kalmucks were replaced in territorial possessions, and in comfort equal, perhaps, or even superior, to that which they had enjoyed in Russia, and with superior political 30 advantages. But, if equal or superior, their condition was no longer the same; if not in degree, their social prosperity had altered in quality; for, instead of being a purely pastoral and vagrant people, they were now in circumstances which obliged them to become essentially dependent upon agriculture; and thus far raised in social rank that, by the natural course of their habits and the necessities of life, they were effectually reclaimed from roving and from the savage customs connected with a half 5 nomadic life. They gained also in political privileges, chiefly through the immunity from military service which their new relations enabled them to obtain. These were circumstances of advantage and gain. But one great disadvantage there was, amply to overbalance all other 10 possible gain: the chances were lost, or were removed to an incalculable distance, for their conversion to Christianity, without which in these times there is no absolute advance possible on the path of true civilization.

One word remains to be said upon the *personal* interests 15 concerned in this great drama. The catastrophe in this respect was remarkable and complete. Oubacha, with all his goodness and incapacity of suspecting, had, since the mysterious affair on the banks of the Torgau, felt his mind alienated from his cousin; he revolted from the man 20 that would have murdered him; and he had displayed his caution so visibly as to provoke a reaction in the bearing of Zebek-Dorchi and a displeasure which all his dissimulation could not hide. This had produced a feud, which, by keeping them aloof, had probably saved the life of 25 Oubacha; for the friendship of Zebek-Dorchi was more fatal than his open enmity. After the settlement on the Ily this feud continued to advance, until it came under the notice of the Emperor, on occasion of a visit which all the Tartar chieftains made to his Majesty at his hunting 30 lodge in 1772. The Emperor informed himself accurately of all the particulars connected with the transaction—of all the rights and claims put forward—and of the way in which they would severally affect the interests of the Kalmuck people. The consequence was that he adopted the cause of Oubacha, and repressed the pretensions of Zebek-Dorchi, who, on his part, so deeply resented this discountenance to his ambitious projects that, in conjunction with other chiefs, he had the presumption 5 even to weave nets of treason against the Emperor himself. Plots were laid, were detected, were baffled; counter-plots were constructed upon the same basis, and with the benefit of the opportunities thus offered. Finally, Zebek-Dorchi was invited to the imperial lodge, 10 together with all his accomplices; and, under the skilful management of the Chinese nobles in the Emperor's establishment, the murderous artifices of these Tartar chieftains were made to recoil upon themselves, and the whole of them perished by assassination at a great imperial 15 banquet. For the Chinese morality is exactly of that kind which approves in everything the *lex talionis*:



Page 52

“... Lex nec justior ulla est [as *they* think]
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.”

So perished Zebek-Dorchi, the author and originator of 20 the great Tartar Exodus. Oubacha, meantime, and his people were gradually recovering from the effects of their misery, and repairing their losses. Peace and prosperity, under the gentle rule of a fatherly lord paramount, redawned upon the tribes: their household *lares*, after so 25 harsh a translation to distant climates, found again a happy reinstatement in what had, in fact, been their primitive abodes: they found themselves settled in quiet sylvan scenes, rich in all the luxuries of life, and endowed with the perfect loveliness of Arcadian beauty. But from 30 the hills of this favored land, and even from the level grounds as they approach its western border, they still look out upon that fearful wilderness which once beheld a nation in agony—the utter extirpation of nearly half a million from amongst its numbers, and for the remainder a storm of misery so fierce that in the end (as happened also at Athens during the Peloponnesian war from a different 5 form of misery) very many lost their memory; all records of their past life were wiped out as with a sponge—utterly erased and cancelled: and many others lost their reason; some in a gentle form of pensive melancholy, some in a more restless form of feverish delirium and nervous agitation, and others in the fixed forms of 10 tempestuous mania, raving frenzy, or moping idiocy. Two great commemorative monuments arose in after years to mark the depth and permanence of the awe—the sacred and reverential grief, with which all persons looked back upon the dread calamities attached to the 15 year of the tiger—all who had either personally shared in those calamities and had themselves drunk from that cup of sorrow, or who had effectually been made witnesses to their results and associated with their relief: two great monuments; one embodied in the religious solemnity, 20 enjoined by the Dalai-Lama, called in the Tartar language a *Romanang*—that is, a national commemoration, with music the most rich and solemn, of all the souls who departed to the rest of Paradise from the afflictions of the Desert (this took place about six years after the arrival 25 in China); secondly, another, more durable, and more commensurate to the scale of the calamity and to the grandeur of this national Exodus, in the mighty columns of granite and brass erected by the Emperor, Kien Long, near the banks of the Ily. These columns stand upon 30 the very margin of the steppes, and they bear a short but emphatic inscription[10] to the following effect:—



Page 53

By the Will of God,
Here, upon the Brink of these Deserts,
Which from this point begin and stretch away,
Pathless, treeless, waterless,
For thousands of miles, and along the margins of many mighty Nations, 5
Rested from their labors and from great afflictions
Under the shadow of the Chinese Wall,
And by the favor of KIEN LONG, God's Lieutenant upon Earth,
The ancient Children of the Wilderness—the Torgote Tartars— 10
Flying before the wrath of the Grecian Czar,
Wandering Sheep who had strayed away from the Celestial Empire
in the year 1616,
But are now mercifully gathered again, after infinite sorrow,
Into the fold of their forgiving Shepherd. 15
Hallowed be the spot
and
Hallowed be the day—September 8, 1771!
Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

[5] Singular it is, and not generally known, that Grecian women accompanied the *anabasis* of the younger Cyrus and the subsequent retreat of the Ten Thousand. Xenophon affirms that there were “many” women in the Greek army—[Greek: *pollai esan etairai en to strateumati*]; and in a late stage of that trying expedition it is evident that women were amongst the survivors.

[6] “Trashed.” This is an expressive word used by Beaumont and Fletcher in their “*Bonduca*,” *etc.*, to describe the case of a person retarded or embarrassed in flight, or in pursuit, by some encumbrance, whether thing or person, too valuable to be left behind.

[7] There was another *ouloss* equally strong with that of Feka-Zechorr, *viz.* that of Erketunn under the government of Assarcho and Machi, whom some obligations of treaty or other hidden motives drew into the general conspiracy of revolt. But fortunately the two chieftains found means to assure the Governor of Astrachan, on the first outbreak of the insurrection, that their real wishes were for maintaining the old connection with Russia. The Cossacks, therefore, to whom the pursuit was intrusted, had instructions to act cautiously and according to circumstances on coming up with them. The result was, through the prudent management of Assarcho, that the clan, without compromising their pride or independence, made such moderate submissions as satisfied the Cossacks; and eventually both chiefs and people received from the Czarina the rewards and honors of exemplary fidelity.



[8] All the circumstances are learned from a long state paper on the subject of this Kalmuck migration drawn up in the Chinese language by the Emperor himself. Parts of this paper have been translated by the Jesuit missionaries. The Emperor states the whole motives of his conduct and the chief incidents at great length.

[9] *Camels "indorsed" "and elephants indorsed with towers."*—MILTON in *Paradise Regained*.



Page 54

[10] This inscription has been slightly altered in one or two phrases, and particularly in adapting to the Christian era the Emperor's expressions for the year of the original Exodus from China and the retrogressive Exodus from Russia. With respect to the designation adopted for the Russian Emperor, either it is built upon some confusion between him and the Byzantine Caesars, as though the former, being of the same religion with the latter (and occupying in part the same longitudes, though in different latitudes), might be considered as his modern successor; or else it refers simply to the Greek form of Christianity professed by the Russian Emperor and Church.

[Illustration: ROUTE OF THE TARTARS IN THEIR FLIGHT.]

NOTES.

THE ORIGINAL SOURCES.

In Professor Masson's edition of De Quincey, Vol. VII, p. 8, is the following discussion of the author's original sources:

"A word or two on De Quincey's authorities for his splendid sketch called *The Revolt of the Tartars*:—One authority was a famous Chinese state-paper purporting to have been composed by the Chinese Emperor, Kien Long himself (1735—1796), of which a French translation, with the title *Monument de la Transmigration des Tourgouths des Bords de la Mer Caspienne dans l'Empire de la Chine*, had been published in 1776 by the French Jesuit missionaries of Peking, in the first volume of their great collection of *Memoires concernant les Chinois*. The account there given of so remarkable an event of recent Asiatic history as the migration from Russia to China of a whole population of Tartars had so much interested Gibbon that he refers to it in that chapter of his great work in which he describes the ancient Scythians. De Quincey had fastened on the same document as supplying him with an admirable theme for literary treatment. Explaining this some time ago, while editing his *Revolt of the Tartars* for a set of Selections from his Writings, I had to add that there was much in the paper which he could not have derived from that original, and that, therefore, unless he invented a great deal, he must have had other authorities at hand. I failed at the time to discover what these other authorities were,—De Quincey having had a habit of secretiveness in such matters; but since then an incidental reference of his own, in his *Homer and the Homeridae*,^[11] has given me the clue. The author from whom he chiefly drew such of his materials as were not supplied by the French edition of Kien Long's narrative, was, it appears from that reference, the German traveller, Benjamin Bergmann, whose *Nomadische Streifereien unter den Kalmueken in den Jahren 1802 und 1803* came forth from a Riga press, in four parts or volumes, in 1804-1805. The book consists of a series of letters written by Bergmann from different places during his residence among the Tartars, with interjected



Page 55

essays or dissertations of an independent kind on subjects relating to the Tartars,—one of these occupying 106 pages, and entitled *Versuch zur Geschichte der Kalmuekenflucht von der Wolga* ("Essay on the History of the Flight of the Kalmucks from the Volga"). A French translation of the Letters, with this particular Essay included, appeared in 1825 under the title *Voyage de Benjamin Bergmann chez les Kalmueks: Traduit de l'Allemand par M. Moris, Membre de la Societe Asiatique*. Both works are now very scarce; but having seen copies of both (the only copies, I think, in Edinburgh, and possibly the very copies which De Quincey used), I have no doubt left that it was Bergmann's Essay of 1804 that supplied De Quincey with the facts, names, and hints he needed for filling up that outline-sketch of the history of the Tartar Transmigration of 1771 which was already accessible for him in the Narrative of the Chinese Emperor, Kien Long, and in other Chinese State Papers, as these had been published in translation, in 1776, by the French Jesuit missionaries. At the same time, no doubt is left that he passed the composite material freely and boldly through his own imagination, on the principle that here was a theme of such unusual literary capabilities that it was a pity it should be left in the pages of ordinary historiographic summary or record, inasmuch as it would be most effectively treated, even for the purpose of real history, if thrown into the form of an epic or romance. Accordingly he takes liberties with his authorities, deviating from them now and then, and even once or twice introducing incidents not reconcilable with either of them, if not irreconcilable also with historical and geographical possibility. Hence one may doubt sometimes whether what one is reading is to be regarded as history or as invention. On this point I can but repeat words I have already used: as it is, we are bound to be thankful. In quest of a literary theme, De Quincey was arrested somehow by that extraordinary transmigration of a Kalmuck horde across the face of Asia in 1771, which had also struck Gibbon; he inserted his hands into the vague chaos of Asiatic inconceivability enshrouding the transaction; and he tore out the connected and tolerably conceivable story which we now read. There is no such vivid version of any such historical episode in all Gibbon, and possibly nothing truer essentially, after all, to the substance of the facts as they actually happened."

Professor Masson's Appended Editorial Note on the Chinese Accounts of the Migration (Vol. VII, pp. 422-6):

"As has been mentioned in the Preface, these appeared, in translated form, in 1776, in Vol. I of the great collection of *Memoires concernant les Chinois*, published at Paris by the enterprise of the French Jesuit missionaries at Pekin. The most important of them, under the title *Monument de la Transmigration des Tourgouths des Bords de la Mer Caspienne dans l'Empire de la Chine*,



Page 56

occupies twenty-seven pages of the volume, and purports to be a translation of a Chinese document drawn up by the Emperor Kien Long himself. This Emperor, described by the missionaries as 'the best-lettered man in his Empire,' had special reasons for so commemorating, as one of the most interesting events of his reign, the sudden self-transference in 1771 of so large a Tartar horde from the Russian allegiance to his own. Much of the previous part of his reign had been spent in that work of conquering and consolidating the Tartar appendages of his Empire which had been begun by his celebrated grandfather, the Emperor Kang Hi (1661-1721); and it so chanced that the particular Tartar horde which now, in 1771, had marched all the way from the shores of the Caspian to appeal to him for protection and for annexation to the Chinese Empire were but the posterity of a horde who had formerly belonged to that Empire, but had detached themselves from it, in the reign of Kang Hi, by a contrary march westward to annex themselves to the Russian dominions. The event of 1771, therefore, was gratifying to Kien Long as completing his independent exertions among the Tartars on the fringes of China by the voluntary re-settlement within those fringes, and return to the Chinese allegiance, of a whole Tartar population which had been astray, and under unfit and alien rule, for several generations. With this explanation the following sentences from Kien Long's Memoir, containing all its historical substance, will be fully intelligible:

"All those who at present compose the nation of the Torgouths, unaffrighted by the dangers of a long and painful march, and full of the single desire of procuring themselves for the future a better mode of life and a more happy lot, have abandoned the parts which they inhabited far beyond our frontiers, have traversed with a courage proof against all difficulties a space of more than ten thousand *lys*, and are come to range themselves in the number of my subjects. Their submission, in my view of it, is not a submission to which they have been inspired by fear, but is a voluntary and free submission, if ever there was one.... The Torgouths are one of the branches of the Eleuths. Four different branches of people formed at one time the whole nation of the Tchong-kar. It would be difficult to explain their common origin, respecting which indeed there is no very certain knowledge. These four branches separated from each other, so that each became a nation apart. That of the Eleuths, the chief of them all, gradually subdued the others, and continued till the time of Kang Hi to exercise this usurped pre-eminence over them. Tse-ouang-raptan then reigned over the Eleuths, and Ayouki over the Torgouths. These two chiefs, being on bad terms with each other, had their mutual contests; of which Ayouki, who was the weaker, feared that in the end he would be the unhappy victim. He formed the project of withdrawing himself forever from the domination



Page 57

of the Eleuths. He took secret measures for securing the flight which he meditated, and sought safety, with all his people, in the territories which are under the dominion of the Russians. These permitted them to establish themselves in the country of Etchil [the country between the Volga and the Jaik, a little to the north of the Caspian Sea].... Oubache, the present Khan of the Torgouths, is the youngest grandson of Ayouki. The Russians never ceasing to require him to furnish soldiers for incorporation into their armies, and having at last carried off his own son to serve them as a hostage, and being besides of a religion different from his, and paying no respect to that of the Lamas, which the Torgouths profess, Oubache and his people at last determined to shake off a yoke which was becoming daily more and more insupportable. After having secretly deliberated among themselves, they concluded that they must abandon a residence where they had so much to suffer, in order to come and live more at ease in those parts of the dominion of China where the religion professed is that of Fo. At the commencement of the eleventh month of last year [December, 1770] they took the road, with their wives, their children, and all their baggage, traversed the country of the Hasaks [Cossacks], skirted Lake Palkache-nor and the adjacent deserts; and, about the end of the sixth month of this year [in August, 1771], after having passed over more than ten thousand *lys* during the space of the eight whole months of their journey, they arrived at last on the frontiers of Charapen, not far from the borders of Ily. I knew already that the Torgouths were on the march to come and make submission to me. The news was brought me not long after their departure from Etchil. I then reflected that, as Ileton, general of the troops that are at Ily, was already charged with other very important affairs, it was to be feared that he would not be able to regulate with all the requisite attention those which concerned these new refugees. Chouhede, one of the councillors of the general, was at Ouche, charged with keeping order among the Mahometans there. As he found it within his power to give his attention to the Torgouths, I ordered him to repair to Ily and do his best for their solid settlement.... At the same time I did not neglect any of the precautions that seemed to me necessary. I ordered Chouhede to raise small forts and redoubts at the most important points, and to cause all the passes to be carefully guarded; and I enjoined on him the duty of himself getting ready the necessary provisions of every kind inside these defences.... The Torgouths arrived, and on arriving found lodgings ready, means of sustenance, and all the conveniences they could have found in their own proper dwellings. This is not all. Those principal men among them who had to come personally to do me homage had their expenses paid, and were honorably conducted, by the imperial post-road, to

Page 58

the place where I then was. I saw them; I spoke to them; I invited them to partake with me in the pleasures of the chase; and, at the end of the number of days appointed for this exercise, they attended me in my retinue as far as to Ge-hol. There I gave them a ceremonial banquet and made them the customary presents.... It was at this Ge-hol, in those charming parts where Kang Hi, my grandfather, made himself an abode to which he could retire during the hot season, at the same time that he thus put himself in a situation to be able to watch with greater care over the welfare of the peoples that are beyond the western frontiers of the Empire; it was, I say, in those lovely parts that, after having conquered the whole country of the Eleuths, I had received the sincere homages of Tchering and his Tourbeths, who alone among the Eleuths had remained faithful to me. One has not to go many years back to touch the epoch of that transaction. The remembrance of it is yet recent. And now—who could have predicted it?—when there was the least possible room for expecting such a thing, and when I had no thought of it, that one of the branches of the Eleuths which first separated itself from the trunk, those Torgouths who had voluntarily expatriated themselves to go and live under a foreign and distant dominion, these same Torgouths are come of themselves to submit to me of their own good will; and it happens that it is still at Ge-hol, not far from the venerable spot where my grandfather's ashes repose, that I have the opportunity, which I never sought, of admitting them solemnly into the number of my subjects.'

“Annexed to this general memoir there were some notes, also by the Emperor, one of them being that description of the sufferings of the Torgouths on their march, and of the miserable condition in which they arrived at the Chinese frontier, which De Quincey has quoted at p. 417. Annexed to the Memoir there is also a letter from P. Amiot, one of the French Jesuit missionaries, dated 'Pe-king, 15th October, 1773,' containing a comment on the memoir of a certain Chinese scholar and mandarin, Yu-min-tchoung, who had been charged by the Emperor with the task of seeing the narrative properly preserved in four languages in a monumental form. It is from this Chinese comment on the Imperial Memoir that there is the extract at p. 418 as to the miserable condition of the fugitives.

“On a comparison of De Quincey's splendid paper with the Chinese documents, several discrepancies present themselves; the most important of which perhaps are these:—(1) In De Quincey's paper it is Kien Long himself who first descries the approach of the vast Kalmuck horde to the frontiers of his dominions. On a fine morning in the early autumn of 1771, we are told, being then on a hunting expedition in the solitary Tartar wilds on the outside of the great Chinese Wall, and standing by chance at an opening of his pavilion to enjoy the morning sunshine, he



Page 59

sees the huge sheet of mist on the horizon, which, as it rolls nearer and nearer, and its features become more definite, reveals camels, and horses, and human beings in myriads, and announces the advent of, *etc. etc.*! In Kien Long's own narrative he is not there at all, having expected indeed the arrival of the Kalmuck host, but having deputed the military and commissariat arrangements for the reception of them to his trusted officer, Chouhede; and his first sight of any of them is when their chiefs are brought to him, by the imperial post-road, to his quarters a good way off, where they are honorably entertained, and whence they accompany him to his summer residence of Ge-hol. (2) De Quincey's closing account of the monument in memory of the Tartar transmigration which Kien Long caused to be erected, and his copy of the fine inscription on the monument, are not in accord with the Chinese statements respecting that matter. 'Mighty columns of granite and brass erected by the Emperor Kien Long near the banks of the Ily' is De Quincey's description of the monument. The account given of the affair by the mandarin Yu-min-tchoung, in his comment on the Emperor's Memoir, is very different. 'The year of the arrival of the Torgouths,' he says, 'chanced to be precisely that in which the Emperor was celebrating the eightieth year of the age of his mother the Empress-Dowager. In memory of this happy day his Majesty had built on the mountain which shelters from the heat (Pi-chou-chan) a vast and magnificent *miao*, in honor of the reunion of all the followers of Fo in one and the same worship; it had just been completed when Oubache and the other princes of his nation arrived at Ge-hol. In memory of an event which has contributed to make this same year forever famous in our annals, it has been his Majesty's will to erect in the same *miao* a monument which should fix the epoch of the event and attest its authenticity; he himself composed the words for the monument and wrote the characters with his own hand. How small the number of persons that will have an opportunity of seeing and reading this monument within the walls of the temple in which it is erected!' Moreover the words of the monumental inscription in De Quincey's copy of it are hardly what Kien Long would have written or could have authorized. 'Wandering sheep who have strayed away from the Celestial Empire in the year 1616' is the expression in De Quincey's copy for that original secession of the Torgouth Tartars from their eastern home on the Chinese borders for transference of themselves far west to Russia, which was repaired and compensated by their return in 1771 under their Khan Oubache. As distinctly, on the other hand, the memoir of Kien Long refers the date of the original secession to no farther back than the reign of his own grandfather, the Emperor Kang Hi, when Ayouki, the grandfather of Oubache, was Khan of the Torgouths, and induced them to part company with their overbearing kinsmen the Eleuths, and seek refuge within the Russian territories on the Volga. In the comment of the Chinese mandarin on the Imperial Memoir the time is more exactly indicated by the statement that the Torgouths had remained 'more than seventy years' in their Russian settlements when Oubache brought them back. This would refer us to about 1700, or, at farthest, to between 1690 and 1700, for the secession under Ayouki.



Page 60

“The discrepancies are partly explained by the fact that De Quincey followed Bergmann’s account,—which account differs avowedly in some particulars from that of the Chinese memoirs. In Bergmann I find the original secession of the ancestors of Oubache’s Kalmuck horde from China to Russia *is* pushed back to 1616, just as in De Quincey. But, though De Quincey keeps by Bergmann when he pleases, he takes liberties with Bergmann too, intensifies Bergmann’s story throughout, and adds much to it for which there is little or no suggestion in Bergmann. For example, the incident which De Quincey introduces with such terrific effect as the closing catastrophe of the march of the fugitive Kalmucks before their arrival on the Chinese frontier,—the incident of their thirst-maddened rush into the waters of Lake Tengis, and their wallow there in bloody struggle with their Bashkir pursuers,—has no basis in Bergmann larger than a few slight and rather matter-of-fact sentences. As Bergmann himself refers here and there in his narrative to previous books, German or Russian, for his authorities, it is just possible that De Quincey may have called some of these to his aid for any intensification or expansion of Bergmann he thought necessary. My impression, however, is that he did nothing of the sort, but deputed any necessary increment of his Bergmann materials to his own lively imagination.”

* * * * *

1 1. The first three paragraphs of the essay, comprising the formal introduction, are intentionally rather more picturesque and vivacious in style than the ordinary narrative that follows. If these paragraphs be read consecutively aloud, the student will surely feel the sweep and power of De Quincey’s eloquence. Attention may well be directed to the author’s own apparent interest in his subject because of its appeal to the *imagination* (p. 1, l. 4), of the *romantic circumstances* (p. 1, l. 11), of its *dramatic capabilities* (p. 2, l. 8), of its *scenical situations* (p. 3, l. 8). Throughout the essay effort should be made to excite appreciation of the significance of words, and De Quincey’s mastery in the use of words may be continually illustrated. In paragraph 1, note the fitness of the word *velocity* (l. 12) and the appropriateness of the epithets in *almighty instincts* (l. 17), *life-withering marches* (l. 18), *gloomy vengeance* (l. 19), *volleying thunders* (p. 2, l. 1).

1 5. Tartar. Originally applied to certain tribes in Chinese Tartary, but here used for Mongolian. Look up etymology and trace relation of the word to *Turk*.—steppes. A Russian word indicating large areas more or less level and devoid of forests; these regions are often similar in character to the American prairie, and are used for pasturage.

1 6,7. *terminus a quo, terminus ad quem*. The use of phrases quoted from classic sources is frequent in De Quincey’s writings. Note such phrases as they occur, also foreign words. Is their use to be justified?



Page 61

1 18. leeming. The lemming, or leming. A rodent quadruped. "It is very prolific, and vast hordes periodically migrate down to the sea, destroying much vegetation in their path."—*Century Dictionary*.

1 22. Miltonic images. "Miltonic" here characterizes not only images used by Milton, but images suggestive of his as well. Yet compare:

Or from above
Should intermitted vengeance arm again
His red right hand to plague us?
—*Paradise Lost*, II, 172-4.

Or, with solitary hand
Reaching beyond all limit, at one blow
Unaided could have finished thee.
—*Paradise Lost*, VI, 139-41.

2 12. sanctions. The word here means not permission, nor recognition merely, but the avowal of something as sacred, hence obligatory; a thing ordained.

2 13, 14. a triple character. De Quincey is fond of thus analyzing the facts he has to state. Notice how this method of statement, marked by "1st," "2dly," "3dly," contributes to the clearness of the paragraph.

2 17. "Venice Preserved." A tragedy by Thomas Otway, one of the Elizabethan dramatists (1682).—"Fiesco." A tragedy by the great German dramatist Friedrich Schiller (1783), the full title of which is *The Conspiracy of Fiesco at Genoa*.

2 22. Cambyses, the Third (529-522 B.C.). He was king of Persia and led an expedition into Ethiopia, which ended disastrously for him.

2 23. anabasis. The word itself means "a march up" into the interior.—katabasis (l. 28) means "a march down,"—in this case the retreat of the Greeks. The *Anabasis* of the Greek historian Xenophon is the account of the expedition of Cyrus the Younger against Artaxerxes, which ended with the death of Cyrus at the battle of Cunaxa (401 B.C.).

2 25. Crassus. A Roman general who led an army into Parthia (or Persia) (54 B.C.). He was defeated and put to death by torture.—Julian (l. 26), the Apostate, lost his life while invading Persia (363 A.D.).

2 28. the Russian anabasis, *etc.* The historic invasion of Russia by the armies of Napoleon in 1812, followed by the terrible retreat from Moscow.



3 3. This triple character, *etc.* Note this method of making clear the connection between paragraphs. Make close study of these paragraphs; analyze their structure. Compare the manner of introducing subsequent paragraphs.

3 14. Wolga. The German spelling. The Volga is the longest river in Europe. It is difficult to locate with certainty all the points here mentioned.

3 16. Koulagina was a fort somewhere on the Ural river; perhaps to be identified with Kulaschinskaja, or Kologinskaia.

3 17. Cossacks. A people of mixed origin, but of Russian rather than Tartar stock. There are two branches, the Ukraine and the Don Cossacks. This people is first heard of in the tenth century. The title of the leader was *Hetman*; the office was elective and the government was democratic. The Cossacks have been noted always as fierce fighters and are valuable subjects of the czar. The *Bashkirs* (l. 18) are Mongolians and nomadic in their habits.



Page 62

3 18. Ouchim was evidently a mountain pass in the Ural range (compare p. 37, l. 18).

3 19. Torgau, spelled also *Torgai* by De Quincey, though elsewhere *Turgai*, indicates a district east of the Ural mountains; it is also the name of the principal city of that district.

3 20. Khan. A Tartar title meaning chief or governor.

3 22. Lake of Tengis. Lake Balkash is meant. Compare p. 56, l. 18, and note thereon.

3 23. Zebek-Dorchi. One of the principal characters in the following narrative.

3 32. Kalmucks. A branch of the Mongolian family of peoples, divided into four tribes, and dwelling in the Chinese Empire, western Siberia, and southeastern Russia. They were nomads, adherents of a form of Buddhism, and number over 200,000.—*Century Cyclopedia of Names*.

4 12. exasperated. As an illustration of the discriminating use of words, explain the difference in meaning of *exasperated* and *irritated* (l. 19); also point out the fitness of the word *inflated* in the phrase (l. 13).

5 23. rival. Why “almost a competitor”? What is the meaning of each word?

5 32. odious. Is there any gain in force by adding *repulsive*?

6 5. Machiavelian. Destitute of political morality. A term derived from the name of Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian statesman and writer (1469-1527), who, in a treatise on government entitled “The Prince,” advocated, or was interpreted to advocate, the disregard of moral principle in the maintenance of authority. In this sentence discriminate between the apparent synonyms *dissimulation*, *hypocrisy*, *perfidy*.

6 15. Elizabeth Petrowna. Daughter of Peter the Great and Catharine I. Empress of Russia 1741-1762.

6 28. Tcherkask. An important city of the Cossacks, near the mouth of the Don.—tents. A common method of counting families among nomads. What figure of speech does this illustrate?

7 25. roubles. A rouble is the Russian unit of value, worth seventy-seven cents. The word is etymologically connected with the Indian *rupee*.

7 28. Thus far, *etc*. Notice the care with which De Quincey analyzes the situation.

8 19. mercenary. Look up origin of the word. How is it appropriate here?



8 29. romantic. What are the qualities indicated by this adjective? How did the word, derived from *Roman*, get its present significance?

8 34. A triple vengeance. Compare with the similar analysis p. 2, l. 13.

9 11. behemoth. A Hebrew word meaning "great beast." It was used probably of the hippopotamus. See *Job*, xl, 15-24. In the work by Bergmann, which furnished De Quincey with much of his material, the figure used is that of a giant and a dwarf.—
Muscovy. An old name of Russia, derived from Moscow.

9 13. "lion ramp." Quoted from Milton:



Page 63

The bold Ascalonite
Fled from his lion ramp.
—*Samson Agonistes*, 139.

“*Baptized and infidel*” and “*barbaric East*” are also borrowings from Milton.

9 16. unnumbered numbers. Notice how effectively in this and the following sentences De Quincey utilizes *suggested* words: *monstrous, monstrosity; hopelessness, hope*.

9 22. fable. Here used for plot; the idea being that the story of the Revolt has all the compactness and unity of design to be found in the plot of a classic tragedy, which could admit the introduction of no external incidents or episodes to confuse the thread of the main action.

10 8. translation. Note the etymology of this word, which is here used in its literal sense.

10 17. But what, *etc.* See with what art, as well as with what evident interest, De Quincey catches the very spirit of the plot. How does the interrogation add strength?

10 25, 26. Kien Long. “Emperor of China from 1735 to 1796, was the fourth Chinese emperor of the Mantchoo-Tartar dynasty, and a man of the highest reputation for ability and accomplishment.”—MASSON.

10 28. religion. Lamaism. “A corrupted form of Buddhism prevailing in Tibet and Mongolia, which combines the ethical and metaphysical ideas of Buddhism with an organized hierarchy under two semi-political sovereign pontiffs, an elaborate ritual, and the worship of a host of deities and saints.”—*Century Dictionary*.

10 29. Chinese Wall. This famous wall was built for defence against the northern Mongols in the third century. It is 1400 miles in length and of varying height. In what sense is the phrase used figuratively?

11 17. great Lama. “Lama, a celibate priest or ecclesiastic belonging to that variety of Buddhism known as Lamaism. There are several grades of lamas, both male and female. The dalai-lama and the tesho- or bogdo-lama are regarded as supreme pontiffs. They are of equal authority in their respective territories, but the former is much the more important, and is known to Europeans as the Grand Lama,”—*Century Dictionary*.

The Dalai-Lama (p. 12, l. 11) resides at Lassa in Tibet.

12 34. With respect to the month. Notice the extreme care with which the author develops the following details, and the touch of sympathy with which this paragraph closes.



13 28. war raged. “The war was begun in 1768 when Mustapha III. was Sultan of Turkey; and it was continued till 1774.”—MASSON.

13 33. Human experience, *etc.* It is a favorite device of this writer to develop a concrete fact into an abstraction of general application. Do you believe that this is true? Can you give any illustration?

15 1. a pitched battle. “It will be difficult, I think, to find record, in the history of the Russo-Turkish war of 1768, of any battle answering to this.”—MASSON.



Page 64

15 10. Paladins. A term used especially to designate the famous knightly champions who served the Frankish Charlemagne. Look up the etymology of the word and trace its present meaning.

15 24. ukase. "An edict or order, legislative or administrative, emanating from the Russian government."—*Century Dictionary*.

16 9. mummeries. Find the original meaning of this word.

16 22. Catharine II. "Elizabeth had been succeeded in 1762 by her nephew Peter III., who had reigned but a few months when he was dethroned by a conspiracy of Russian nobles headed by his German wife Catharine. She became Empress in his stead, and reigned from 1762 to 1796 as Catharine II."—MASSON.

17 10. doubtful suspicion and indirect presumption. Note the additional force given to the nouns by the adjectives.

17 18. Weseloff. This gentleman is referred to again at more length in pages 45-50.

17 31. sanctions. Compare the note on p. 2, l. 12. The sense in which the word is used justifies the use of *violate* in the next line.

18 24. first of all. Again see how, by use of this phrase, followed later by *secondly*, *thirdly*, *etc.*, De Quincey gains greater clearness for his various points.

19 29. But the time, *etc.* Here is the first general division point in the main narrative. The genesis of the plot has been described; now follow the active preliminaries to the flight.

19 33. one vast conflagration. Compare the account, p. 25.

20 12, 13. But where or how, *etc.* Note again the effective use of interrogation. How does it stimulate interest?

20 17. Kirghises. The spelling *Kirghiz* is more familiar. Like the Bashkirs, nomads of the Mongolian-Tartar race, perhaps the least civilized of those inhabiting the steppes.

20 26. *rhetoric*. In what sense used here? Is this use correct?

21 5. *Sarepta*. Locate this town; it is on a small river that empties into the Volga. "The point of the reference to this particular town is that it was a colony of industrious Germans, having been founded in 1764 or 1765 by the Moravian Brothers."—BALDWIN.

22 11. Temba. The Jemba.



22 28. Kichinskoi. Notice the vividness of the character portrait that follows; compare it with the portraiture of Zebek and Oubacha previously given.

23 1. surveillant. Here used for watchman or spy. What derivatives have we from this French expression?

23 34. Christmas arrived. Another division point in the analysis.

24 5. Astrachan. Also spelled *Astrakhan*. The name of a large and somewhat barren district comprising more than 90,000 square miles of territory in southeastern Europe; its capital city, having the same name, is situated on the Volga near its mouth.

24 26. at the rate of 300 miles a day. By no means an incredible speed; in Russia such sledge flights are not uncommon. Compare what De Quincey has to say of the glory of motion in *The English Mail-Coach*,—"running at the least twelve miles an hour."



Page 65

25 26. malignant counsels. What is the full effect of this epithet?

26 10. valedictory vengeance. Note again the force of the epithet.

26 28. aggravate. What is the literal significance of this word? As synonymous with what words is it often incorrectly used?

28 11. For now began to unroll. Does this paragraph constitute a digression, or is it a useful amplification of the narrative? Does De Quincey exaggerate when he terms these experiences of the Tartars “the most awful series of calamities anywhere recorded”?

28 14. sudden inroads. “The inroads of the Huns into Europe extended from the third century into the fifth; those of the Avars from the sixth century to the eighth or ninth; the first great conquests of the Mongol Tartars were by Genghis-Khan, the founder of a Mongol empire which stretched, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, from China to Poland.”—MASSON.

28 18. volleying lightning. Compare p. 2, l. 1, where De Quincey uses a somewhat similar phrase. Why is the phrase varied, do you suppose?

28 21. the French retreat. It would be interesting to compare the incidents and figures of this retreat, as furnished by biographers and historians. Sloane’s *Life of Napoleon* is a recent authority.

28 26. vials of wrath. Compare *Revelation*, xv, 7, and xvi, 1. If De Quincey had used the Revised Version he would have written *bowls* instead of *vials*. Such borrowings of phrase or incident are called “allusions.” Make a list of the scriptural allusions found in the essay,—of those suggested by Milton.

29 16. Earthquakes. “De Quincey here refers to such destructive shocks as that which occurred at Sparta, 464 B.C., in which, according to Thirlwall, 20,000 persons perished; that which Gibbon speaks of during the reign of Valentinian, 365 A.D., in which 50,000 persons lost their lives at Alexandria alone; that in the reign of Justinian, 526 A.D., in which 250,000 persons were crushed by falling walls; others in Jamaica, 1692 A.D.; at Lisbon, 1755 A.D., with loss of 30,000 lives; and in Venezuela, 1812 A.D., when Caraccas was destroyed, and 20,000 souls perished.”—WAUCHOPE.

29 20. pestilence. Described by Thucydides; see also Grote’s *History of Greece*, Chap. XLIX. Of the great plague of London (1665) the most realistic description is Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year*.

29 28. The siege of Jerusalem. Read Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Bks. V and VI.

29 31. exasperation. Compare note on p. 26, l. 28.



30 3, 4. even of maternal love. The reference is to an incident mentioned by Josephus (*The Jewish War*, Bk. VI, Chap. III), in which a mother is described as driven by the stress of famine to kill and devour her own child.

30 5. romantic misery. How *romantic*? Compare this phrase with similar uses of the word *romantic*.



Page 66

30 10. River Jaik. The Ural.

30 33. scenical propriety. Compare the statement with similar ones made by the author elsewhere.

31 11. decrement. Compare with its positive correspondent, *increment*.

31 20. acharnement. Fury.

31 26. The first stage, *etc.* A time mark in the essay.

32 10. liable. Another instance of a word often misused, correctly employed in the text. Compare note on *aggravate*, p. 26, l. 28.

32 23. Bactrian camels. There are two species of camel, the dromedary, single humped, and the Bactrian, with two humps. The former is native to Arabia, the latter to central Asia. The dromedary is the swifter of the two. *Bactria* is the ancient name of that district now called Balkh, in Afghanistan.

33 7. evasion. Compare with its positive correspondent *invasion*; compare *decrement*, p. 31, l. 11.

34 8. champaign savannas. Both words mean about the same, an open, treeless country, nearly level. What is the linguistic source of both words?

37 19. hills of Moulgaldchares. Spurs of the Urals running southwest.

38 10. Polish dragoons. "The adjective refers not to the nationality, but to the equipment of the cavalry. Thus there was at one time in the French army a corps called *Chasseurs d'Afrique*, and in both the French and that of the Northern troops in our own Civil War a corps of Zouaves. Similarly at p. 53, l. 24, De Quincey speaks of *yagers* among the Chinese troops. Perhaps both Polish dragoon and yager were well-known military terms in 1837. At any rate there is no gain in scrutinizing them too closely, since the context in both cases seems to be pure invention."—BALDWIN.

38 11. cuirassiers. From the French. Soldiers protected by a cuirass, or breastplate, and mounted.

38 20. River Igritch. The Irgiz-koom.

39 21. concurrently. Etymology?

39 33. sad solitudes, *etc.* Notice this as one of the points in a very effective paragraph.

40 3. aggravations. Compare note on p. 26, l. 28.



40 5. howling wilderness. Why so called? Compare with a previous use of the same expression (p. 12, l. 5).

40 18. spectacle. Compare with other references to the theatrical quality of the *Flight*.

40 21. myriads. Is this literal? Notice the contrast in tone between this sentence and those which close the paragraph.

41 12. adust. "Latin, *adustus*, burned. Looking as if burned or scorched."—*Century Dictionary*.

41 15. erected their speaking eyes. Study this expression until its forcefulness is felt. The camel is notorious for its unresponsive dullness; indeed its general apathy to its surroundings is all that accounts for its apparent docility. De Quincey, therefore, is speaking by the book when he describes these brutes as "without the affections or sensibilities of flesh and blood." Their very submissiveness is due to their stupidity.



Page 67

- 41 20. those of Xerxes. See Crete's *History of Greece*, Chap. XXXVIII.
- 41 29. untread. A dictionary word, but uncommon. Recall similar words used by De Quincey which add picturesqueness in part because of their novelty.
- 41 31. their old allegiance. 1616. See the close of this paragraph.
- 41 33. scapegoat. *Leviticus*, xvi, 7-10; 20-22.
- 42 32, 33. land of promise ... house, etc. *Deuteronomy*, viii, 14; ix, 28.
- 43 8. Orsk. Upon the river Or.
- 43 9. Oriembourg. A fort.
- 43 23. sinister. Etymology?
- 43 29. transpiring. Like *aggravate* and *liable*, a word often misused. What does it mean?
- 44 10. were dispersed. Note the variety of phrases in the following ten lines used to indicate separation.
- 46 16. Hetman. Chief. Compare Germ. *Hauptmann*, Eng. *captain*, Fr. *chef*.
- 47 1. evasion. See previous note on p. 33, l. 7.
- 48 2. carabines. Old-fashioned spelling. Short rifles adapted to the use of mounted troops.
- 49 13. without a parallel. As has been seen, De Quincey is fond of superlative statements. A writer may or may not be true in his claims; the habitual assumption, however, predisposes his reader to doubt his judgment.
- 49 16. Desultors. This word is not in common use, but *desultory* is. Look up the derivation and note the metaphor concealed in the latter word.
- 49 19. at the rate of 200 miles. Compare preceding note on p. 24, l. 26.
- 50 27. "more fell," etc. From the last speech in Shakespeare's *Othello*, addressed to Iago:

O Spartan dog,
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea!
Look on the tragic loading of this bed;
This is thy work.



51 17. “fierce varieties.” Misquoted. See *Paradise Lost*, II, 599; VII, 272.

51 19. post equitem, etc.:

Behind the horseman sits black care.

—Horace’s *Odes*, III, 1, 40.

51 20. undying worm. *Isaiah*, lxvi, 24.

51 29. “from morn till dewy eve.” *Paradise Lost*, I, 742.

52 33. On a fine morning. Study this paragraph carefully with reference to the rhetorical effect. The entire scene is the product of De Quincey’s imagination; do you consider it truthful?

53 24. yagers. German *Jaeger*; used of a huntsman or a forester, also in parts of Germany and Austria used to indicate light infantry or cavalry. Compare with *Polish dragoons*, p. 38, l. 10.

54 21. indorsed. Look up the etymology. Has De Quincey, in his note, quoted Milton accurately? See *Paradise Regained*, III, 329.

56 13. rather in a diagonal. This is another characteristic of De Quincey; he is sometimes tediously exact in his details; perhaps the minuteness is justifiable in this instance, as the statement increases the realistic effect of an imaginary scene.



Page 68

56 18. a large fresh-water lake. The Lake of Tengis here referred to, mentioned by name in the paragraph following this, is evidently Lake Balkash, into which flows the river Ily. It is one of the largest lakes in the steppes, but its water is really *salt*.

59 21. globes and turms. Latinisms. Milton uses *globe* in *Paradise Lost*, II, 512, and *turms* in *Paradise Regained*, IV, 66.

60 4. retributory. What more common form is used synonymously?

60 21. “La nation des Torgotes,” *etc.* “The nation of the Torgouths (*to wit the Kalmucks*) arrived at Ily wholly shattered, having neither victuals to live on [*sic*] nor clothes to wear. I had foreseen this, and had given orders for making every kind of preparation necessary for their prompt relief; which was duly done. The distribution of lands was made; and there was assigned to each family a portion sufficient to serve for its support, whether by cultivating it or by feeding cattle on it [*sic*]. There were given to each individual materials for his clothing, corn for his sustenance for the space of one year, utensils for household purposes, and other things necessary; besides some ounces of silver wherewith to provide himself with anything that might have been forgotten. Particular places were marked out for them, fertile in pasture; and cattle and sheep, *etc.*, were given them, that they might be able for the future to work for their own support and well-being.’—This is a note of Kien Long subjoined to his main narrative; and De Quincey, I find, took the above transcript of it from the French translation of Bergmann’s book. That transcript, it is worth observing, is not quite exact to the original French text of the Pekin missionaries.”—MASSON.

61 12. “Lorsqu’ils arriverent,” *etc.* “When they arrived on our frontiers (to the number of some hundreds of thousands, although nearly as many more had perished by the extreme fatigue, the hunger, the thirst, and all the other hardships inseparable from a very long and very toilsome march), they were reduced to the last misery, they were in want of everything. The Emperor supplied them with everything. He caused habitations to be prepared for them suitable for their manner of living; he caused food and clothing to be distributed among them; he had cattle and sheep given them, and implements to put them in a condition for forming herds and cultivating the earth; and all this at his own proper charges, which mounted to immense sums, without counting the money which he gave to each head of a family to provide for the subsistence of his wife and children.’

“This is from a eulogistic abstract of Kien Long’s own narrative by one of his Chinese ministers, named Yu Min Tchoung, a translation of which was sent to Paris by the Jesuit missionary, P. Amiot, together with the translation of the imperial narrative itself. The transcript is again by the French translator of Bergmann, and is again rather inaccurate.”—MASSON.



Page 69

63 17. *lex talionis*. Law of retaliation.

63 18. “*lex nec justior*,” *etc.* “Nor is there any law more just than that the devisers of murder should perish by their own device.”—OVID, *Ars Amatoria*, I, 655.

63 25. *lares*. The minor deities of a Roman household.

63 30. Arcadian beauty. Arcadian is synonymous with rural simplicity and beauty. Arcadia, the central province of Greece, was a pastoral district and lacked the vices—as well as some of the virtues—of the surrounding states.

64 1. *extirpation*. Etymology?

64 23. *music*. One who has listened to Mongolian attempts at harmony must suspect that De Quincey is again inspired by his imagination when he characterizes this part of the commemoration as “rich and solemn.”

64 28. *columns of granite and brass*. This feature of the narrative, as well as many other details of apparent fact, including the entire inscription said to have been placed upon the monument, are evidently the pure invention of De Quincey’s fancy, no mention of these details being found in his historical sources.

FOOTNOTES:

[11] “Some years ago I published a paper on the Flight of the Kalmuck Tartars from Russia. Bergmann, the German from whom that account was chiefly drawn, resided a long time among the Kalmucks,” *etc.*—Essay on *Homer and the Homeridae*.

ADVERTISEMENTS

STANDARD ENGLISH CLASSICS

EDITED BY COMPETENT SCHOLARS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS.

Tennyson’s *The Princess*. Edited by ALBERT S. COOK, Professor of English Literature in Yale University. 40 cents.

Carlyle’s *Essay on Burns*. Edited by CHARLES L. HANSON, Teacher of English in the Mechanic Arts High School, Boston, Mass. 30 cents.

Macaulay’s *Essay on Milton*. Edited by HERBERT A. SMITH, Instructor in English in Yale University. 25 cents.



Macaulay's Essay on Addison. Edited by HERBERT A. SMITH. 35 cents.

Macaulay's Essays on Addison and Milton. (In one volume.) Edited by HERBERT A. SMITH. 50 cents.

Dryden's Palamon and Arcite. Edited by GEORGE E. ELIOT, Jr., Instructor in English in Morgan School, Clinton, Conn. 35 cents.

George Eliot's Silas Marner. Edited by R. ADELAIDE WITHAM, Teacher of English in Latin High School, Somerville, Mass. 50 cents.

Sir Roger de Coverley Papers. From "*The Spectator*." Edited by MARY E. LITCHFIELD. 40 cents.

Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. Edited by L.R. GIBBS. 25 cents.

Pope's Translation of the Iliad. *Books I., VI., XXII., and XXIV.* Edited by WILLIAM TAPPAN. 35 cents.

Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome. Edited by M. GRANT DANIELL, recently Principal of Chauncy-Hall School. cents.



Page 70

Cooper's Last of the Mohicans. Edited by JOHN B. DUNBAR, Instructor in English in the Boys' High School, Brooklyn, N.Y. 60 cents.

Shakespeare's Macbeth. Edited by Rev. HENRY N. HUDSON. 35 cents.

Burke's Speech on Conciliation with America. Edited by HAMMOND LAMONT, Associate Professor of Rhetoric in Brown University. 40 cents.

Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield. Edited by D.H. MONTGOMERY. 40 cents.

Edmund Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord. Edited by ALBERT H. SMYTH, Professor of English Literature in the Central High School, Philadelphia. 30 cents.

Irving's Sketch Book. (Complete.) Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by MARY E. LITCHFIELD. cents.

De Quincey's Revolt of the Tartars. Edited by W.E. SIMONDS, Professor of English Literature in Knox College, Galesburg, Ill. 30 cents.

Milton's Paradise Lost, Books I. and II., and Lycidas. Edited by HOMER B. SPRAGUE. 40 cents.

* * * * *

GINN & COMPANY, Publishers,
Boston. New York. Chicago. Atlanta. Dallas.

THE ATHENAEUM PRESS SERIES

Issued under the general editorship of Professor GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE, of Harvard University, and Professor C.T. WINCHESTER, of Wesleyan University.

THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES ARE NOW READY:

Sidney's Defense of Poesy. Edited by Professor ALBERT S. COOK of Yale University. 80 cents.

Ben Jonson's Timber; or Discoveries. Edited by Professor F.E. SCHELLING of the University of Pennsylvania. 80 cents.

Selections from the Essays of Francis Jeffrey. Edited by LEWIS E. GATES of Harvard University. 90 cents.



Old English Ballads. Edited by Professor F.B. GUMMERE of Haverford College. \$1.25.

Selections from the Works of Thomas Gray. Edited by Professor WM. L. PHELPS of Yale University. 90 cents.

A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics. Edited by Professor F.E. SCHELLING of the University of Pennsylvania. \$1.12.

Seventeenth Century Lyrics. Edited by Professor F.E. SCHELLING of the University of Pennsylvania.

Herrick: Selections from the Hesperides and the Noble Numbers. Edited by Professor E.E. HALE, Jr., of Union University, 90 cents.

Selections from Keats's Poems. Edited by Professor ARLO BATES of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. \$1.00.

Selections from the Works of Sir Richard Steele. Edited by Professor GEORGE R. CARPENTER of Columbia University. Cloth. 90 cents.

Carlyle's Sartor Resartus. Edited by Professor ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN of Dalhousie College, Halifax, N.S. \$1.25.

Selections from Wordsworth's Poems. Edited by Professor EDWARD DOWDEN of the University of Dublin. \$1.25.

Specimens of the Pre-Shakspearean Drama. Edited by Professor JOHN M. MANLY of Chicago University. In three volumes. Vols. I. and II. now ready, \$1.25 each.



Page 71

Selections from Malory's Morte Darthur. Edited by Professor WILLIAM E. MEAD of Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn. \$1.00.

Burke's Speech on Conciliation with America. Edited by Professor HAMMOND LAMONT of Brown University. 50 cents.

Selections from Shelley's Poems. Edited by W.J. ALEXANDER of the University of Toronto. \$1.15.

Selections from Landor. Edited by W.B.S. CLYMER, formerly of Harvard University. \$1.00.

Selections from William Cowper's Poems. Edited by JAMES O. MURRAY of Princeton University. \$1.00.

Selections from Robert Burns's Poems. Edited by the late JOHN G. DOW, formerly of the University of Wisconsin. \$1.10.

The Poems of William Collins. Edited by WALTER C. BRONSON of Brown University, 90 cents.

Gibbon's Memoirs. Edited by Professor OLIVER F. EMERSON of Western Reserve University. \$1.10.

* * * * *

GINN & COMPANY, Publishers.