

MISCELLANY.

ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

SCHAMYL, THE CIRCASSIAN LEADER.

Schamyl was born in the year 1797, in one of the pastoral districts of the Circassian territory bordering on the Caspian Sea. His early education fitted him to become a leader of the forest tribes...

At an early age Schamyl exhibited a lively perception of the charms of nature. Old men relate of him that was wont to climb the neighboring mountains, gazing at the wild scenery in the rays of the setting sun...

"There are elk on the Kuban; but the following of the fallow deer in the hills is more common. The hunter searches for the beds of the roes with dogs, or stalking the forest steals upon the herd when browsing upon the tender twigs and the moss of trees...

When the bargain is struck a grand feast celebrates the event. Hundreds of relatives and friends assemble to honor the betrothals by a picnic and a dance from morning till night. Upon the arrival of the marriage-day, the couple are joined together by still more feasting and brave ceremonies.

charm, and placing by the bedside three earthen vessels filled with corn, and containing each a lighted lamp. At the hour of midnight the bridegroom gallops to the house of his friend, is conducted into the presence of his bride, and without priest or magistrate the ceremony is concluded.

"On their heads the girls wear a bonnet not unlike the Albanian skull cap, of scarlet or some other brilliant color, and trimmed with lace of silver. Beneath this the hair falls down their shoulders in braids, which are confined at the end by a silver cord, or are tied like the tresses of the Cossack girls with bright ribbons that nearly sweep the ground.

"The eyes' blue-belliance, And the golden hair, Are the objects of admiration."

"While in addressing each other, the men make use of what we term the Christian name, and whatever the difference of rank, treat each other generally with the familiarity of brothers. Still, they never fail to do honor to a chief by half rising from their seat on his entrance into a room, and by standing up erect in case he be of superior age.

"At that period in his prime, he had outgrown the early delicacy of his constitution, and was a warrior as distinguished in personal appearance as in character and intellectual culture. He was of middle stature; had fair hair, since turned white; grey eyes overshadowed by thick, well-drawn brows; a mouth, like his hands and feet, small; a regular, so-called Grecian nose; and a complexion remarkable among his countrymen for its fairness and delicacy of skin.

"In his hospitality the Circassian vies with the Arab of the desert. A house, or at least an apartment, is kept ready by every man of substance for the reception of strangers, its doors never being closed by day, and a pile of logs always blazing on the hearth in winter evenings.

"Only after repeated solicitations on the part of the guest, and when all others present have taken their seats, will the host consent to sit down himself, and even then he will crouch down at a respectful distance on the floor. After the repast, served perhaps by the sons of the house, water is brought in by maid-servants, that the guest may wash his hands, while they carefully do the same office for his feet.

"The Circassian girls are sparingly nourished says an ancient writer, living mostly on milk, bread of millet, and pastry. Delicate in her food as she is neat in her dress, growing up in the healthy air of the mountains, living in a society of simple tastes and natural habits, always treated with gallant courtesy by a race of men whose hearts are mostly moved by a love of war and of beauty, it is not strange that nature should have preserved through so many generations something of the type of loveliness which adorned the world's age of gold, and which in modern times has made the Caucasian head to be regarded by civilized man as the truest image of his Maker."

"The society of which Schamyl became a member in full, on reaching manhood, was a free democracy. In the tribe to which he belonged, there was no other chief than the favorite leader of the warriors on their expeditions against the enemy. Nor did this office continue longer than the campaign. In time of peace all were brothers, with no distinction but such as might result from a difference in natural gifts or in the favors of fortune.

"The Circassians still retain the nomadic idea that the soil is common property. Occupancy gives a title for the time being, and individuals regard the land which they improve as their own. But no person claims more land than he can fairly occupy. At his decease, it is either divided equally among his sons, or is enjoyed by them in common. In certain parts of the country, however, the chiefs and nobles cultivate considerable tracts by means of serfs and captives. These are often supplied with

the appliances of farming, on condition of returning one-half the produce. Nor is their lot one of great severity. They are quite as likely to be seen racing, wrestling, pitching quoits, and sleeping under hedges and wattled fences, as bending over the short-tailed plough or hoe.

"The manners of the Circassians are remarkable for their natural politeness. Their social intercourse is founded on personal dignity and mutual respect. They rarely indulge in ungraceful levity or violate the simple rule of manly behavior. Even their dances and games are performed with a certain decorous reserve, and on their military excursions, their habitual sedateness takes the place of rigid discipline.

"Their mode of salutation is by raising the right hand to the head, and sometimes lifting their caps. It is also a mark of respect to kiss the hand of a stranger of distinction and place it on the forehead. They strike hands together in token of amity, and females part from each other with a gentle embrace of their right arms, and then a clasping of their right hands.

"This respect for age, taking the place of that for rank, runs through the whole style of Circassian manners. The decision of an aged man settles all minor controversy; when he speaks in the council ring, the most eloquent keep silence; if in anger he strike a blow even, it is not returned; wherever he moves the crowd make way for him; in winter his is the warmest corner by the fire; in summer the young girls spread his mat on the verandah and fan his slumbers; it is an honor to light his chibouque, when he wishes to ride, every one is ready to saddle his steed, and a dozen lads run to help him down on his return. 'Doubly accused,' says the Circassian proverb, 'the man that draweth down upon himself the malediction of the aged.'"

"His military exploits have been in keeping with his character. Nor is he more remarkable as a warrior than as a ruler and a lawgiver. — N. Y. Tribune.

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THE TRI-WEEKLY COMMERCIAL

Published every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, at \$5 per annum, payable in advance.

RATES OF ADVERTISING. Single insertion \$5 1/2. For 2 months, \$8 00. For 3 months, \$10 00. For 6 months, \$16 00. For 1 year, \$28 00.

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