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TRAVELS
IN THE
THREE GREAT EMPIRES
OF
AUSTRIA, RUSSIA,
AND TURKEY.

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CHAPTER VII.

MOLDAVIA. FROM GALATZ TO LIOVA.

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A LETTER of introduction insured to us the hospitalities of the vice-consul of Galatz and his lady, who kindly took us into their house

and were unremitting in their obliging attentions till we resumed our journey towards the frontier of Russia. It was no small privilege to find ourselves under the shelter of a roof and to enjoy the luxury of a bed, after six consecutive nights passed on the hard unfurnished boards of the steamer. These comforts, with the courtesies of our considerate host and hostess, were the more valued when we learned that our companions had searched the town in every direction for a corner in which they might pass the night; and had, at length, been obliged to put up with accommodations of a very different description from those with which we were favored.

The lady of the vice-consul presided over our morning repast and amused us with anecdotes of her servants. One is a fine handsome Albanian; fierce, capricious, and violent in love and hatred; at times he leaves his master, to whom he is much attached, for hours together; and when, on his return, he is questioned as to this strange conduct, he fixes his eyes on the ground, makes no reply, shows no sign either of sorrow or of anger, and does the same thing the next time he is offended or idle. But he is honest, and this is no little recommendation. His costume is beautiful. From a crimson cap

a long black tassel falls over his light flowing locks. A shirt, open in front, is retained in its place by a dark brown jacket, likewise open: below this, is a red leathern girdle, about ten inches wide, furnished with a brace of silver-headed pistols; and a yataghan formed part of his dress till his ungoverned passions rendered it necessary to disarm him of that formidable weapon: from the waist hangs a very full white linen petticoat, the width of which is a subject of pride with the wearer, and varies from thirty to fifty yards: long dark gaiters and shoes complete the costume. The servant who had charge of the child was a Greek, habited in the garb commonly worn by his countrymen in Turkey.

Moldavian domestics appear to be indolent, stupid, and immoral to the last degree. They require to have the same order repeated every day: when the dinner-cloth is laid by one who has performed the office for months, the mistress must sit by and say, "Now put on the spoons, now the salt-cellars, now the tumblers now the knives," and so for every separate article of table furniture: when reprov'd, they stand mute, and look on the ground; but neither profess nor exhibit an intention to do better. Their inclination to theft is irresistible; a lady

residing here told us that it frequently happened that her pocket-handkerchief, laid down for a moment while she was speaking to a servant, disappeared as she turned away her head: the culprit at first denies the charge; and when the stolen article is found upon him, he evinces no sense of shame.

While we sat at dinner five languages were spoken, though the party consisted of only four individuals. We talked to one another in English and to our hostess in French; while our host addressed one of us in French, the other in Italian, and his wife in Greek; and they both gave orders to their servants in Moldavian.

Galatz carries on a considerable commerce and may be regarded as the port of both the principalities, though Ibrail has lately drawn to itself a share of the trade of Wallachia. Ships from England, the Ionian isles, and other European countries, are generally lying off the quay. The principal exports are tallow, haricot-beans, corn, cheese, barrel staves, wax, wool, beasts, skins, and wine to Odessa. The chief imports are iron, oil, olives, cotton, sugar, and coffee. Articles of food are remarkably cheap: a goose in good condition costs sevenpence, a fat sheep three shillings, and an egg a farthing.

The houses are nearly all built of unpainted wood and roofed with the same material. Most are limited to a single floor, with a front open towards the street, as is usual in Wallachia and the east; and goods exposed for sale are spread out on the ground. At the upper end of the town are a few dwellings of a better description, inhabited by consuls and two or three of the richer merchants; they are tiled and white-washed, and have glass windows, with a story above the rez-de-chaussée. The furniture of the rooms consists of a sofa extending along one side, a table, a looking-glass, and three or four chairs; while a stove in the wall answers for two or more apartments. The streets are formed of the trunks of trees placed crossways, making what is familiarly called a *corduroy* road.

The population may be about five thousand, of whom one thousand are British subjects from the Ionian isles; principally, men who have fled for debt or crime, or have been left here by vessels in which they worked their passage. Besides these, a considerable number of Jews and Armenians are to be seen, but the great mass of the natives are of the Greek persuasion.

The arrival of the steamer brings with it a gala-day to the inhabitants. On these occasions the vessel becomes a general rendez-

vous for all the gossips of the place, and ordinary recreations and amusements are absorbed in that superlatively gratifying one, seeing and being seen, talking and being talked to.

Moldavia derives its name from the river Moldau. It was once occupied "by the Venedic nations, or the people who dwelt on fens; the same tribes who first inhabited that part of England now called Cambridgeshire. The ancient Venedi appear to have been the beavers of the human race; all their settlements were on the banks of small rivers and lakes, or by the side of fens. It is more than probable that their diet was fish and the flesh of water-birds; and finding that the effluvia from the marshes was best obviated by covering them with water, they constructed dams across the narrows and rapids of the small rivers and filled the marshy hollows with water, around which they dwelt in security, and lived upon the salmon and wild fowl which fattened in these artificial lakes. Most of the rivers in Moldavia are at this hour intersected with weirs which dam the waters and form ponds; mills are built on these weirs, and the villages are placed around them."*

* Neale's Travels. Doubtless the name *Venedi* is connected with the Teutonic word *fen*; and a similar relation

some beautiful scenery, but the southern parts are flat and uninteresting.

From what we could learn of the politics of the country, it seems that they are so intimately blended with those of Wallachia as scarcely to require a separate mention. Once subject to the tyranny of Turkey, Moldavia, at the same time with her sister principality, was virtually released from the Ottoman yoke to bow to one no less galling; and though governed by a hospodar of her own, yet he is the creature and the tool of Russia. The population, amounting to half a million, is thinly scattered over the province, which, from the fertility of its soil, is capable of supporting four or five times the existing number. The towns participate the general dearth of inhabitants; and Jassi, the capital, contains scarcely more than twelve thousand souls.

The first information obtained at Galatz relative to the quarantine on the frontier of Russia was discouraging. The period of probation prescribed for travellers arriving at the neighbouring town of Reni, instead of being four days, as we had been informed, proved to be fourteen; at the same time, bills of health may be traced between the Saxon *fenn* and the Dutch *venne*, each signifying a marshy spot.

ceived from the English consul at Constantinople certified that, though the plague existed there, it was not raging with malignity; thus it appeared that, in descending the Danube nearly to its embouchure, we had acted on incorrect information; and we were almost inclined to wish that we had proceeded, like some of our companions, direct from Rustchuk to Varna, and thence by water to Constantinople. It was now too late to pursue this course; and there is no road from Galatz to the capital of Turkey: while, owing to the prevalent winds, a voyage is so tedious and the vessels are so ill adapted for the reception of passengers, that we resolved to submit to quarantine and make the best of our way to Odessa, whence a steamer plies to Constantinople. In this decision we were confirmed by hearing that at Liova, distant eighteen hours from Galatz, travellers might enter Russia with a detention of only four days.

Preparatory to departure, it was necessary that the Russian consul should sign our passports, to attest that we had not been travelling in any part of Turkey but Wallachia and Moldavia, in neither of which provinces the plague existed. This form, with the exchange of money and purchase of provisions for a journey

through a country supplying none, occupied the morning; and it was 4 P.M. before our carriage made its appearance. As there is no high-road to Liova, it was impracticable to travel with post-horses, and the best vehicle the consul could procure was so rickety that we feared it would scarcely carry us to the journey's end. To this five ponies were attached with less of tackle than we had ever seen used; and what there was consisted solely of cord which had been repeatedly broken and re-tied. The wheeler on which the driver mounted had a bit, the other only a halter: of the three leaders two were furnished with bits and were linked together; to the third nothing whatever was affixed but the traces round his chest; he was governed entirely by the voice, heedless of which, he frequently strayed in the course of the journey and made direct for a piece of grass or a well; while his comrades, pursuing their course, left him behind the vehicle; in which state he was dragged backwards by the traces, till the driver descending chastised him for his erratic propensities. This man was a Moldavian, who spoke not a word of any other language than that of his native wilds. His coarse white shirt, with long sleeves, was fastened over a pair of yet coarser trowsers by a

broad girdle of green cloth, ornamented with two leather straps studded with large brass buttons. Over this was a sheepskin cloak, with the wool inside. His cap was made of the same material with the wool outside; and he was furnished with large top-boots.

The sight of this equipage was almost sufficient to deter us from undertaking the journey; but we had no alternative: whether we advanced or receded, whether we returned to Giorgervo, or directed our course to Odessa or Constantinople, this was the best conveyance the town supplied; and in it we were compelled to proceed.

Our luggage was soon stowed away in the vehicle; the lighter articles were placed behind, and two large portmanteaux, to serve as seats, in front. No interpreter could be obtained who spoke Moldavian and Russ together with any language with which we were acquainted; and thus, to all other discomforts was added that of an inability to communicate with our driver or with the people of the country.

At length, we bade adieu to our friends at Galatz, through whose kindness we were provided with a little English porter, some good bread, roast fowls, butter, and a few bottles of mineral water. It was 5 P.M. when we started;

the sun soon sank below the horizon, and our route lay over a flat common without a single object to vary its monotony. The road, considering that it was nothing but a Moldavian wagon track, was pretty good; though every now and then we were sadly jolted by a rut or hole; while the frail bridges crossing the streams or quagmires, composed, as they were, of pieces of wood thrown loosely one upon another, tottered under our weight.

It was nearly ten o'clock when the howling of a number of wolf-like dogs announced that we were in the village of Formosica. We drove to the residence of the boyar, or chief landholder, and requested him to provide us with a lodging. Fortunately, he spoke German; and, politely expressing a regret that his own house was full, he sent a man to shew us the next best accommodation in the village. In a few minutes we were at the door of a hut, our entrance into which roused from their slumbers an old man and his wife, three or four young women, and a girl, who were lying on benches which they readily resigned at the command of their landlord. The suffocating smell and hard boards offered so little inducement to sleep, that, had it been July instead of September, we should have preferred remaining in

the carriage; but the night air in these countries, especially in autumn, is peculiarly prejudicial to health. While, therefore, one of the party guarded the baggage, in a spot where we might so easily have been plundered without the means of obtaining redress, the others threw themselves on the benches in travelling costume. Sundry wild sounds varied the dull watches of the night, through all of which we might have slept had it not been for the young lady of the family, who, long before day-break, roused by the increased activity of the Lilliputian herds to which her flowing locks afforded cover, set up a scream, and began to pursue them with the deadly vengeance of her nails. Our alarm kept pace with the vigor of her efforts, and the fears induced were an antidote to sleep.

A little before 5 A.M. we resumed our journey without food. Every third or fourth hour carried us to a collection of miserable huts, built of mud and wicker-work, thatched with reeds, and scattered irregularly over the waste, without garden or enclosure. Nothing like a street is to be seen. One of these villages is called Brennerst; another Popogéne, and a third Wodeni. At Brennerst we were struck with the unusual number of wells: every twenty yards was marked by one of those long

poles, balanced on the stump of a tree by a bucket at one end and a heap of mud on the other, which are so common in India, and in almost every country of Europe except our own. In the neighbourhood of Popogéne we met a tribe of gipsies, whose swarthy complexions were scarcely concealed by any clothes; one of the younger ones, by no means an infant, was absolutely naked; a man was almost in the same state; and the women were not decently covered. These wretched people seem in the principalities to be sunk even below their degraded fellow-subjects. Elsewhere they separate themselves, here slavery separates them, from the rest of mankind.

Our course lay along the right bank of the river Pruth, the ancient Puretus, which once formed the boundary of Russia and Turkey, and which now divides the Russian province of Bessarabia from the principalities whose independence the czar professes to guarantee, while he holds them in abject subjection. Our first view of the great northern empire was accompanied with appropriate sensations, for the morning was the coldest we had experienced; yet many of the fields on this side the Pruth are cultivated with vines; and the wine of Moldavia, especially that called Odobesta, is

celebrated. We passed some plantations of tobacco; and wild asparagus scattered its seeds under our wheels as we galloped over the common which skirts the nominal dominions of Turkey on the Russian frontier. This waste swarms with crows and hawks; and the magpies excited our surprise, as we had never before seen those birds in such numbers.

At noon we halted at Wodeni, a village consisting of a few huts made of hurdles, daubed with mud and covered with rushes, which is favored above its fellows with a church of the same simple structure.

The people wear neither shoes nor stockings, and are clad in the filthiest garbs. The girls of all classes plait their hair in two queues which hang down to the feet; and, as these are peculiar to unmarried women, very possibly some such custom exists (though less precise and less accurately defined,) as that which prevails in Hamburg; where, it is said, a girl cuts off one queue when she marries, and the other if she become a second time a wife. It is not improbable that the Moldavians derive their mode from the Dacians, as the Hamburgers do from their ancestors, the Suevi, of whom Tacitus records that the common people braided and tied their hair, while the chiefs

wore it in a knot on the top of the head, that they might appear taller and more terrible to their enemies.

Resuming our journey, we soon reached a spot called Orgee and, as the sun set, the small town of Faltsi, distinguished from the neighbouring villages only by the greater number of its huts and the superiority of its church, which is stuccoed and ornamented with two towers, and has a belfry at a distance from the sacred edifice; a separation as usual in the principalities, as it is in Scandinavia and many parts of Italy. Here we observed, for the first time, chains suspended from the crosses surmounting the towers, while the crosses themselves are double, like those of Russia. This adoption of the northern style of architecture and ornament indicated our near approach to the empire of the czars; and as the building appeared quite modern, it may reasonably be concluded that it has been erected since the course of political occurrences placed Moldavia virtually in the hands of the Russians.

From Faltsi our route ran parallel to the channel of the Pruth and to a chain of low hills in Bessarabia, over a wide morass extending ten or twelve miles and sometimes forming small lakes, in the middle of which are

islands covered with rushes and other productions of marshy lands. The moon yielded but a feeble glimmer; our driver lost his way; and for more than an hour we anticipated the probability of wandering all night on the common: at length, with great difficulty, we reached a village and obtained a guide to direct us into the straight road to Liova. Our animals had now been fifteen hours in harness, with only one short interval in the middle of the day; and unless accustomed to such severe labor, they would have been incapacitated for exertion; but the Moldavian horses are very strong, though ill fed; they seldom touch oats or any nutritious grain; and even during this long journey, though those we drove eat but once in the day, still the only food with which they were indulged was rank straw.

It was past nine in the evening when we found ourselves among some huts on the bank of the Pruth, at a spot dignified by the high-sounding title of Porte de Liova. By the light of the moon we discerned a ferry; and the loud cry of the guards, stationed on the opposite side and answering one another at short intervals, indicated the vicinity of the Russian quarantine, whither we were bound. This cry of the sentinels is wild and singular. It consists

of one high note, which they usually sustain as long as the breath permits, when they conclude by descending the scale in semi-tones.

A hard-featured, passionate man, roused from his slumbers, soon answered the call of our driver, and came out to ask what we required. We intimated by signs that we were desirous of crossing the river to Liova: to this he replied by violent gestures and unintelligible vociferations; and after a fruitless effort to persuade him to comply with our wishes, we were beginning to make arrangements for spending the night in the carriage, when a more respectable person accosted us. He understood just two words of German; "To-morrow morning;" by means of which he intimated that we could not cross the ferry till the following day; and at the same time conducted us to a miserable hut, where a woman and a naked child, rolling themselves off a plank, placed it at our disposal. In a corner, two more children lay on the mud floor. The stove, a broad bench on three sides of the room, and a stick suspended from the ceiling, on which several articles of dress were hanging, constituted the only furniture. Three holes in the wall, provided with pieces of bladder removable at pleasure, served to admit light, but did not exclude the air. Such was

our apartment. Our companions had a similar one in another cabin. In a few minutes the vehicle was unloaded and the baggage piled before the door to barricade it against intruders; when, partially undressing and wrapt in our cloaks, we lay down to sleep, with the two children in the corner, thankful for a sheltered spot in which to rest our weary limbs.

The following morning we awoke to a sense of our miseries, and saw by daylight the full extent of the wretchedness by which we were surrounded. The screaming of the children had compelled us in the middle of the night to put them into the outer room, and they ceased to disturb us; but not so the insects by which we were almost devoured: an entomologist might have made a fair collection from the various species of our tormentors. On opening the door, we found ourselves enveloped in a thick mist; the Pruth flowed under the wall of the hut, and the eye could not penetrate the dense vapor that arose from its surface; but as soon as this was dissipated, we descried the roof of the Russian quarantine on the further side of a low hill, and recognized in it the site of our future prison. In vain we traversed and retraversed the village in search of some one who spoke French, Italian, or German; but not a

creature was to be found whose attainments extended beyond a knowledge of the Moldavian dialect. The uncourteous man who, the preceding night, had impressed us with no very favorable opinion of his disposition, verified to-day the estimate we had formed of him; and to our signs, soliciting a conveyance to the opposite shore, he replied only by negations issued with all the assumption of petty authority. In this painful situation we passed several hours, without the possibility of moving or of procuring bread, meat, clean water, or the common necessaries of life; till, in the afternoon, a flag raised on the Russian bank intimated that strangers might cross the water: at the same time several Jews arrived, some of whom spoke broken German; and from them we learned the real cause of our detention, namely, that the bureau is opened only twice a day, and on Sunday, which this happened to be, but once.

Embarking in a canoe formed of an excavated tree, and reaching the opposite shore in company with about sixteen Jews and Moldavian peasants, we proceeded to exhibit our passports and solicit permission to enter the quarantine, which consists of a number of little detached buildings, surrounded by

a wooden palisade forming a square of about a hundred and fifty yards. Outside this are an office, where at stated hours an employé receives passports and strangers, and a quadrangle into which the détenus are permitted to enter once in the day, to converse with their friends through a screen of trellis-work. The visit of our companions enabled the prisoners to avail themselves of this privilege, and a dirty tribe flocked to the bars to gossip away their short half-hour. Some of the Jews, who had been long fasting, spread out their provisions on the ground and began to eat, having first washed their hands and rinsed their mouths; for, like their ancestors of old, "unless they wash, they eat not."

In the bureau we encountered an official styling himself the commissary, who spoke not a word of any language but the Russian. We were separated by a double grating furnished with small doors opposite to each other, between which, on a glass case containing a New Testament and a picture of the virgin, our passports were placed. These were taken up with a pair of tongs, and one of the Jews was desired to inform us that we must return the following day. We represented that we had already lost time by the arrangements which

prevented our reception the previous night; that we were now in a spot where the necessaries of life were not procurable; that we had literally passed fifty-four hours without washing our faces, from the impossibility of procuring any water unmixed with mud, and that we had spent two nights without enjoying the comfort of a bed; that to force us to remain longer in such a condition was cruel; and that some consideration ought to be manifested. All this touched not the heart of the commissary, who replied only that the law must be obeyed. Before we left, the doctor of the quarantine, who spoke a little French, arrived, and acted as interpreter. Having heard our just complaint, he kindly interceded for us, but without effect; and the sleek little commissary desired him to apprise us that the law requires every foreigner, not French, bringing a French passport, to be detained beyond the frontier while enquiries are instituted regarding him; nor would he understand that the passports of all English travellers are necessarily drawn out in French; that being the diplomatic language of Europe.

Finding that we were likely to be thus maltreated, we gave him a letter addressed to the governor of the town, stating that some foreign

gentlemen wished to enter the Russian dominions, that they were furnished with regular passports and willing to submit to quarantine, but that they were harassed by unnecessary detention, to obviate which his aid was solicited. When we requested that this might be speedily forwarded, the following dialogue with the commissary took place by means of a Jew. "Whence comes this letter to the governor of Liova?" — "From the Porte de Liova." — "Who wrote it?" — "A gentleman." — "What gentleman?" — "His name will be found in the letter." — "The commissary must know his name." — "Then the governor will doubtless inform him." Disgusted with his examiné, the commissary turned away, the doors were locked, and we were ordered to recross the water.

Doomed to pass another day in the miserable Porte de Liova, it was a source of thankfulness and surprise that the means professedly intended to prevent our carrying infection from countries where it was well known no contagious disease existed, did not themselves induce illness; a result which would probably have ensued, but for the wholesome food supplied by our kind friends at Galatz.

After a second doleful night, we arose with such strength as survived the attacks of the

insatiable insects, and were happy to see the flag flying at eight o'clock. Again we resorted to the office of the commissary, who said that it was impossible we should be received, because we must previously take an oath, and we did not understand the Russian language. We enquired why the oath could not be translated? "Because nobody can translate it."—"Where is the doctor?"—"He may perhaps come to-morrow or next day."—"Is there no one in the town who talks German, French, or Italian, and who will translate the oath for a handsome remuneration?"—"No; nobody!"—"Will you not communicate the substance of the oath to one of these Jews, and suffer him to repeat it to us?"—"That is impossible: a Jew cannot administer an oath to a Christian."—"But a Jew can inform a Christian what he is called upon to swear."—"No; he cannot take the name of Christ."—"A Jew often does take the name of Christ, though in blasphemy: however, the word is the same in all languages; let him interpret the rest of the oath, we can supply the sacred name." The absurdity of this conversation was the more glaring, as a Jew was at the time actually naming the name of Christ in his office of interpreter between us. To suppose the commissary could not under-

stand the feasibility of this arrangement, were to suppose him without reason ; but he would not. We offered him a piece of gold, which he refused, and went away, leaving us to decide whether we should go back to Galatz or make one more effort to overcome the vexatious annoyances of a Russian frontier.

On the northern boundary equal obstacles are not opposed to the admission of travellers ; but we were informed at Vienna that it was impossible to conceive the inconveniences to which those are exposed who enter Bessarabia ; and so the result proved. The fact is, Russia does not wish the subjects of more liberal governments to blend with her own ; and she cannot more effectually prevent such an amalgamation than by condemning them to what we suffered. Nothing but a determination to exclude foreigners to the utmost of her power can account for the anomaly that, in a frontier office, at which many must be constantly arriving, there should not be an individual capable of conversing in any language but Moldavian and Russ, except the doctor, who stated that it was no part of his duty to act as interpreter.

While we were meditating on the course to be adopted, the commissary returned : he had probably seen the governor and learned that we

were furnished with an introduction to count Woronzow, the governor-general of Southern Russia; for his manner was entirely changed: he now told us that if we would attend, with our party, in the afternoon, bringing a list in Russ of every, even the most minute, article in our possession, we should be admitted, and the oath should be translated for us into French. By means of a Jew who spoke a little German and Moldavian, and a Moldavian who spoke a little Russ but could scarcely write and required two or three minutes for each word, a list of our effects was made, minute even to scraps of linen, some allumettes, and fragments of paper. This tedious work accomplished, we proceeded to cross the ferry, but were arrested in our progress by the sentinel on the Moldavian side, who insisted on a present before he would suffer us to pass. Some of his companions, encouraged by the readiness with which we had submitted to similar impositions, had asked for a trifle, which we intended to give; but when a military sentry ventured to stop us with such a demand, we felt that compliance would be weakness and that duty required we should assert our rights by forcing a passage malgré his opposition.