

# ADVENTURES

OF

# MICHAÏLOW,

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Russian Captive;

AMONG THE

KALMUCS, KIRGHIZ, AND KIWENSES.



WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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I was born in the reign of **SHAH NADIR**, in the little town o. Suzchaas, several days journey South of the Caspian Sea. My parents lived in a mean hut, and supported themselves, like other indigent Persians, by agriculture. Three children, a daughter and two sons, were the only fruit of their conjugal love.

The devastations of the last Turkish war, and a scanty harvest, distinguished the year of **SHAH NADIR**'s decease, 1747. The scantiness of this harvest occasioned a famine in Persia. A great part of the people fell a sacrifice to this calamity, and others sought a support in the towns near the Caspian Sea. My parents too were compelled to leave their native place, and set out for Ratch, a flourishing commercial town, on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea.

My father, and his whole family, left their hut in the most wretched condition. My brother, who was but five years old, and myself, who was only six, followed our ragged parents as naked as when we were born. Our only sustenance during the journey was fruit; and we slept in the open air. While we were travelling, some Caucasian robbers took away my brother, and I have never since heard what became of him. The rest of us reached Ratch in safety. Here my parents sought employment as day labourers; but the number of poor that had flocked to this neighbourhood was very considerable and the wages were consequently very low. An Armenian soon became acquainted with my sister and married her, and thus eased the cares of my parents. But what could they do with me, who was then but six years of age! My uncle advised my father either to sell me, or to give me away. Paternal affection in vain objected to this proposal. The reasonable representations of my uncle at length succeeded, and preparations were made to send me away. I

accidentally overheard these consultations. I wept bitterly, and resisted as much as I could, but in vain. In our way we passed by the residence of the Russian Consul, IWAN BAKUNIN. My father and I were here met by an Armenian groom, in the service of the Consul, who said to my father, "Whither are you taking this boy?" My father replied, "Poverty compels me to lead my only son to market for sale!" The Armenian expressed a wish to purchase me for himself, and calling my father into the stable, soon concluded a bargain. I received a buttered *Churek-cake\**, and my father half a ruble and three Churek-cakes. I eat my cake with cries and tears, and my father left me for ever.

There was at that time in the house of the Consul a Pop (or Russian Priest) named IWAN AFANASSICH. This Ecclesiastic saw me that very evening, and, becoming fond of me, wished to adopt me as his son. The Armenian resisted his solicitations for some time, but the Consul supported the priest, and at last obliged the Armenian to give me up. The priest then renewed his promises, and received from the Consul a written document, which secured to him a legal claim to my person.

IWAN AFANASSICH conducted me to his house, ordered me a bath, caused a clean shirt and a silk jacket to be given me, and treated me in every respect as his own son. After some days he conducted me to a large stone building, which, I was informed afterwards, was a church, when he gave me his benediction, and named me WASSILIJ. My Persian name was BUY.

The generous IWAN AFANASSICH did not officiate constantly at the residence of the Consul, but performed the clerical duties alternately with another priest on board the merchant vessels trading from Ratch. After a few weeks the other priest returned from a voyage, and IWAN AFANASSICH was obliged to embark on board another vessel, while the former remained at the Consul's. AFANASSICH left me with his colleague, to whom he strongly recommended me. But the new priest was a man of low, vulgar ideas, destitute of humanity, and addicted to drinking. A few days after the departure of my second father, my mother, for the first time, paid me a visit. Our joy on meeting each other again was inexpressible, and our tears flowed abundantly. The hard-hearted priest, however, paid no regard to these tender emotions, but tore me away from the arms of this affectionate mother, and with a torrent of abuse pushed her out

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\* These cakes are very common among the Tartars, Kalmucs, and Southern Russians. They are composed of wheat flour and water, are made into the form of a plate, and are about the thickness of a finger.

of the house. But this was not the only mortification I had to endure from this cruel man. One day during Lent, when I had fasted for a whole day, I drew secretly from the drawer of the table, some fragments of a *fast-meal*, in order to satisfy my hunger. The curate unfortunately found me eating, and for this trifling offence, flogged me most unmercifully. At length, to my great joy, my benefactor, the good AFANASSICH, returned, and not only allowed me to see, and speak to, my mother, but even enabled me to make her several trifling presents.

Not long after this the Consul left Ratch, for Astracan, to which place we accompanied him. Some time after our arrival in that city, I was baptized in one of the churches, and received the name of *Michailow*, from a merchant of the name of Michailow Chlebnikow, who stood as sponsor. AFANASSICH, after the lapse of six months, was appointed *Proto-Pop* (chief-priest), and was called first to *Ichornoiyar*, and afterwards to TZARITZYN. This worthy man took me with him wherever he went, and, intending me for the church, caused me to learn to read and write. But, alas! I had lived only five years with AFANASSICH, when death tore him from me.

After the death of this *Proto-Pop*, I became the property of his widow, who, soon after the decease of her husband, left TZARITZYN, and went to live at SARATOW with her son, who held some clerical office there. She, however, soon exchanged this new residence for JENATAJEWSK, having been invited by her daughter, who had there married the Kalmuc interpreter, KIRILLIJ MAKARITCH WESELOFF, and who was also a widow. Several years passed away, and the mother and her daughter died. I then entered into the service of Lieutenant SAWA SPIRIDOMITCH WESELOFF, half brother to the aforesaid Weseloff.

My new master was at this time with a Company of Kalmuc Dragoons, who always lived in the neighbourhood of the Kalmucs, and were obliged to accompany them in all their warlike excursions. I served with my master in two Kalmuc campaigns, and was at the great battle of the Kalas, where above five thousand of the enemy were slain.

After having faithfully served my master for several years, a particular incident occasioned a separation, to which I attribute all the misfortunes that afterwards befel me.

I immediately enlisted into the service of the Cossacks, agreed for an annual pay of eighty rubles, and received thirty rubles bounty.

I entered into the Cossack service the latter end of December, 1770, just when the Kalmucs were preparing to flee to China. ELBASHA CHAN, who was on the opposite side of the Volga,

between ICHORNOLJAR and JENATAJEWSK, endeavoured to lull into security the Russian commander KISHINSKOJ, by pretending there were signs of commotion among the KIRGHIZ, which he wished to suppress. KISHINSKOJ immediately sent him a SSOTNIK (or commander of a hundred Cossacks) with seventeen Cossacks and an Interpreter, to be employed against the Kirghiz, under the command of ALEXANDER MICHALOWITCH DUDYE, Captain of Dragoons, who was at that time in the Kalmuc headquarters. I was one of these seventeen Cossacks.

At Kalmuc a bondman of my master was conducting a cow into the town for sale, and meeting me in the street, requested me to sell it for him. I asked the man why he would not sell it himself. He made numerous excuses, and was so very importunate, that at last I conducted the cow to the market and sold it. Although I never once suspected it, it afterwards turned out, that the Kalmuc slave had stolen the cow. The owner saw the cow, and claimed it from the purchaser as his property. They both went to my master, who questioned me about it. I immediately named the Kalmuc of whom I had received the cow. The Kalmuc, however, denied it so obstinately, that my master considered me to be the guilty person, and caused me to undress to be flogged with a *Plette* (a cat-o'-nine-tails). I had received two or three stripes when the wife of my master entered, and insisted upon my release, being convinced of my innocence. I was accordingly released, but was so exasperated at this unmerited punishment, that I did not remain another moment in the house.

We left Jenatajewsk on the second of January, 1771. We went twenty-seven versts up the Volga in barges, and then crossing the river, landed opposite the *Whoponow Stanitza*. We continued our march as far as the river *Achtuba*, which is in reality an arm of the Volga, branching from that river not far from Tzaritzin, and again running into it near Jenatajewsk. The *Achtuba* being at that time so much swollen, we could not find any ford; we therefore made a raft, upon which we placed our saddles and baggage, and we ourselves swam over on the backs of our horses. We passed the night on the opposite bank, and next morning continued our march towards the camp of the Chan. We had yet two days journey before us, and having but little provision with us, we took on the first day a couple of sheep and on the second a Camel, which served us for food.

During our march the Vice-Chan had made known to all the Kalmucs assembled in the Steppe (sandy desert) NRYN, his intention of fleeing to China, and had sent them back to their habitations, that they might make the necessary preparations for their journey. We met several troops, each consisting of from

ten to twenty armed Kalmucs, who were returning towards the Volga. We enquired, "Why do you return? Are the Kirghiz already vanquished?" The Kalmucs replied, "Our preparations have quieted them: the Vice-Chan has dismissed us, and will himself reach the Volga to-morrow. We Cossacks, not suspecting they would deceive us, cheerfully continued our march, reckoning on the near approach of winter quarters. Towards evening we arrived in the neighbourhood of the Kalmuc camp, and immediately sent forward our Interpreter to order quarters for us. Our horses, which had not left the *Kuban* till late in the Autumn, were so much fatigued, that it was with the utmost difficulty they dragged themselves along, and as we sensibly felt the increasing cold weather, we were very impatient for warm huts. I followed the Interpreter somewhat quicker than the other Cossacks, and had not rode far, when I heard at a distance a warm altercation, and soon after distinguished the voice of our Interpreter. I at last perceived a Kalmuc hut, from which they were just turning out the Interpreter. I addressed a Kalmuc Durhatch priest, (fortune-teller), whose name was GABUN SHARAP, and who belonged to the suit of the Lama, and said to him. "What is the meaning of this noise?" SHARAP made no reply, but with a mild voice, said, "what is your name?" I answered in an angry tone, "my name is WASSKA." "WASSKA," replied the priest, "this is a fast day with us: we do not slaughter to day, and therefore cannot entertain you. But not far hence are the quarters of the Truchmenzes;\* pass the night with them, and return to-morrow, and I will have some meat cooked for you."

In the meantime our comrades had arrived, and I called out to them, "alight, comrades, take the saddles from your horses: they will not admit us; but we will soon find an entrance." We were just preparing to make ourselves masters of a hut, when the priest invited the Ssotnik, the Interpreter, and myself into his own.

Having entered, we seated ourselves after the Kalmuc fashion, along the side wall of the hut. The priest immediately ordered a cup of tea for each of us, and said, "drink, my lads, that your wishes may be fulfilled." After the tea, some mare's milk was warmed for us, and while we were drinking it, the

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\* Whoever has read in the Mogul News of the Counsellor of State *Pallas*, the history of the Kalmuc flight, will know that about a hundred Truchmenzes were sent to assist the Kalmucs against the Kirghiz.

priest said, "a happy journey to you." The Interpreter and I myself smiled, and said, "All is not right with him."

The priest was silent for some moments, and then asked Who was the better warrior, the Kalmuc, or the Russian? We replied angrily, "GALLUNG, (thus the priests of rank are called by the Kalmucs), thou art either drunk or mad!" The Kalmucs who were present, without attending to our reply, gave it as their opinion, that in the plain the Kalmucs were superior to the Russians, but that in the woods, the Russians had the superiority.

Soon after the Gallung said, "Do any of you know how to read?" The Interpreter pointing to me, said, "he knows how to read." I, however, replied, "I am not a proficient in reading, but I can read so as to understand." The priest then said, "it is written in our books, that after forty-six years the Kalmucs will reign over the Russians."

We had now heard enough. We arose in a passion, left the hut, and went to an acquaintance of the Interpreter, in order to pass the night there. We perceived at the entrance a slaughtered cow, and requested they would give us some of it. The host answered us rudely, and said the cow had not been killed for us; but we were not intimidated at this reply, and, having cut off a piece of meat, we entered the hut, and boiled it for our supper. They gave us some of the sticks of which the hut was built for fuel: "have you no other fuel," we asked, "than the wood of your huts?" They replied, "this wood is decayed; where we are to pass the winter, we shall find plenty of wood, with which we can build new huts." This answer appeared to us very reasonable at that time, but we afterwards found that the Kalmucs burned the wood of their huts, that they might the more easily effect their flight.

After we had eaten our supper, we laid ourselves down to rest, but our host did not appear to be at all inclined to sleep. His wife asked him, why he did not lie down? He replied, "do you not know that it is my turn to-night to guard the sheep?" So saying he went away, and my comrades soon fell asleep.

Soon after I heard a loud cry on the outside of the hut, and got up to see what was the matter. I found a number of people at the entrance who opposed my going out. I told them I was obliged to go out. I was answered, "make an effort to restrain your wants, and go back into the hut." I then asked, "what is the meaning of that noise?" They answered, "that is nothing to you. Two Truchmenses have stolen some of our horses: our people have pursued the robbers and have caught one of them. You and your comrades will be called upon to-morrow as witnesses, but if you do not



remain in the hut, your testimony will not be received: such is our custom." I found that these people were mocking me, but I obeyed, and determined to complain of this treatment.

When I returned to my place of rest I awoke the Interpreter, and related to him what had happened. A new cry presently reached our ears, and we distinctly heard a person call out in the Russian language, "Good father, have mercy!" We knew it to be the voice of one of our Cossacks, who, for want of warm clothes, had laid himself down within a neighbouring hut, and not like the other Cossacks out of doors. We immediately jumped up, and hastily put on our clothes. Three Kalmucs then entered the hut and lighted a fire. While they were thus employed, I drew my knife from its case, and called out to them in a loud voice, "You shall not take us alive! We will sell our lives dearly!" When the three Kalmucs perceived my naked knife they took to their heels, and we fastened the door with ropes that nobody might enter.

We now kept up the fire with sticks which we tore from the hut, and prepared to defend ourselves as well as we could. The Kalmucs, who now assembled around our hut to the number of from fifty to sixty, called to us to surrender, assuring us that if we refused we should die. We answered boldly, "do what you please, but we will not leave the hut." They now thrust their pikes at us through the openings of the hut, but we placed the landlady with her sucking child before us, and thus guarded off the pikes.

At break of day the Kalmucs renewed their threats, and again called upon us to surrender. Not daring to trust to these people, we asked for the Gallung, Sharap, who on the former evening, as we now perceived, had indirectly warned us of our danger. Sharap soon made his appearance. We said, that we put in nobody a greater confidence than in him, and wished to know of him the reason of the tumult. The priest answered, "you would not believe me yesterday, how will you believe what I tell you now?" We replied, we had caused him to be called because we put entire confidence in his integrity. The priest then informed us that Elbasha with all the Kalmucs were fleeing to China, that they had already made prisoner our captain of cavalry, and that we were destined to slavery.

Although this account appeared to us rather improbable, we found it necessary to surrender to the assailants. The other huts were already packed upon camels, and they were just beginning to break up our hut, when we rushed out, and throwing ourselves at the feet of the priest, implored his protection against our enemies. The honest Sharap raised us up, and endeavoured to comfort us; and when the others attempted to

drag us away by force, our benefactor said to them, "hear what I am about to say! These people have clothes, good guns, and horses; divide every thing they have among yourselves; but leave me their persons. I will give them five sheep, and to each of them a warm pelt, and will conduct them to a distant part of the Steppe, that they may thence return to their homes. Do but consider that some of them have left behind them unhappy fathers and mothers, others have left their wives and children!"

They replied, "how shall we allow them to go? Dost thou not know the command of the Chan? That, 'whoever returns, whether he be a Russian or a Kalmuc, shall be put to death!'"

At these words, the priest embracing all three of us, said to them, "if you will kill these kill me first! As long as I live no harm shall happen to them."

The Kalmucs now retreated, and commenced their march. The Sharap also mounted his horse, and commanded us to follow him. Being fearful of losing our protector we laid hold of the tail of his horse, and followed him with a melancholy joy. When we had proceeded some paces, the priest looked around, and perceiving his brother, who was driving a herd of mares, he immediately rode up to him, and said, "What! I suppose you think to milk your herd as far as China. Do you not see these poor people who go on foot? You will do a good work if you give them commodious horses for riding." The brother without the least objection immediately gave us three horses; and putting a cord into their mouths instead of a bit, we mounted and rode at the side of the priest.

Not far from the place where we had reposed the preceding night we saw the dead body of a Cossack, who had belonged to our troop, lying on the ground with his head cloven. Deeply affected by this sight we alighted, covered the corpse of the unfortunate Cossack with a mat which lay near it, and then hastened after the priest, lest we should lose him.

At our next resting place, the priest caused supper to be dressed for me and my two comrades, and endeavoured to comfort us by his encouraging conversation. "Of what use is it," said he, "to be melancholy? Nobody, it is true, can escape his destiny; but be assured, that, as long as I live, you have nothing to fear." We were supplied with plenty of food and some tobacco, but neither the one nor the other afforded us any real pleasure. After supper the priest caused pelts to be spread for us at the side of his resting-place, but we were too restless to think of sleep. "Sleep!" said the old man, "and be not concerned: no harm shall happen to you while I live." Thus

spoke the generous priest without venturing to sleep himself, lest any one should attempt to injure us.

The Kalmucs proceeded on their march the following morning, and we kept close to our priest the whole of the day. In the evening a Gatzul, (an under priest,) and three other Kalmucs came into our hut and attempted to take us away by force, and drag us before the Chan, who was two or three days journey in advance; our protector, however, would not permit them to take us, but desired the Kalmucs to go to the Chan, and return with his orders. As to ourselves, we were quite willing to be brought before the Chan, for the Interpreter and I had several friends at his court, on whose protection we could implicitly rely.

Six days had now elapsed, and we had by continued marches already reached the Jaik, without hearing of the return of the messengers. In the meantime I met with an old Kalmuc acquaintance, a niece of the Gallung, who lived with her mother in a neighbouring hut. This female and her husband formerly guarded the cattle of my late master; and having been abandoned by her husband, had returned to her own country. On the evening of the sixth day, our benevolent priest sent us to this acquaintance, saying to us, "go thither, ask for some meat and pottage, and eat; you have now nothing to fear from any thing but hunger." We were, however, afraid of leaving our benefactor, and he caused the provisions to be brought; to his hut. Our fears were not without foundation; for at midnight seven Kalmucs stole into our hut, in order to drag us away, but Sharap watched over us so diligently that he frustrated their intentions.

It was reported the next day, that the messengers had returned, and would conduct us to the Chan. The good priest endeavoured by encouraging words to heighten the joy we felt at this intelligence, and again wished to send us to the hut of his niece; but we even now resisted his solicitations, and were very reluctantly conducted thither by one of his Manji (boy priests.)

On our arrival at the hut, they gave us some victuals and tobacco, and having finished our meal, the niece said to her mother, "pray tell these poor people what we have just heard." The mother then said to us, "do not go with those Kalmucs. They pretend that they come from the Chan, but they intend to take you away in order to kill you." Our feelings were overwhelmed at this intelligence, and we left the hut in order to seek the protection of our benefactor. Not long after the villains arrived with their lying message, but they were immediately sent away.

Several days had passed after this incident, and we had already left the river Jemba behind us, when, as we were proceeding with our loaded camels, three Kalmucs unexpectedly attacked the Interpreter and myself, seized our horses, and galloped off with us at full speed. I was seized first and conducted to a great distance in the Steppe (desert). Already the marching Kalmucs were out of sight, when from the top of a hill I perceived a number of people, some on foot, others on horseback, towards whom we gradually approached. On our coming up to them, I soon recognized two of our Cossacks, one of whom they were cutting to pieces; the other either because he had irritated them by a too long resistance, or had by his conduct brought upon himself a greater punishment, had been bound to the tail of a wild horse, and was thus dragged about until he expired, when he was also cut in pieces. During this bloody spectacle we arrived on the spot: they immediately pushed me from my horse, and dragged me forward.

Fortunately for me, at this moment a *Saissang* (commander) of rank in the service of the Chan, came riding by us with his Tushimell (privy counsellor). The former knew me, and said to the ruffians, "this man is one of those whom the Chan has demanded; give him up immediately." They replied, "the Chan has not demanded him, and we will not give him up, but will kill him." Some old Kalmucs, however, among the rest had more compassion. "What advantage," said they, "can the death of this man be to you? Be satisfied with the blood of those already slain, and let this man go."

The Tushimell then said to these ferocious savages, "you disobey the command of the Chan; you shall see what will be the consequence." These words had such an effect upon them, that I was immediately delivered up to the Tushimell, that he might do with me as he pleased. At this moment the honest Sharap arrived at full gallop, and rescued the Interpreter.

The Tushimell ordered me to mount behind him, and then hastened away with me in order to overtake those who had marched forward. When we had proceeded a few versts, we were met by a Gatzul, who had scarcely seen me, when he demanded me of the Tushimell, saying, "I have an only brother; this man shall be my second brother. I will solicit the Chan for him at the end of our march." The Tushimell immediately gave me up to the Gatzull, and continued his march.

When I found myself alone with the Gatzul, he explained to me why they had killed the two Cossacks, and said that they intended to have treated me in the same way. The Interpreter and I knew these two Cossacks: they had not been treated so

well as ourselves, having been dragged away on foot. We had not seen them since our captivity, until the evening before their death, when one of them seeing us, called aloud. "Welcome, comrades; we are now four in number, and may venture to return home." The other Cossack, however, whom we afterwards saw dragged about by the horse, said to his companions, "We need not be in a hurry, comrades, let us rather wait for a more convenient opportunity; we will then violate the Kalmuc women, take away from the Kalmucs their best horses and arms, and return with our booty." A Kalmuc who overheard us, contrary to our expectation, understood the Russian language, and secretly reported this conversation to his countrymen, and it was on this account that they attacked us.

Towards evening my new benefactor conducted me to his hut, and having introduced me to his mother, who was seventy years of age, and to his brother who had been married but a few months, he said to them—"I have adopted this man as my brother." Then addressing himself to me, he said, "live here in the hut of our mother." A few moments after he left us in order to overtake the Chan, who was in advance with the armed Kalmucs.

The brother resembled the Gatzul in goodness of disposition, but the wife was the very reverse. The husband was, with very little intermission, engaged night and day in attending to the herds, and whenever he returned for a short time to the hut, he enquired whether I was contented. Although I was not treated in a friendly way, and had very little to eat, yet I did not complain. The good Loosang, however, so my host was called, suffered me to want nothing while he was in the hut.

I had lived in this manner for some time, when the honest Gatzul returned: his first words to me were, "how fares it with you?" I answered, "very well." The Gatzul, however, enquired of his neighbours how I was treated, and learned the truth. He immediately called his brother to him, and said, "thy wife is a vile creature, and thou art no better, since thou dost not tame her. I introduced this man to thee as my brother, but since thy wife has treated him so ill, I will no longer have any thing to do with thee; let our effects be divided."

The representations and entreaties of the brother at length reconciled the Gatzul, who then delivered me up to the care of his aged mother, while he himself returned to the Chan. Loosang, however, was so enraged at his wife for having excited the anger of his brother, that he discarded her, and would have nothing more to say to her. Her relations endeavoured to persuade him to alter his determination, by saying, that under the present circumstances people ought to conciliate friends, and

not dismiss them. This reasoning had the desired effect: the brother of the Gatzul again received his discarded wife into his hut.

I had now passed a month with my new host, marching daily through the Kirghiz Steppes (desert): the cattle were much fatigued; for the incessant attacks of the Kirghiz compelled the Kalmucs to fly as speedily as possible. When we arrived at the river *Irrich*, every one expected that the horde would rest, in order to negociate with the Russians. The Kalmucs themselves were rejoicing at the prospect of returning to Russia, when suddenly a report was spread, that the hordes, which had remained on the other side of the Volga, had put themselves in motion, and, having destroyed a number of cities, were likewise fleeing to China.

"Prince Donderkow," it was reported, "had destroyed Jenatajewsk and Chornoijar, and had already arrived on the Jaik. The Derbatsch Uluss had destroyed Dubowsk, Tzaritzin and Sareptish Colony. Jandyk, the uncle of the Chan, had reduced Astrachan to a heap of ashes, and was approaching with valuable booty. No stanitze (village) on the Volga remains entire." This report deprived us of all hopes of returning, and also accelerated our march. I was now too intimidated to make an attempt to escape, being fearful of falling into the hands of the Kalmucs who were approaching us in the rear. I therefore remained with my host.

It is true I was not so badly treated as at first, but still I was a prisoner, and I longed to return to Russia. Being no longer in fear for my life, I frequently strolled about in the neighbourhood. In one of these excursions, I went into the Churull (convent) of the Lama, and there found two of my former comrades, who were slaves, one of whom had lost an eye.

The winter had now passed away, and the days became gradually more pleasant, as the spring advanced, so that I felt very anxious to return to the Volga. The barbarous treatment which I endured of two Kalmucs increased my wishes. I was one day, as usual, driving the herd before me, whilst my vile hostess was attending to the laden camels at some distance behind me, when a couple of Kalmucs seeing me, one of them said to the other, "What will you bet, that I do not strike that slave from his horse with a single stroke of my *platte*?" The other replied, "Nonsense: you cannot do it." The former unwilling to have boasted in vain, immediately struck me so forcibly over the face, that my eyes appeared to strike fire. "There," said the other, "you see he did not fall. But now you shall see, that I will have him down." So saying, he took aim with his *platte*, and gave me so powerful a blow, that it quite stunned me.

The two Kalmucs then galloped away, and my cruel hostess approaching me, began to scold me, and said, "You worthless fellow, why do you not drive on the sheep? Do you not see that the horde have already halted?" I was so enraged at this abusive language, that, could I have procured a gun or a knife, I should probably have laid violent hands on myself. I however resolved to escape, whatever might be the consequence.

We had already proceeded ten days' journey beyond the Torjai rivers, and expected to rest there for some months, when it was reported that the Russians were approaching. The march was instantly renewed, and we had to traverse for three days a dreary desert, where the water was so foul, that even the cattle refused to drink it. When we had passed this frightful place, we were attacked by the Kirghiz, from whose hands we with difficulty delivered ourselves. This happened in the beginning of April, and two days after, I effected my escape in the following manner.

The nights having already become mild and pleasant, my masters slept in the open air, in order to guard a couple of young camels which had been recently foaled. This circumstance was to me very favourable, as it gave me an opportunity of providing myself in the hut with necessaries for my journey. I accordingly furnished myself with half a pud of flour, a dozen parcels of tobacco leaves, two legs of mutton, a fat sheep's tail, together with a field kettle to boil the meat in. Besides these I took seventeen silver rubles, and a dress with silver buttons, which belonged to my hostess. I put them all into a bundle, which I fastened with a rope of camel's hair. Being thus prepared, I slung across my shoulders the musket of my host, stole softly out of the hut with the bundle under my arms, and having saddled a brown mare, which was fastened to the outside of the hut, I mounted, and, invoking the protection of heaven, rode slowly from the place.

The day already began to dawn, and here and there I could perceive people loading their camels, and placing kettles over the fire for tea, but fortunately no one observed me. Not far from the huts I caught a grey mare, and then with my two horses, I galloped at full speed till I reached the summit of a hill, which was a few versts distant from the camp. I secured the horses at the top of the hill, and then prepared my breakfast. By means of the lock of my gun I procured some fire, which I kept up by *kobyl* grass; (*Stepa pennata*); I then mixed some flour and water together, and of the dough I formed Churek-cakes, which I baked in the *kobyl* ashes. While I was thus engaged, I frequently looked towards the camp, and, to my

great joy, found that the Kalmucs were gradually disappearing, till at length they were entirely out of sight.

After I had finished my breakfast, which consisted of twelve Churek-cakes, I again mounted my horse, and rode westward. Towards evening I perceived before me, at a great distance, two horsemen, who were evidently approaching me, and, in order to avoid meeting them, I went southward, and made my horses go as fast as they could. When it became dark, I halted, laid myself down, and slept till day-break. I continued my journey without breakfasting, and about noon again perceived some people approaching towards me. It was now in vain to avoid them, for they had seen me, and I was persuaded their horses were better than mine. I soon found myself surrounded by seven horsemen, though they were yet at some distance. I at first imagined they were Russians, but I soon perceived by their red dress, and round caps, that I had to contend with Kirghiz. On coming near they gave me to understand by signs that I must throw away my gun. I immediately alighted from my horse, laid down my gun, and retired a few paces. The Kirghiz now alighted also, and took from me every thing I had. They even stripped me of my clothes, and in the room of them gave me a ragged garment which had been thrown away by the Kalmucs. After I had put on this ragged frock, they ordered me to ascend a hill, which was at a short distance, and, having first examined my bundle, they followed me.

When I reached the top of the hill, I observed a number of huts, and saw many of the Kirghiz, who were collecting their herds; others were engaged in milking and other employments. The Kirghiz, who had taken me, now made a fire, and placed a kettle over it in order to cook some victuals. I was not a little anxious to eat, since I had not taken a morsel since the preceding morning: but how great was my disappointment, when I saw them put but five small sheep's ribs into the kettle, and yet there were more than *five* persons present who were to partake of this meal. How, thought I, can this suffice for all of us? But, perhaps, there is a sick person in the hut, for whom they are making broth of this meat, surely a second kettle will be placed on the fire. At length the meat being boiled was put into a dish, and, as is also customary with the Kalmucs, was cut into small pieces. They then washed their hands, offered up a prayer according to the Mahometan rites, and then divided the meat among themselves. Each of them received his little share in a cup, which contained little more than a spoonful, and I had the mortification of viewing them. During the meal, however, they endeavoured to comfort me, promising to take me to Oremburgh, and there



deliver me up to a Kirghiz interpreter. Two of them threw me a few morsels of meat: if they had given me the whole meal, it would not have satisfied my hunger.

I was still expecting to see another kettle, till at last they prepared to go to sleep. My feet were now put in irons, and my hands fastened to my neck with ropes, which were drawn so tight, that I was totally unable to move them. They then obliged me to lie down in the hut, and one of the large felt coverlets, with which their huts are usually covered, was spread over me so as to expose only my head. The seven Kirghiz then laid themselves around me on the borders of this large covering, to prevent my escape during the night.

I endured indescribable torments during the whole night, owing partly to my fetters, and partly to the vermin with which my covering swarmed, and there was no possibility of rubbing myself. No one ever wished for day more than I did. In the morning they untied my hands, and divided among them the preceding day's booty. I became the share of the chieftain of this banditti; whose name was *Isbossar*. The horses, the gun, and the other articles were divided among the rest. I endeavoured to make my master understand by signs, and by using some Russian and Kalmuc words, that he would do well if he would take me to Orenburgh, where he might be sure of obtaining a good ransom for me: but the old man was too cunning to trust to my assertions, and pretended not to know what I meant.

The Kirghiz fire with lighted tow, and are entirely unacquainted with the nature of gun-locks; the Kirghiz, therefore, who had received my musket, was quite amazed at the lock; I immediately explained to him its use, but he considered his mode of shooting so convenient, that he would not hear of this innovation; he therefore took off the lock, and put it in his wallet. I discovered in this wallet among other things a steel, and I resolved to take it whenever an opportunity presented itself, as it was indispensably necessary, if, at any future period, I should succeed in making my escape from the Kirghiz.

These robbers went out daily to plunder, leaving one behind, in turns, to watch me and to guard the herds. After some days had passed, the Kirghiz who possessed my gun remained at home to watch. I took advantage of a few moments absence of my guard, and opening the wallet, took out the steel. I then replaced the wallet as before to avoid suspicion, and for want of a better place concealed the steel under one of the patches of my garment.

A few days after, the Kirghiz wanted something from his wallet, and while he was examining its contents, he said to his companions, "I think there was a steel in my wallet." They

replied, "If such a thing has been in it, it must be there still." The Kirghiz at last yielded, and I congratulated myself that my theft had brought upon me no bad consequences.

The Kirghiz, whom I had robbed of the steel, had frequent occasion to cut tobacco for his own use, and being myself accustomed to tobacco, I always contrived to be near him during this operation, in order to obtain the stalks of the tobacco which he threw away. I was once engaged in picking up the stalks, when suddenly the Kirghiz seized my garment in the very part where the steel was concealed, and tearing off the patch, discovered the theft. "Look," cried he, "you see I was right: I knew that my steel was in the wallet." Upon this my master came into the hut, and, as my theft was apparent, he immediately seized a piece of wood, and beat me most unmercifully.\* Not considering this a sufficient punishment, he took his bow, put an arrow on it, and intending to kill me, aimed directly at my breast. At this instant another Kirghiz, with the intention of saving me, laid hold of the bow, when the arrow flew off, and struck me in the left leg just below the knee, where the scar may be seen to this day. From this time I was more narrowly watched than before. They continued also to fasten my hands every night. In the day-time, however, they merely left the irons on my feet.

Isbossar had three daughters, and two daughters-in-law. According to the custom of the Kirghiz, these females lived in separate huts; in the day-time, however, they occasionally visited the huts of the men. They repeatedly entreated their father to let me sleep without my hands being tied. "You know," said they, "he has irons on his feet; how is it possible for him to escape?" The father, however, paid no attention to their entreaties, but continued to tie my hands every night.

A few weeks after I had suffered such ill-treatment from my master, one of his grand-children, a boy about seven years of age, fell ill. His complaint was the asthma. My master took me to the hut to visit the sick boy, where I found a female Kalmuc seventy years of age, who carried on among the Kirghiz the profession of a sorceress. The Kalmucs themselves are friendly to sorcerers, but the Kirghiz are still more so. Through the medium of this Kalmuc my master addressed me thus: "Thou hast lived among the Russians and Kalmucs; they have skilful physicians; thou, therefore, must know a remedy for the disease of my grandson."

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\* This barbarous act, together with daily observation, proves the truth of this axiom, namely, that men punish others most severely for those vices and foibles of which they themselves are guilty. The Kirghiz, for instance, punish theft in others although thieving is their profession.

I replied, " Ah ! my good father, I know nothing of the art of healing, and if I have formerly known anything of it, my misfortunes have caused me to forget it." The old man upon this pressed me still more, and said, " Do me this only favour : if you recover the health of my grandson, I will then take you to Oremburgh, and give you your liberty."

This discourse operated on me very powerfully. I at once became a physician, approached the sick bed, felt the pulse of my patient, and desired him to shew me his tongue. I then pretended to reflect on the child's disease, and at last said to the old man, " It is not likely that the remedies which will restore the boy's health can be found here : In Oremburgh there are certainly many remedies to be had, but if you ride there yourself you will not be able to find them, unless you take me with you." The old man, however, was of opinion that Oremburgh was very far, and that several days would elapse before one could possibly return.

My artifice being unsuccessful, I next ventured to advise a remedy, which at all events could do him no harm. I said therefore to the old man ; " Do not, on any account, allow your grandson the use of milk, but make him some good mutton-broth." I had scarcely uttered these words, when the father of the boy hastened out of the hut, brought in a sheep three years old, and slaughtered it : so that knowledge of medicine procured me at least a good meal. My patient soon began to grow better, and the parents and grandfather loaded me with caresses.

Two or three days afterwards I again visited my patient, and found him alone in the hut at the side of a large vessel of sour sheeps' cream, which he was drinking most greedily. I called the mother, and with oaths and curses said to her, " Did I not desire you not to give the boy any milk ? Since you have not obeyed my directions, you will see what will be the consequence." I immediately left the hut, and returned to my own home.

The next morning I went out as usual with my leathern bag, in order to collect dung for fuel, and presently saw my master riding after me on a camel. " Wassilij," said he, on overtaking me, " have pity ! come along with me ; my grandson is again dangerously ill." I answered, " I assure you I can render him no farther assistance." The old man, however, would not listen to this, and said, " we have taken from the Truchmenzers three bladders filled with different kinds of medicine ; there may be something amongst them that may be of use in this disease."

We then went into the hut where the sick child lay. The sorceress, who was then praying with her rosary, sat near the boy, and I with my fettered legs sat down opposite to her. The

bladders were brought, and I pretended carefully to examine the medicines. In order to give them a proof of my knowledge of medicine, I took out a drug from amongst the rest which I imagined was bear's gall, and licked it with my tongue. "Why did you lick that?" said the sorceress, "it is human gall." I replied as if I did not know it. "In my country people not only lick human gall, but they also dissolve it in brandy and then drink it. But as for this sick boy, neither gall nor any other drug will be of service to him. It is not likely he will live much longer. They may, however, give him some mare's milk."

A herd of mares was immediately collected in order to procure for my patient the milk I had ordered for him. While this was doing, the sorceress asked me, "How long do you think the patient has yet to live?" I immediately asked her, "How long do you think he will live?" The old woman answered in a low tone of voice, "I think he will live a month, or longer." I replied in a loud voice, "If he does not die this evening, he will die to-morrow morning."

In less than an hour my prediction was fulfilled. I was sitting at the entrance of the hut, when my old master came tottering along with great lamentations, supported by two of his children. In order to shew him my sympathy, I secretly wetted my eyes with spittle, and then rose up and approached him. They brought with them a copper kettle with some warm water in it, and having washed the body of the child, they enveloped it in a white frock. Having done this, they immediately carried the corpse to the burying place, which was about twenty-versts distant from our huts.

It was dark when they returned from the funeral; and all prepared for sleep. Isbossar, who, during the illness of his grandson, had treated me more humanely than before, now tied my hands again so tightly, that I could hardly endure the pain. "Why do you do so, Isbossar?" said I. The old man answered, "I miss a saddle girdle, and I suspect you." This however, was an idle pretext. He thought, probably, that I had neglected his grandson, or that I was meditating my escape.

The following day was appointed for the funeral feast, which was extremely welcome to me, because I could reckon on satisfying my hungry stomach. Several sheep were slaughtered on the occasion, and the guests had full dishes placed before them. Although I was shut up in the hut, lest I should escape during the feast, yet the inmates and the guests gave me so much cut meat, that I had not only enough for the present, but saved a whole dish for the following day, which I carefully concealed in a corner of the hut.

In order to provide myself in future with as good meals as I had had for the last two days, I hit upon a stratagem, which completely succeeded. It is the custom of the Kirghiz to separate the lambs from their dams during the night, and to fasten the former to the huts, where they remain until the sheep are milked in the morning. (They drank more sheep's milk than that of any other animal.) Without going outside the hut, I every night strangled a lamb, or killed it by pushing it forcibly against the wall of the hut, which I readily accomplished by thrusting out my hands through the openings of the hut. The Kirghiz on going out found every morning a dead lamb at the side of the hut, and as they, like the Kalmucs, never eat the flesh of animals that have died a natural death, they left these dead lambs for me, and gave me a separate kettle, that I might cook in it this impure meat, as they conceived it to be.

They all thought a disease had befallen the herd, and resorted to sorcery and other means to guard against the calamity.

As I had now no longer occasion to complain of hunger, and having in the course of one year, which I had passed with the Kirghiz, become accustomed to my chains, my fate appeared to me more tolerable than at first. My only fear now was lest my master should sell me to some other Kirghiz, with whom I might not be so well off as with him. For this reason I requested the old Kalmuc sorceress to let me know, if ever my master should intimate to her that he intended to sell me. The old woman always replied, "Ah! there is no question about it: and if he should have such a design, I will let you know."

In spite of these assurances, however, this cursed woman was not sincere, for she daily encouraged my master to get rid of me as soon as possible. "For what purpose," said she one day to him, "do you keep this man? your grandson is dead; your lambs diminish every day; he evidently brings nothing but misfortune into the house: rather sell him." By this discourse she prevailed upon the old man to send his two sons to find a buyer.

In the meantime I became acquainted with another female Kalmuc, who made boots: I frequently visited her in order to drink a cup of mare's milk, or to have a little chat with her. The day on which my master's sons rode away, I called upon this acquaintance with my leathern bag filled with dung, and putting down my load seated myself at her side. "Do you not know," said she, "where the two sons of your master are gone?" I answered, "How should I know?" "Poor fellow," said she, "Why do you not endeavour to escape from this place? Women undertake it, and you will not." I replied, "How can I accomplish it, since my feet are fettered?" "As if," said

she, "the fetters could not be loosened: there," continued she, "take this pike head, and force the lock of your fetters with it; but conceal it carefully, lest it should be discovered. If, however, you do not make your escape very soon, you will be carried away; for your master's sons are gone to procure a purchaser."

I immediately returned home with the iron, and had I been inclined to doubt the truth of the intelligence given me by this good Kalmuc, I had now an opportunity of convincing myself of her honesty. The old sorceress came sneaking to my master, while I was lying at the side of the hut, pretending to sleep. I had learned sufficient of the Kirghiz language to enable me to understand that I was the object of their conversation. I therefore listened the more attentively, and was perfectly convinced of the faithlessness of the old woman, and the integrity of the other. I therefore determined this very night to try every expedient, in order, if possible, to effect my escape.

We all laid ourselves down for the night. I lay in a corner with fettered feet, and my hands fastened as usual, and thought of nothing but flight. When the Kirghiz had fallen asleep, I untied the string with which my hands were fastened, and took hold of the iron which I had received, in order to force open the padlock of my fetters. I had already begun to work when the sheep on the outside of the hut became very unquiet, and the young people ran out to see what was the matter. After their return no one thought any longer of sleep. What could I do? I now contrived, but with the greatest difficulty, to fasten my hands again with the help of my teeth, that in the morning no one might perceive that they had been loosened. Morning at length came and every one went to his customary occupation, and I also went to mine. Towards evening the old man's sons returned, and immediately held a secret conversation with their father, the purport of which I could easily guess.

On the following morning I took my leathern bag as usual in order to gather dung. The old man had already risen and was sitting before his hut. He addressed me in a more friendly tone than usual saying, "Wassilij, why do you go out so early? Do you not perceive that the hoar frost is still lying on the dung? Drink a cup of Arjan,\* before you go out."

I knew very well what this civility meant; and I merely said, "It is likely to get very warm at a later hour, and I shall then find it more difficult to walk about in my irons."

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\* The Kirghiz Tartarish name of a sour milk beverage.

“ Never mind,” said the old man; “ stay a little longer.” I accordingly threw down my bag and went into the hut; I had not long been there, when a strange Kalmuc arrived on horseback, who, I afterwards learned, had been carried off in his youth by the Kirghiz, and, though he had at first lived as a slave among them, had now obtained his freedom from his rich master, with whom, however, he still lived.

My Master now said to me, “ Wassilij, I have a brother, who is much richer than I am, possessing perhaps 5000 sheep. One of his labourers is ill, and as I can do without thee for some time, I will send you to my brother, and you may remain with him until the health of the labourer is re-established. His illness is not dangerous, and in ten days you will probably be here again.” I replied, “ Why dost thou lie, Isbossar? I can guess thy intention. Thou hast sold me. Is it not so?”

Instead of returning any answer, they took the irons from my feet, placed me on a horse, and having fastened my feet under the belly of the horse, drove me away. I was so enraged at Isbossar and the old sorceress, that I could have murdered them both; and I assailed them with abuse and curses as long as they could hear me.

The two sons of the old man accompanied me and the strange Kalmuc, until towards noon, when we stopped at a Kirghiz hut to rest. The walls of the hut were hung with hides of wolves and foxes, by which one could judge of the landlord's predilection for hunting. After we had remained here for two hours, our two companions returned, and I was compelled to mount the horse again and follow the stranger.

Towards evening we reached the hut where we were expected. The master came out half dressed, with a pointed cap on his head, and gazing at me for some time, said to my conductor, “ What black devil of a fellow is this? Is this the appearance of a Russian?”

My conductor, who had, in the meantime taken off the saddles from the horses, replied, “ With whom do you quarrel? Did you not make the bargain yourself? Another time look before you buy.”

Kinshall (which was the name of my new master) then led me into the hut, and asked me, “ Of what country are you?” I answered him impertinently, “ Why do you ask? You believed the other people before you saw me, believe now that I came from the country they named to you. Had you asked me before, I should most likely have given you a different answer.” The Kirghiz then asked how old I was? Although I had but just attained my thirtieth year, I purposely added fifteen years to my age. The Kirghiz was so enraged when he discovered, as he

thought, that they had cheated him, that he appeared to be beside himself.

That very evening my master assembled some Kirghiz of rank, related to them the particulars of this fraudulent bargain, and asked them whether he could not oblige Isbossar to take back his slave? They maintained unanimously that the bargain, having been once concluded, could not be made void; but they gave it as their opinion, that as Isbossar had cheated him, he might now try to cheat some one else. The assembly having dispersed, Kinshall put me in irons, took one of his three wives, and lay down to rest.

On the following morning my master began to make preparations for a long journey, and the young women and girls, who were in his service, treated me with some sour sheep-cream. "Poor fellow!" said they, "he will now be carried far away." The journey, however, did not take place this day. But the next morning my master ordered me to mount a horse, under the belly of which he fastened my feet, and immediately began his journey. We were accompanied by two Karakalpaks. For nine days we rode southward, and on the tenth we reached the Sea of *Aral*, where we halted for the remainder of the day, and regaled ourselves with some cheese made of sheeps' milk. This had been our only food during the journey; sometimes we eat it in a dry state, at other times we dissolved it in water.

At the place where we halted were three or four bushes, a few yards distant from each other, and under these we rested. But I was unable to sleep and thought only of escaping to Russia. The Karakalpaks, however, slept; and my master lay down and closed his eyes. I considered this the most favourable opportunity for making my escape, and resolved to take advantage of it immediately, should I even be under the necessity of committing murder. My master's girdle, to which the key of my fetters was attached, was laid under his head: as I could not draw away the girdle without awakening my master, I considered it most safe to cut his throat. I then intended to take our horses and escape to the Russian frontiers. I had already crept softly to my master, and with one hand had seized the handle of the knife which was fastened to his girdle, and held the sheath in the other, when the pretended sleeper suddenly seized my hands, and cried with a loud voice, "Help! help!" The Karakalpaks hastened to the spot, and having torn off my rags, they all three covered my whole body with the repeated stripes of their plattes, so that not a spot about me remained untouched. They then mounted their horses, and obliged me to run before them naked and on foot. The country about the lake of *Aral* is a barren heath. The heat of the sun was excessive, and the ground so intensely



hot, that my feet were absolutely scorched. I at last fell down upon my knees overcome with extreme pain, but was again compelled to walk by the whips of my conductors. The pain which I endured was indescribable. I prayed to God that he would by death put an end to my sufferings: but my prayers were not answered. The following morning, however, I obtained my horse again.

After eleven days journey along the lake of Aral, which was on our left, we reached the mouth of the river Darja, which runs into it, and here again we halted. On the following day we passed a large wall, built of red bricks. At regular distances there were turrets which projected from the walls, and which were painted with a variety of colours. The dimensions of this wall, which formed a square, within which were several buildings, amounted in appearance to about half a verst. I enquired of the Karakalpaks to whom the building belonged, and they said it was so old that they knew nothing of it.

The banks of the Darja are inhabited by Karakalpaks, who, like the Kirghiz and Kalmucs, lead a wandering life. Two days journey from the mouth of the Darja was the hut of the two Karakalpaks who accompanied us, where we alighted. My master remained here and sent me forward with the other two to a neighbouring Karakalpak village, where they hoped to sell me.

The next morning a fat Karakalpak came to our hut on horseback to look at me, and if I suited him to purchase me. After having examined me, he said, "How can this black fellow be a Russian?" The others replied, "All the Russians on the Volga are black. The white Russians live near the Yaik."

I then rose from my place, approached the Karakalpak, and stroking his horse, admired its beauty. "I have many such," said the Karapalkak. "In my country," I replied, "people are contented with few horses; I am of Truchmenz origin, and my relations live in Persia."

I had scarcely uttered these words, when the Karakalpak stared at me, and after looking at me for some time, without saying a word, he turned his horse and galloped away.

I conceived that I had acted very wisely, and did not suspect what would be the consequence. I imagined that when these people knew that I was a Russian, the Kirghiz would take me back again, and that when I was once more with the Kirghiz, it would not be difficult at a future period to make my escape. But it will soon appear how much I had been deceived in my expectations.

The Karakalpaks returned with me to their habitation, and whilst I went into the hut, they conversed with my master in a low tone of voice. I had not been in the hut long, when my

master entered as furious as a madman, and struck me with a pair of iron horse-fetters, as if he intended to kill me. I was exposed to his ill-treatment the whole of the day, and in the evening he fettered me by binding my hands to my back, and fastening me to a railed wall, so that I was unable to move. I then said to him "Have you no fear of God, since you thus treat me?" But the barbarian struck me so violently on my face with his platte, that he knocked out one of my teeth. If at that moment I had had a knife in my hands, I should most certainly have put an end to my existence. The Karakalpaks, men, women, and children, who sat around me, all laughed at my wretched condition. This behaviour hurt my feelings more than all the rest.

After passing the night in this painful situation, I was the next morning again beaten by my cruel master. The Karakalpaks at length advised him to take me to *Kiwa* for sale: he and the two Karakalpaks therefore mounted their horses, and I was obliged to accompany them on foot.

We passed the night in the Steppe, and the next day crossed the Darja. My master now ordered me to mount the horse, and said to me, "Wassilij, I will either sell you or exchange you, but when you are questioned, say you are a Russian and but twenty-five years of age." I replied, "I will tell the truth; I will say that I am a Persian, and that I am forty-five years of age." My master then said very coolly, "Do as you please: but do not think I shall take you back again. If you persist in your obstinacy, I will cut you in pieces. I shall only lose four camels, and two tabunes\* of mares. You now know my resolution."

There being no market-day at *Kiwa*, my master alighted at the house of an acquaintance, whom he had by chance met in the street. During summer and autumn the *Kiwenses*, like the *Kalmucs* and *Kirghiz*, live in temporary huts, which they usually erect near their corn-fields and meadows: the other part of the year they live in houses of brick. The town itself is surrounded by walls of brick.

In the house at which we alighted, we were hospitably received and treated with *Churek-cakes*. For some time my master and his friend conversed in a low tone of voice. The two Karakalpaks soon after arose, and mounting their horses, left my master with our host, whose name was *Ishnijas*, and whose two brothers lived with him, the youngest of whom was not married. As I was not wanted in the hut, I went out; took my saddle and placed it under a tree, and slept there till sunset. When I awoke, the wives and sisters of the household

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\* A tabune contains from ten to twelve mares.

came to see me, pitied and endeavoured to comfort me, and gave me some Churek-cakes, which I ate with avidity.

My master passed the night in the house, and on the following day he said to me, "I shall exchange you in this house for another slave: you have no doubt seen in our way, not far hence, near the little river Atalik, a grove: I will there wait for you. Try to escape as soon as possible, and then we will return together, and at some future period I will take you to Oremburgh." I made no reply to this proposition, but merely spit on the ground.

In Kiwa the Russian slaves are considered more valuable than the Persians. For this reason our landlord gave in exchange for me a young Persian named Safor and two Bucharian dresses. In order to terminate the exchange according to the Kiwa custom, the most respectable people of the town were invited to a feast, which consisted of mutton and Plow.\* "This Russian," said my new master, "I have received from Kinshal in exchange for Safor, and I have invited you, that you may all know it."

One of the company wondered at my brown complexion, but Kinshal quickly replied, that this was the appearance of all the Russians on the Volga, and the upright Kiwenses by no means doubted the truth of this assertion. I said nothing, and Kinshal was so satisfied with me, that he gave me his whole dish of Plow. He soon after saddled his horses, and returned home with his new slave.

I had now the most humane master in the world: he conducted me about his house, and made me acquainted with every new object. The Kiwenses support themselves partly by manufactures and commerce, and partly by cultivating their fields, which furnish them with rice, millet, and wheat. My master and his family were employed in all these branches. A small piece of ground provided them abundantly with rice and corn. The women spun yarn, of which they made linen. Whatever they acquired by their industry was exchanged for cattle and different kinds of merchandize, and these again were bartered for other necessary articles. I had only some trifling domestic work to do, except that I occasionally assisted my master and his brothers in cultivating the land. In short I could not have desired to live more comfortably, but nevertheless I longed to go to Russia. During night I dreamed of nothing but the *friends* I had left there, that I conversed with them on the most agreeable subjects, walked with them through the town, and was enter-

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\* A well known Asiatic dish, made of rice and butter, or grease. The Europeans spell it *Pilau*: but I follow the Tartarian pronunciation and write it *Plow*.

tained by them at their houses. But when I awoke, and found myself in a Kiwense hut, my sorrow was very great.

My master had two horses, some cows and sheep, which were sent to pasture in common with the cattle of the neighbours, and each of the owners alternately provided a person to guard them. I had lived three months with my new master, when the boy, who used to guard our cattle, fell sick, so that another was to be sent in his stead. "Wassilij," said my master, "our herdsman is ill: if he should not be better in eight or ten days, I will provide another herdsman: however, to-morrow you will drive our cattle to the pasture."

Having received from my hostess three Churek-cakes, I mounted one of the horses, and leading the other by the hand, drove the herd into the field. Not far from the town, I unexpectedly met another herdsman whom I knew, and who was driving his sheep to the pasture: we agreed to guard our herds together, and as he was on foot, I gave up my other horse to him. About a verst and a half beyond us I perceived a lake, and, being very thirsty, I left the whole of the herd to the care of my companion, and rode to the lake: When I had reached it, I alighted, took some water in my hands and drank, and then wetted one of my Churek-cakes and ate it. The herdsman remaining much longer behind than I expected, I was riding back to meet him, when I was met by two Tartars. I enquired if they had seen a boy upon a grey horse. The Tartars replied; "We have seen a boy not far off whose horse has run away." While the Tartars were speaking, the boy came running to me almost breathless, and related to me the accident. His horse, he said, had become shy, and, having neither saddle nor bridle, he was unable to manage it and had been thrown off. I left the boy to take care of the herd, and rode away in search of the horse. Supposing it had run back to the stable, I galloped home, but the horse was not there. I then suspected it had returned to its former owner, a Karakalpak, of whom my master had lately purchased it, and as he did not live far from the town, I hastened there to make enquiries for it.

As the Karakalpaks lived towards the west, and I must take that direction, if I returned to Russia, the thought suddenly occurred to me, that it was now possible to make my escape. Without much reflection, I hastened forwards, and rode about thirty versts without halting, till at length I reached the river *Atalik*, and the grove which had been pointed out to me by my late Kirghiz master. I rested here till towards evening, and was preparing to continue my journey, when I saw before me three Karakalpaks, who were leading two loaded horses. These Ka-

rakalpaks, I had no doubt, carried merchandize, which they intended to sell to the Kirghiz. "If you tell them," thought I, "that you have escaped from your master to seek the service of another, they will take you with them, and will sell you to the Kirghiz, from whom you can easily make your escape." Accordingly, when I overtook the Karakalpaks, I pretended that I had been compelled to leave my master, because he was a miser, and would not allow his servants enough to eat.

The Karakalpaks listened to me without making any reply. At last one of them desired me to alight, and having himself mounted my horse, he rode towards a distant Karakalpak village, and the other two made me follow on foot. We slept in the Steppe during the night, and on the following day about noon we arrived at the Karakalpak village, where the other Karakalpak was waiting for us. The three Karakalpaks, who intended to rest here for the day, said to each other, "If we take this slave farther with us, we may pay dearly for it: we had better deliver him up to the magistrate of the village, that he may be restored to his master."

I had scarcely heard these words when I devised a plan, by which I might extricate myself from this dilemma. I hastened to the magistrate of the place, and told him as well as I was able, that I was a Russian slave, and that my master lived at Kiwa, and was called Ishnijas: I added, that I had the day before lost a grey horse, which my master had lately bought, and that while I was searching for the horse, I overtook three Karakalpaks, and asked them if they had seen my horse? who replied, "What do we care about your horse, come along with us; we will sell you to the Kirghiz." That they then dragged me from my horse and beat me most unmercifully: that then one of them mounted my horse and rode forwards to this place, while I followed with his two comrades on foot: and that I was now come before him to make my complaint.

The judge was well pleased with my behaviour, said he knew my master, and that he would send to Kiwa to acquaint him with what had happened. He fulfilled his promise, and on the following day towards evening, my master arrived with his second brother: the brother proceeded immediately to the Karakalpak judge, in whose house I then was, and when he saw me, he said, "Wassilij, how have you come hither?" I related to him circumstantially my invented narrative, and having concluded it, he took me to his brother, who was in a neighbouring hut. He had slaughtered a sheep, and was just preparing supper when we arrived. He caused me to relate my story once more: the good man sincerely pitied me, and said in a conciliatory manner, "You simpleton, why did you not return home?"

the accident could not be remedied: Why were you afraid? If the Usbecks, who you know live by plunder, had found you, they would certainly have carried you off." He then took from his wallet two cakes, which he gave me to eat, while the supper was preparing.

The next morning, before we returned home, my master summoned the three Karakalpaks before the magistrate: the magistrate reproached them with their crime, which he said was punishable. Although the Karakalpaks declared their innocence, yet my report seemed so probable, nobody would believe them. When they found that all their asseverations were unavailing, they promised to appear at Kiwa at the next sitting of the judges, in order to clear themselves of the accusation.

It had already grown dark when we reached home. Our hostesses came to meet us on the road. They rejoiced at my return, and said in an endearing manner, "O you poor Wassilij; surely you must have suffered hunger with the Karakalpaks." The eldest then took me by the hand, and conducted me to the hut, where supper was now ready.

The sessions of the magistrates happening two days afterwards, the Karakalpaks did not fail to make their appearance. They related the occurrence to the magistrates, and swore by heaven and hell they had told the truth: but my deposition, being supported by my master, prevailed. The Karakalpaks were accordingly ordered to pay a fine of one sheep and four pieces of gold each worth about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  silver rubles.

The summer months had nearly passed away, and autumn approached, without my having had another opportunity of escaping, when, one day, in the month of September, my master's wives came running to me, and said, "Wassilij, Wassilij, the Kirghiz have brought hither a countryman of yours: come quickly!" I at first thought they were mocking me; nevertheless, I went out, but did not expect to see a Russian. A man with a long black beard, and wearing a round Tartarian cap, was then shewn to me: he appeared to me to be a Kirghiz, or some other Tartar. They desired me to address him in the Russian language, and in compliance with their request, I approached the man, and said in Russian, "Welcome, brother!" The supposed Tartar immediately took off his cap, and replied, "Welcome, brother!" I was now convinced he was a Russian, and had so many questions to put to him, that I knew not with which to begin.

He at last told me his name was *Fedor Chimodanow*, and that he had been a kettle-drummer in the Dragoon regiment at Oremburgh. "One Saturday," he said, "I ordered the landlord to make a fire, in order to heat some broth, while I went

some versts from the town, to examine a field of carrots, and to mow some grass; while I was thus employed two Kirghiz attacked me and carried me off." I enquired if he had left any children behind him. He replied with a flood of tears, "I have left a son of fourteen years of age behind me." At this intelligence I burst into tears myself.

Our hostess now called me to supper, and I left the Russian with these words, "Would to God you were sold here! We would then visit each other daily, and try if we could not devise some plan for our escape." My wish was in part fulfilled, for Chimodanow was sold to a soap-boiler in Kiwa. We often visited each other, and spoke of our intended flight. But alas! I soon perceived that my new friend belonged to that class of men, who are not deficient in words, but who want abilities and energy of mind to put their plan into execution. When I represented to him the difficulty of wandering through a barren Steppe without water and without food, he answered, "Oh, as to that, I can content myself with some dry groats, and we can find water every second or third day, as I remarked on my way hither." I replied, "But shall you be able to find the road again, by which you came hither?" He assured me that nothing was easier.

However absurd Chimodanow's speeches were, my wish to escape engrossed my attention so much that I was determined to make the attempt, even with such an unsafe companion. We therefore agreed to make our escape as soon as possible.

While I was occupied with these schemes, it was my master's principal aim to secure my affection by his kindness. He treated me as his friend; left me alone in his warehouses night and day, without, in the slightest degree, doubting my honesty. He dressed me decently, and gave me plenty of food, yet I was determined to leave him as soon as possible. Towards the end of autumn, he proposed my marrying a Kiwense woman. "I will give you," said he, "sixty sheep; and you may either sell them, or allow them to breed: I will, moreover, give you ten pieces of gold, on condition that you take a wife and continue among us."

In order to get rid of the importunities of my master, I requested he would allow me to wait two or three years longer, that I might have time to become better acquainted with the language of the country. "If a Kiwense wife is given me now, I shall not understand what she says, nor will she understand me. Like dumb people, we shall be obliged to converse with our fingers." My master yielded to my entreaties; but I was so much alarmed at the thoughts of marrying a Kiwense, that I immediately went to Chimodanow, and having agreed to escape with him that very evening, I promised to call for him at a certain hour.

On my return home, some companions, with whom I used alternately to guard the workshops of our master at night, invited me to eat some Plow with them; but I excused myself by pretending I had a violent head-ache, went into my little clay-hut, which was in the yard, and prepared for the journey. I took some victuals, which I rolled in a felt mantle, fastened it with a string, and about midnight went to Chimodanow. I knocked at his hut, which was at a short distance from the habitation of his master; but alas! my knocking was in vain; for nothing was to be heard or seen of Chimodanow. At length the day approached, and I was obliged to return home.

The next morning I was asked whether I felt better, and assuring them, with a "Thank God," that I was, I was sent to the pasture with sixty sheep, that had been purchased the evening before. I guarded these sheep till the evening, and when I was driving them home, it occurred to me, that I might reserve one of them for myself, as it would serve us for provision on our journey. Having no knife with me, I strangled one, and hid it in a heap of straw, adjoining the place. The rest of the sheep I drove home, and folded in the yard, and the next morning, they were exchanged for merchandize. On exchanging them, it was naturally discovered, that one of the sheep was wanting, but so far was my master from suspecting my dishonesty, that he concluded the sheep must have been stolen from the yard during the night: consequently, I was not censured, nor even questioned about it.

I went in the morning to see Chimodanow, and having reproached him for his negligence, desired him to be in readiness in the evening, or I should no longer wait for him. I returned home, and, towards evening, having filled an earthen jug with goats, I went, unobserved, to Chimodanow. When I reached the place, he was just in the act of throwing something heavy from the roof of his hut, by which he overbalanced himself and fell with it. Fortunately for Chimodanow the roof was not high, and he escaped unhurt. "What do you mean to do," said I, "with this large piece of linen?" "Don't you know, brother," said Chimodanow, "that it sells for twenty-five copeks the arshin?" I could not help smiling at the simplicity of my companion, and said to him, "Rather invoke heaven, that we may rescue our bodies from captivity, and do not concern yourself about such trifles." It was with the utmost difficulty, however, that I prevailed upon the silly man to leave the linen behind him. When he had packed up his other travelling requisites we commenced our journey. The day began to dawn when we left the town. We were, therefore, under the necessity of creeping under some ruins near the town, and waiting there until it grew dark. We had scarcely reached this place, when Chimodanow began to com-



plain of hunger. I endeavoured to quiet him, but his complaints became more and more tiresome. "If you have nothing else," he said, "give me, at least, some dry groats, to satisfy my hunger." This murmuring was extremely unpleasant to me. It seemed as if some evil genius had encumbered me with this troublesome man: but what could I do? The flight was begun and must be persevered in. I reached him the pot, and the hungry glutton eat of the dry groats with the same appetite as a horse eats his oats.

The sun set, and we left our retreat. When we had proceeded two or three versts, we came to a deserted tile-kiln and hut, near which was a small pit of rain-water. "Brother Wassilij," said my companion, "let us rest here a little, and take something warm." I replied, "Fedor, what strange ideas you have! We have scarcely left Kiwa, and you already require that we should rest, and make a fire. Have you lost your senses." But all remonstrance was in vain. Chimodanow persisted in his request, and I was obliged to yield to his obstinacy.

We entered the tiler's hut and made a fire. I then emptied the groats out of the earthen pot, and filled it up with water, in order to boil in it the intestines of our sheep, but the heat had scarcely raised a scum on the surface, when the bottom of the pot cracked and fell to pieces, and left our meat in the ashes. In order, however, to save some of the meat, I wished to roast it on the ashes, but my companion maintained it would be eatable without. "But the meat," said I, "is still raw." Chimodanow, however, was not inclined to wait; and, quite unabashed, eat greedily of it as it was, crying out, "Hot meat is never raw."

Having finished our repast, I packed up the remainder of our sheep, and continued my journey with my troublesome companion. We travelled till we came near the town of Kipchag, which is about twenty versts from Kiwa; I then proposed keeping on the left of the town, that none of the inhabitants might see us, but Chimodanow resisted my proposition. We might, I told him, get into the high road again, on the other side of the town. "No, brother, no," said he, "that will not do, for I am dying of thirst." "But where will you procure water? for there is none to be found here." "On my journey," he replied, "I saw some behind yonder trees." "Go then," said I, "and guzzle away: surely Satan must have tied me to such a fellow as you!"

We went to the water, and Chimodanow drank most greedily; but I merely wetted my mouth. I then urged my companion to hasten forwards, fearing we might fall into the hands of Kipchaghers. "At least," said I, "let us go on till we reach the river Atalik: there we may conceal ourselves in the wood for several

days; but for the present, we must make all the haste we can." The lazy fellow replied, "I should like to sleep a little here:" so saying, he threw off his boots, spread his upper garment on the ground, made a pillow of his bundles, and lay down. One would have thought he had just returned from a long journey, and had entered his warm room, there to forget the fatigues he had endured. Chimodanow soon began to snore, while I, with my head reclining on my arm, listened to the continued noise of the neighbouring town, which was, at that time, involved in civil war. However, being at last overpowered, I fell asleep.

On waking in the morning, I found myself surrounded by a number of people; and, looking about for Chimodanow, saw him fettered. I too was immediately fettered and conducted with my companion to Kipchag; there we were thrown into prison, where we were obliged to pass the night. Meanwhile, the elders of Kipchag had sent to the neighbouring towns to make it known, that having caught two run-away slaves, the owners might come and claim them. The next day, in the afternoon, my master's second brother and the soap-boiler arrived and claimed us. Chimodanow's master conducted me, and my master's brother conducted Chimodanow. I alighted before the habitation of my master, and there sat down. An inhabitant of Kiwa, who had paid a visit to my master, on his going away, entreated him to do me no harm. "All slaves," said he, "wish to be free. Pardon, therefore, his attempt to escape."

When this humane Kiwense was gone, my master came out of his habitation, and taking from under his garment a small whip, lifted it up to strike me. But the women came running out of the house, tore the whip from him, and threw it into the yard. My master then returned into the house, and desired his youngest brother to go and procure foot-irons. The women then conducted me into the hut, and the oldest of them brought a large dish full of Plow and meat, and set it before me. I pretended to be ashamed, and refused to eat. The hostess then said to the others, "He is ashamed, and will not eat; let us go away:" she then took away the light. Having eaten almost nothing for two days, I immediately seized the dish, and not only emptied it, but even licked it, and then placed it on the table.

A few moments afterwards, a Persian boy, in the service of my master, brought a light, and the youngest brother of my master followed him soon after with the fetters. "I do not know," said he to me, "whether I must fetter you or not." The boy said, "Why should you fetter him? Surely he will not run away to-night!" The other replied, "I am afraid of the anger of my brother, if I neglect his orders." I then held out my feet to him, and said, "Fetter me, then, lest your brother should be angry with you."

While he was applying the irons, his second brother entered, who began to reprove the younger, took off my fetters, and then running after him with the irons in his hands, threw them at him. His Truchmenz brother-in-law had, in the mean time, arrived in the house, and hearing of what I had been guilty, and being less compassionate than the others, came to chastise me. He brought with him a long pole, placed it across the floor of my room, and fastened my arms to it. But the women rescued me this time also. They came in, seized the Truchmenzer by the collar, and dragged him away. After this, they unbound me, and persuaded me to go to sleep.

As I could still distinguish the voices of these women in the yard, I went softly to the door of my hut, and heard the sisters and the other women scolding the Truchmenzer for having tied my hands so fast. "Every body," said one of them, "prefers his own country to any other; how can you find fault with him for wishing to return home? Abuse him no longer; but rather endeavour, in future, to *gain his affections* by kindness: hard words make people sad."

The next day my master convinced me by his behaviour, that he intended to follow the advice of his sister. My flight was not once mentioned to me, and I was at last treated by my master as well as before. The kindness, however, which the women had shown me the preceding day, excited hopes in me that far surpassed my condition.

One of my usual domestic employments was to grind corn in the hand-mill with the women, for in Kiwa no other mills are used. This hand-mill was in a little hut in the yard. In this employment I one day had to assist one of the youngest of the women, when I felt inclined to put her conjugal fidelity to the test. While we were grinding the corn, I intentionally trod upon the foot of the fair Kiwenser: she, however, did not seem to notice it, but continued her work with the utmost indifference. I made a second attempt, but was rebuked in these words,— "Wassilij, what are you about? Do you wish that I should complain to your master?" I now knew with whom I had to do, and took care not to make another attempt.

Not long after this, I was passing by the house of a Kiwenser, and saw persons preparing a beverage from a kind of berries. I was in the street, and the landlord observing that I was watching the process, asked me if I wished to taste it? As I made no objection, they offered me some. I found it very pleasant, particularly as I had drank nothing but milk and water since I had lived in Kiwa. When I returned to my master, I spoke of the delicious liquor I had tasted. My master, glad of the opportunity of a reconciliation, said, "Should you like me to buy some of those berries, and have them boiled for you?" I joy-

fully accepted his kind offer, and the good Kiwenser himself went to market, bought about half a pud of berries, and sent for a man who understood how to prepare them. Having boiled the berries, and pressed out the kernels, he filtered the juice, and then presented it to me, observing that I ought not to drink of it before the next morning. I rose very early in the morning, and drank two cups of it, which inebriated me as much as if I had drunk brandy. The more I drank the more I felt inclined to drink. When I had drank about six cups, I was no longer able to stand upright; I soon fell down, and was discovered on the floor by the inmates, who were not a little merry at seeing me in this condition. This drink is called *bursa*, and the berries are called in that country *psak*.\*

I mention this occurrence merely to show the obliging disposition of my master. Yet he obtained nothing by his friendly treatment, for though I remained with him during the winter, I was resolved to escape the next spring. In order to accomplish this, I had only to take advantage of the opportunity which presented itself when the foreign merchants stopped at my master's, as I might then take one of their Buccharian, Persian, or Awgarian horses, which they never failed to bring with them, and thus escape. But this plan appeared rather too hazardous, as my flight would soon be discovered, and the foreign merchants would use every means to recover their horses.

Spring had now commenced, and my master wished to cultivate his little field before he made a journey to the Karakalpaks to sell his merchandize. He was to be assisted by myself and an Uspek labourer, whom he had hired for the purpose; but as the churek-cakes, which were intended for our food during our labour in the field, were not yet provided, my master remained at home, and sent me forwards with the Uspek, who was a man of very little ingenuity or acuteness. I had a horse and rode to the field, but the Uspek went on foot. My master had also given me a gun, in order that I might kill some game, should I meet with any. Although I hardly knew the use of a gun, yet conceiving it would be useful to me during my flight, to which my thoughts were now principally directed, I took it with me.

The field was about ten versts distant from the town. We arrived there in the evening, and were to pass the night there. I anxiously waited for the Uspek to fall asleep, but he rolled himself about, and did not seem even to think of sleeping. "Why," I asked him, "do you not sleep, Jagub?" He replied, "Why do not you sleep?" I said, "I had kept awake in order to

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\* The berries are said to resemble *dates*. Probably the bursa drink is the ancient date wine, which was so celebrated on the Euphrates, and in other parts of Asia, and perhaps is so still.

smoke a pipe." Some time passed in silence, but still the Uspek continued awake. Day-break at length approaching, and being impatient to make my escape, I threw myself on the Uspek, sat upon him, and tied together his hands and feet. The terrified Uspek knew not what to think of me. "If you resist," said I, "you must die." But, poor fellow, he had no thoughts of resisting me, for he suffered me to do as I pleased, saying, "I know what you intend to do: I wish you a prosperous journey." I replied, "You are mistaken: you will soon discover why I am obliged to fetter you." When I had bound the poor fellow so tight that he was unable to move, I put a gag into his mouth, and went to seek my horse.

Having saddled it, and fastened behind me my bundle of victuals, I implored the assistance of God, Nikolas, the worker of miracles, and all the saints, beseeching them to conduct me in safety to Russia. "Once more," thought I, "you have undertaken to escape from this country; if you are not now successful, you must never more think of returning to Russia, but end your days here." I then urged my horse forwards, and directed my course up the Darja.

As the labourers in the fields had begun to stir when I commenced my flight, I should certainly have been pursued and taken had I continued my journey on this side the Darja; this, however, was not my intention. The banks of the Darja were thickly covered with reeds, and here and there were little boats, which were used for fishing, or for crossing the river. I intended to keep my horse only until I should find a boat, in which I meant to go down the river as far as the lake. I concluded no one would see me on the other side the river, but that I should easily be discovered along the left side of the Darja and Aral.

I had not proceeded far, when I saw a boat amongst the reeds, and immediately advanced towards it. I with great difficulty dragged my horse through the stiff clay, which covered the side of the river, until we reached the boat, when I placed in it my victuals, consisting of five churek-cakes and about ten pounds of groats, and also my gun, a large pumpkin flask, and my saddle and bridle. I then threw my horse down, and bound his legs together with a rope, in order that no one might see him, and that, consequently, nobody might know what road I had taken. On the other side of the river I expected I should be able to take other horses from the Karakalpaks. I found in the boat a board about nine feet long, and a span in breadth, which served me instead of a rudder, and by this means I crossed the river, without being observed by any body.

When I reached the opposite side of the river, I drew the boat as far as I could into the reeds, to prevent its being seen; for I feared nothing more than that the owner should miss his boat,

and seek it on this side the river. For the sake of greater security, therefore, I took all my things out of the boat, and waited at a short distance from it until the approach of night. In the day time it would have been impossible for me to go down the river unobserved, because the western side was here and there covered with Karakalpak huts. When it had grown sufficiently dark, I put every thing into the boat again, and abandoned myself to the course of the river, which took me rapidly along. When I had proceeded in this manner for two hours, I saw before me, in the horizon, a long white streak, from which I concluded that the lake Aral was not far distant.

In order to avoid being carried into the sea by the rapidity of the river, I immediately steered toward the bank, landed with my luggage, and then pushed my boat from me, that it might be carried by the current into the sea.

Having loaded myself with the saddle and my other things, I forced my way through the reeds, and proceeded without delay. I left the Darja and Aral sea behind me, wandered about till the sun had reached the meridian, and then sat down to rest in the high grass, where nobody could see me. I here eat one of my churek-cakes, drank from my pumpkin-flask, and then pursued my journey. The sun was setting, when at a great distance I perceived something, which, as I wished for nothing more anxiously, I conceived to be a tabune of horses; I was this time, however, disappointed in my expectations, for instead of a tabune of horses, I discovered, on a nearer approach, that it was a mountain. But even this discovery was welcome to me, since, from its summit, I might be able to see whether there were any Karakalpak habitations in the neighbourhood, in which case I expected to provide myself with horses. I had now emptied my flask, and suffered much from thirst: at length, to my great joy, I discovered some water, and immediately hastened to this place, and passed the night there.

I travelled forwards till next day at noon, and yet I had not reached the mountain that was before me, nor had I seen any horses. Towards evening I ascended its summit, and perceived at a short distance a few Karakalpak huts. My joy was so great, that I instantly fell upon my knees, and thanked God and all the saints for this discovery. In the beginning of the night I went toward the huts, with a rope in my hands. Before I reached them, I saw a tabune of horses not far from me at pasture, but although I took the greatest pains, I could not catch one of them. I was therefore under the necessity of going to the huts, to see if I could not find one tied. The dogs now began to bark, but fortunately ceased almost immediately. I then stole so near the huts that I distinctly heard a man cough; then, in order to avoid being discovered, I crept on my hands and feet to the en-

trance of a hut, where I found a horse tied. I immediately loosed it, took a *horse-catcher*,\* which lay by the side of the hut, and then riding up to the tabune, caught two horses without difficulty. I now returned to the mountain for my saddle, &c., mounted my horse again, and led the other two.

After having performed several days journey along the Aral Sea, I began to be doubtful whether I should take a northward or a westward direction. After some deliberation I conceived it would be most prudent to proceed towards the North-west; I therefore left the Aral and went towards that point. I continued in this direction above a week, when to my great joy, having been two days without water, I discovered in a rock a deep well, which appeared to have been made by human hands. I immediately halted, fastened my pumpkin to a rope 18 yards long, and let it down into the well, but before the flask would reach the water, I was obliged to fasten to it another rope six yards long, and also a Trinoga.†

When I had drawn up my pumpkin, I put it immediately to my mouth, without examining its contents, and took a hearty draught, but the water having a very bad taste, I looked into the vessel, and found in it the decayed remains of snakes, lizards, earth-mice, and other vermin. This discovery produced such a sensation, that I instantly vomited up what I had taken. I then poured the remainder of the water into the hollow part of a stone which was near the well, and offered it to my horses, as they had drank nothing for three days, but they merely smelt at it, and refused to drink it. With a violent head-ache, occasioned partly by thirst, and partly by the sickness produced by the water, I again mounted my horse, and rode towards another hill, which I perceived at some distance before me. When I reached the top of the hill, I looked around me, but could discover no water. I, however, perceived another hill towards the west, and arrived at the foot of it in the evening, and to my great joy found there were three lakes near it. I instantly jumped from my horse, fell upon my knees, and thanked God that he had given me the means of quenching my thirst.

Nineteen days had now elapsed since I took the horses, and I had long since consumed my five churek-cakes. When I had finished my churek-cakes I satisfied my hunger with dry groats; but I wasso unwell for the last three days that I had eaten nothing. However when I had happily discovered the lakes, a handful of

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\* A rod four yards long, with a sling at the end of it, which is thrown round the necks of the horses in order to catch them.

† In Southern Russia the legs of the horses are frequently tied together by means of a Trinoga or three thongs, which are united together at the ends by a ring, the other ends being fastened to the legs of the horse, namely, one to a hind leg, and the other two to each of the fore legs.

that dry food seemed like honey to me. My horses rested here until the noon of the following day, and I then mounted again and went westward. At midnight I allowed my horses to rest again and laid myself down to sleep. On the following day, when I had rode about fifteen versts, I saw a broad river before me. I rode from an acclivity on the side of this river into a valley, where I found, what I did not wish, a number of Kirghiz huts. To fly was in vain, for the Kirghiz had already observed me, and my horses were tired. There therefore remained nothing for me to do but to ride up to them, and invent some story that my further escape might be facilitated.

Without hesitation I directed my horses towards five or six Kirghiz, who were not far from me. When I approached them they said, "whence do you come? and what is your name?" I answered, "I am a Persian; I have been a slave to the Trechmenzers for a long time, and am called *Bembet*. My master did not give me enough to eat, I there escaped from him, and was seeking service of the Kirghiz, when perceiving your huts, from yonder hill, I came hither."

The Kirghiz immediately conducted me to their huts, caused me to alight, and then divided among themselves my horses and every thing I had. They even obliged me to take off my clothes, instead of which they gave me a miserable skin for an apron, that scarcely covered my nakedness. Thus I found myself suddenly bereft of my hopes, and a slave to the Kirghiz. The river where this happened was called the Jemba.

My new Kirghiz master was not one of the richest of his tribe: my occupation consisted chiefly in gathering dung and fetching water; I had fetters at night, but they were taken off in the morning.

A few days after this new captivity, a young Kirghiz arrived at our hut on a stately courser, and addressed my master thus: "I am informed you have taken some valuable booty lately." I could not hear any more of his conversation, for he took my master away from the hut, for fear any one should overhear him.

The next morning my master killed two sheep: I rejoiced at the prospect of a feast, and thanked God I had now an opportunity of satisfying my hunger, and afterwards, perhaps, to escape with a valuable booty. My master said to me, "Bembet, take the dung bag, and gather some dung." I obeyed the command and soon returned with a full bag. "That is not enough," said my master, at the same time presenting me with a cup of milk; "I have a great deal to cook to day, and I want a great deal of dung." I filled the bag once more, and having emptied it at the side of the hearth, I lay down to repose myself. Towards evening I was awakened, and again sent for dung. When I had



filled the bag a third time, I entered a neighbouring hut in order to drink a cup of milk. The landlady, a Tartar, who, when a child, had been stolen by the Kirghiz from the Jaik Cossacks, was at home alone. I entered into conversation with her, and said, how well I was satisfied with my new master, and that I feared nothing more than being sold to another. "I would not have a new master," I said, "even were I sure of receiving daily enough to eat." The Tartar answered, "You simpleton; don't you know, then, the reason why so much meat is dressed to-day at your master's? Did you not yesterday see a strange Kirghiz arrive at your hut? He is a man of rank, who belongs to the Sultan Ablai: his younger brother is on the point of marrying, and he wants to procure a slave for him; your master has sold you to him, and to-day gives the purchase dinner."

I was so alarmed at this intelligence, that I was not able to finish drinking my milk, but was obliged to put it down and go away. While taking up the bag, I reflected upon my comfortable situation when I was with my Kiwense master, who loved me, and treated me like a brother! I said to myself, "You have done him great injury by your flight: you will now be carried away to a great distance into the Kirghiz steppe, whence perhaps you will never be able to return to Russia. It is better to die, than to live any longer in such misery!"

Having returned home and emptied the bag, my master offered me a bone that had been already gnawed, and said, "There; take this bone and gnaw it." I took the bone, and said, "I cannot eat, but I will drink." Upon which my master replied, "There is milk enough in yonder hut, go and drink as much as you please." Before the hut which my master pointed out to me a saddled horse was tied, and it immediately occurred to me, that I might as well take advantage of this opportunity of escaping, and ride off naked as I was. I therefore put the bone, from which nothing more could be gnawed, behind one of the poles which supported the roof of the hut, and hastened to the hut to which my master had directed me. When I had entered it, instead of eating or drinking, I looked through the holes of the felt to see whether any body was about. Observing no one, I was out of the hut in an instant, untied the horse, and rode away. It had already begun to grow dark, and the cattle around were being led to water; but nobody observed me, or if they did, could not suspect that a naked slave would ride off, for I had nothing but a skin girded round my waist.

There was a high hill not far from the huts, and when I had arrived on its summit I made my horse run as fast as it could, and about midnight I reached the river Saigass, where I held my horse by a leading rope the whole night, saddled and bridled,

in order that I might mount it instantly in case I should observe any pursuers. During the night the gadflies and gnats were intolerable. At sun-rise I mounted my horse again, rode on until evening, and passed part of the second night on a sand hill, near which were several large ditches. After my horse had rested a few hours I rode as far as the river Karakal, which crossed my way : its banks were covered on both sides with reeds ; but before day-break I discovered a path through the reeds, leading to a path on the other side of the river, where I observed some Kirghiz huts, and the inhabitants had already begun to light their fires. It appeared to me too hazardous to cross the river near the huts, particularly as I could distinguish human voices. I therefore went higher up the river to seek another ford. But here also I met with Kirghiz huts, at one of which I saw a horse tied, and wishing to have a fresh horse, that I might be able to reach the Jaik as soon as possible, I untied it, but had scarcely gone many paces with it, when it got into a clay pool, whence it was not possible to extricate it. I with great difficulty took off the saddle, and having put it on my former horse, continued my journey along the Uksal river.

I rode on till noon without finding a passage through the reeds, so that nothing but reeds, water, and sky presented themselves to my view. As I had eaten nothing since the preceding day at noon, and even before that had eaten but very sparingly with the Kirghiz, I became apprehensive of my life. I already began to repent having left the Kirghiz, when not far from me I perceived a hill.

When I had secured my horse, I reconnoitred the country more closely, and found that I was near a Kirghiz winter camp. I observed here and there some huts of reed, in which some swine were rummaging, and which run away as I approached.

Perceiving at the same time a narrow path, I mounted my horse again, and took this path, by which I arrived at the extremity of the reeds. Here I allowed my horse to rest, whilst I myself ascended a hill in order to survey the surrounding country.

How great was my joy, when looking westward from the summit of this hill, I observed the plain of Jaik, the extent of which is but one day's journey. When I had fully convinced myself of this fact, I returned to the reeds, and waited there till evening. This I did because, being now near the end of my journey, it seemed to me more safe to travel by night.

I was obliged to pass several hours in the reeds, where the gnats and other insects stung me still more than before. At last the sun set, and having mounted my horse, I ascended the hill, but I had scarcely reached the summit, when I perceived three horsemen, who were rapidly pursuing me. They were

already so near to me, that I could hear their voices, and it seemed to me, as if they called in Kalmuc, "Sokso! Sokso!" (stop! stop!) They approached nearer and nearer, till I could at length distinctly hear the words, "Tokto! Tokto!" (the Kirghiz word for stop!) By which I was now convinced that I was pursued by Kirghiz. Though I intended at first to stop my horse, yet in order to try if there were not a possibility of escaping my pursuers, I determined to make it gallop as fast as it could.

Although I had at first considered my horse as a bad runner, being little more than skin and bone, I now found to my great astonishment, that in speed it was equal to the best. I had scarcely impelled it to go forwards, when it went almost as swift as an arrow shot from a bow. Two of my pursuers were very soon left behind, but the third was once so near me, that he had almost seized my horse by the tail; but I again impelled him forward, and this Kirghiz also soon remained behind.

As the race had lasted some time, I was now obliged to alight, in order to arrange the saddle-cloth: I now looked behind me, but saw nothing more than a cloud of dust at a distance, raised probably by the trampling of my own horse, so well had he performed his task. I had now arrived in the country which the Russians call *Ssoltshaki* (the salt lakes). I was at first undetermined whether I should finish the last twenty versts quickly or slowly: but finding my horse as fresh as if it had not run at all, and considering that my pursuers might probably take another direction and so gain the advance upon me, I resolved to hasten to the Jaik at full gallop.

The day begun to dawn, and a dark cloud, which I had observed just before, proved to be the thick forest which covered the east side of the Jaik. No one was happier now than myself. In a short time I found myself on the banks of the Jaik. I made the sign of the cross, and then looked up and down in order to discover some one. I at last saw a boat in which were several people. I called out to them with all my might, but no one heard me, although I could distinguish the voices of the Cossack fishermen. I now rode by the side of the river, but its banks being low and composed chiefly of clay, which the spring inundation had rendered very wet, I tied my horse in a dry place, and with great difficulty went on foot, higher up the river. I proceeded in this way for some time, and at length on turning a winding part of the river, I perceived on the opposite side a Stanitza (village) with its Church. With tears in my eyes I threw myself on my knees, and fervently addressing God, and the holy Martyrs, thanked them with a grateful heart, for having delivered me from captivity; though I could

hardly trust to my eyes, and was ready to conclude that all I saw was a dream.

On approaching nearer the Stanitza I perceived a Cossack fisherman, sitting in a boat and employed in catching salmon. I called out to him, "Mr. Cossack, take me over quickly in your boat." The Cossack knew not what to think at seeing on this side of the river a naked man, who addressed him in the Russian language, and hesitated to come to my assistance. "Whence do you come?" he enquired. Impatient to be safely landed on the opposite side, I replied, "Why do you ask a man such a question who is almost dead? Take me over and you shall hear every thing."

The Cossack immediately steered his boat towards me, and took me over. When we had landed and entered the Stanitza, the men and women of the village ran to meet us, surrounded us on all sides, and wondered to see a man in such a condition. The Ataman (chief, or elder) of the Stanitza at length came to us, and addressing himself to me, said, "*Who are you ?*"

A venerable Cossack, with a long grey beard, who stood near the Ataman, said impatiently to the latter, "You are a fine Ataman :\* first give him meat and drink, and then ask him who he is?"

The old man then conducted me to his habitation, and, on entering, said to his aged wife, "Provide something immediately for this poor captive to eat." He then ordered me to sit down on a bench, gave me a piece of bread, and said to his wife, "Pray give him some sour milk : for although it is now the Whitsun fast-time, no prayer has yet been offered up for him.† But my lad," said he, addressing me, "do not eat so eagerly : eat not too much at a time ; it may hurt you !" I followed his advice, eat as moderately as I could, and then thanked my honest host for "*bread and salt.*"‡

When I had finished my meal, my host conducted me to his stable, that I might take some rest. I slept soundly until the next morning, and after having had something to eat, I related to my host circumstantially all my adventures. When I had concluded, I said to him, "Good father, do you think your Ataman will indulge me with a boat, that I may cross the river and fetch my horse?" The good old man said, "It will be a

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\* The sincerity and energy of this address is much more strongly expressed in the original: "*Gowno atamanishka.*"

† The *Rasholniks*, by whom the country about the Aral and Jaik is principally inhabited, believe, that, as long as the fast prayer has not been offered up, nobody is obliged to hold the fast.

‡ The phrase "*bread and salt*" is very common in Southern Russia, and particularly among the Cossacks, both when they request to be entertained, and after having received an entertainment.

useless undertaking; for the insects have no doubt killed your horse by this time, they are so numerous and formidable in that forest; however we will see what can be done."

The old man immediately conducted me to the Ataman, who, when I had related to him my adventures, caused a boat to be given to me. We found the poor animal alive indeed, but, alas! weltering in blood, and so extremely faint, that he could not even move his tail. We brought him over the river, and the good old man gave orders that proper care should be taken of it for me.

My host next caused a priest to be called, who gave me his benediction. I was then provided by the old man with shirts, trowsers, and a coat; and having rested a few days, I was furnished with post-horses and conducted from the Stanitza KALMYKOWSK (the name of the village I had first seen on my return) to the town of JAİK (*Ural*). My horse, which the Ataman of Kalmykowsk would gladly have purchased, was fastened to the pole of the carriage that it might run by the side of the post-horses.

When I arrived at Jaik, I was conducted by a corporal, who had accompanied me from Kalmykowsk, to the office of the Chancellor, and my conductor delivered to an officer of the staff, a written document concerning me, which he had brought with him. The officer looked at me several times, while he was perusing the paper, and when he had finished it, he approached me, and asked, "Do you not know me?" I answered, "If I have ever seen you, I cannot now remember it." The Colonel replied, "You were with SSAWA SPIRIDONITCH WESELOFF, when I bought forty horses of him on the Volga island. My name is IWAN DONILICH SSIMONOFF." While he was speaking to me I recollected him. The Colonel then gave me three silver rubles, and ordered the ruling Ataman to appoint me quarters, and to send my horse to the Cossack tabune: then addressing himself to me, he said, "If you do not wish to remain here, I will send you to Astrachan, whence you may return to Jenatajewsk." The Ataman afterwards gave me a silver rouble, and several Cossack Officers also presented me with money, some with a rouble, others with half a rouble, so that in a short time I had collected about fifteen silver rubles.

As it was now hay-harvest in the Jaik country, and eighty copecks were the daily wages given to the labourers, I intended to stay here some time longer, in order to earn as much money as would be requisite to defray the expences of a public thanksgiving: for I thus wished to evince my gratitude to the Supreme Being for my delivery from captivity. But I had no

occasion to work in order to accomplish this, for I soon got, by various contributions, as much money as enabled me to perform these religious duties.

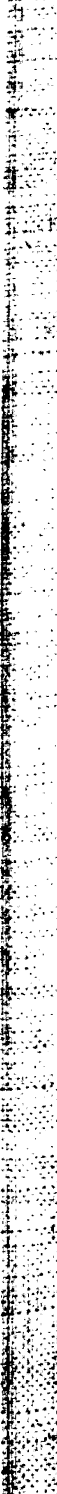
I sojourned above a month at Jaik, waiting for Astrachan Tartars, who were expected from Oremburgh with sheep, and whom I intended to assist in driving their sheep for a moderate remuneration. But the Pugacheff rebellion breaking out, in which the Jaik Cossacks also took an active part, a Kalmuc Cossack advised me to sell my horse, intimating at the same time it would not get fatter. I followed his advice, and accordingly led my horse to the market. I certainly expected I should be able to get three rubles for it, but I sportingly asked twenty rubles for it of a Cossack, who presented himself as a purchaser. The Cossack, to my astonishment, offered me seven rubles; other buyers, however, who either understood the value of a horse from its outward appearance, or who had heard of the race he had run, advanced the price higher and higher, until at last I sold it for seventeen rubles.

When I had sold my horse, I went to Colonel Ssimonoff, and requested my passport. The Colonel gave me a letter to the Astrachan-governor Beketoff, and I then proceeded, first to Gurjew (or the mouth of the Jaik), and thence by water to Astrachan. I was here conducted to the Chancelry of the Governor, who then resided in the town of SAREPTA. Colonel Murawjew, who transacted the business of the Governor during his absence, read the letter, and ordered me to be conveyed to Jenatajewsk. I now referred the Colonel to the Imperial Ukase, which orders, "*That those who return from captivity, and particularly natives of Asia, shall receive a reward of one hundred rubles.*" The Colonel replied, "You must wait patiently until the return of the General, and in the mean time you may proceed to Jenatajewsk."

I accordingly returned to Jenatajewsk, and entered into the service of MICHAILO SEAWICH WESELOFF, who then occupied the post of *Pristaw* over the Darbat Kalmuc hordes. Thirty years I have served this excellent master, partly in the horde, and partly at Jenatajewsk. I am still in his service, and I hope to end my days with him. But let it be recollected that "*the hundred rubles to which I am entitled has not yet been paid to me.*"



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