

## C H A P. X.

GROSS WARDEIN—COUNTY MEETING—HOT BATHS—NATRON  
—ZIGUINERS, ETC.

DEBRETZIN was to have been the extent of my travels eastward; but as I was informed that some high mountains which I saw from hence were close to Gros Wardein, only a short day's journey distant, I was desirous of examining them, as I should then have seen the mountains or hills that bound the great plain as well on the east as the west; and as Baron Voray, who was at Debretzin on some law business, was returning to his estate in the county of Arad, for the sake of company we agreed to travel together.

Sunday the 23d of June I left gloomy Debretzin, and travelled over much such a country as that of my last day's journey; but this was better inhabited. I passed through several good large villages, but the road was much worse. Near a fen between Bogash and Kis-Maria, are some remains of one of the fortresses of the famous Botkai. This *patriot* was so zealous, and so little delicate in the means by which he was to execute his designs, that he invited both

*Turks and Tartars* to his assistance. We stopped and dined at the last-mentioned place: as the baron had informed the judge of his coming, he had prepared a comfortable dinner for us. This little village Kis-Maria was Botskai's birth-place and his property; and when he was elected to the principality of Transylvania, he gave his peasants their liberty.

My hills fled before me; and when I arrived at Gross Wardein, I found the mountains which I was told were here, to be only hills; and the mountains which I saw from Debretzin were those that divide Hungary from Transylvania, and were still a day's journey off. The poverty of the German language in this instance was in part the cause of the mistake: *berg* signifies both hill and mountain: so, often in works translated from the German, I have found these two words misapplied.

I was not, however, displeas'd at having made this mistake. Gross Wardein is one of the prettiest towns in Hungary; and in every respect the reverse of Debretzin. Every thing here looked gay; music and dancing were heard in every house; and buggies, gigs, and chariots were bowling about as with us: this was Sunday, and the inhabitants are catholics, to them therefore a day of festivity.

I waited immediately upon the deputy lieutenant of the county, or *vicecomes*, though I had no letter of introduction to him; and this

did not prevent him from receiving me in the most polite manner. I now thought myself very fortunate; for I learnt I was come at a most favourable time, as the next day there was to be a meeting of the county: I was kindly invited to attend, and likewise to dine with them. I then began my mineralogical investigations; but I did not find any porphyrous rocks or breccia as on the western side of the plain; nor did I see any indications of such: in the brooks, and in the bed of the river, I found limestone pebbles; and in the buildings sandstone was used.

The next day I attended the county meeting, and received every mark of civility and attention. It was a very brilliant assembly: the gentlemen were all in elegant Hungarian dresses. The debates were carried on in the Hungarian language; it was therefore by their looks, and not by their conversation, I was to learn what was going on. Some from the tone of voice I conjectured to be much out of humour: these frequently twisted their *moustaches* very rapidly between the fingers; but this did not signify, like the bull's rubbing his horns, or the boar his tusks, against a tree, defiance; business was peaceably transacted, and about two o'clock we sat down to a hospitable dinner, given us by the deputy lieutenant.

German cookery and German manners and customs prevailed here as they do in the rest of Hungary. Before we sat down we all stood round the table, and each for himself prayed or pretended to

pray: this was what we call *grace*. Towards the conclusion of the dinner, which lasted a long time, a few glasses of good wine were sent round; and then we all rose up, stood behind our chairs, prayed again for about a minute, and then withdrew for our coffee.

I was introduced to the bishop, and to the provost Count Sauer, by both of whom I was invited to dinner for the next day. The bishop seemed to be a good honest fellow, and supplied his inns with found wholesome wine. He is not indebted to his birth or connections for this high dignity: he was only chaplain to a regiment when the Emperor Joseph gave him this See, which was formerly a very rich one; but his predecessor, by his bad management, greatly involved it in debt, so that the clear revenue now is only about five thousand a-year. The episcopal palace is a vast pile of building, but not finished. In the church are the tombs of some Hungarian kings, and amongst these that of Saint Ladislaus: on this account, when Uladislaus, King of Poland, accompanied the Emperor Sigismund hither from Debretzin, as an act of piety he walked.

In the afternoon I went to the hot-baths, which are about four or five miles from the town. Some of these are only covered by a shed, others are quite open. Here I saw the strangest sight sure mortal ever beheld. At Gross Wardein begins the district of Hungary inhabited by the Wallachians, as may be seen in the map, and many

of

of the lower orders of the inhabitants of this town are of this nation, which is a member of the Greek church, and follows the old-style. This, therefore, was the Pentecost of the Wallachians; and a swarm of them was come here to enjoy the pleasures and advantages of the baths, so that most of them were full, and presented really a sight which my pen is no way capable of describing. All ages and sexes, with skins of all hues, and with features of all expressions, were washing their hides in these cleansing waters. From what I said of the baths of Bude, it is not necessary to say, that the fair were without their shifts, yet not without their petticoats.—Oh! happy man!—Oh! fortunate traveller! says secretly my reader, thus to have been permitted to feast your eyes on so much beauty. Reader, be not unhappy nor envious: much you have not lost; and if you will drive your pigs into a horse-pond, and view them with poetic fancy, your pleasure may equal mine: disgust, not desire, was raised at this sight. Old women here prevailed, with pendent flabby dugs, and withered skins. In zoological terminology, *Mammæ pendentes flaccidæ marcescentes, rugosæ tuberculate furfurosæ flavo-fuscæ*. Some of these good women had their little children in their arms. I noticed two or three young *Zigui-ners* amongst them; these, though so young, were as dark as Mulattoes: no doubt with this colour they came into the world. But this was not all I saw: this odious sight only served to set off to greater advantage a solitary nymph in another bath; and now you have cause, reader, to envy my good fortune. For here alone, and only under the grey canopy of heaven, “whilst evening drew her crimson curtains round,”  
and

and the serenity of the air and the melody of the neighbouring woods awakened sweet sensibility, friend to our pleasures, but often enemy, alas! to our peace; separate from the vulgar throng and all alone, as if conscious of her superior beauty, the loveliest girl sure Nature ever formed lay quite exposed, reclining in a shallow bath in the very attitude of desire. A thin short petticoat, which the tepid water wrapped close about her limbs, or else wantonly spread wide abroad, as if, proud of its beauteous guest, it was eager to shew her delicate shape, or else expose all her charms, was the only covering she had on. Youth, the youthfulness of eighteen years, sparkled in her eyes and glowed in her lovely countenance; and her heaving bosom and swelling breasts announced that she had reached that happy period of life, at which kind Nature having invested her fair offspring with their brightest charms, warms them with love, and teaches them to exult in being loved. She suffered my enamoured gaze, and smiled; and by her melting looks expressed she felt the presence of the God of Love and her own frailty.—*Ob! che boccone!* what a contrast to those in the other baths! Here I should say *Mammæ hemisphæricæ prominentes firmæ dilute rosæ*—*Ob! che boccone!*—Why, O kind Providence! hast thou so often made so great a difference between our duty and our desires, and placed so many barriers to keep us from the but little bliss we see, often the only we can expect and the only worth desiring?—Are these the restraints of thy governing care? or are they the machinations of thy perverse children; who, though thou art willing to lead them through life by the path of pleasure,

pleasure, like gloomy *fakirs* prefer that of austerity and useless mortification? If so, let some philosopher arise amongst us, to teach us a morality more compatible with human nature. For what is this world, viewed even on its fairest side, with all its pomp and glitter, undiminished by the detracting eye of experience, without the delights of love, but insipidity, or toil and drudgery? It is this alone which can make the nauseous or insipid draught of life go down, and repay us for bearing the oppressive load of care which society and cruel fortune often with merciless hands heap upon us; and without this we either become children and amuse ourselves with trifles, or turning morose, and then seeing every thing in dismal colouring, refuse to act our part in life.

These are the natural consequences of a severe morality, which, like the chilling wind of hard penury and grief, depresses the generous feelings of the soul; whilst those who with a full pulse enjoy these the sweets of life, and remain uncorrupted by the world, breathe in every wish general benevolence and good will, and delight in seeing a happy world.

After such a bewitching sight as this, how could I descend to the common affairs of life and think of——reptiles? The charming girl made me lose a snake I had just killed by the side of the warm waters which run from the baths, and which I had half examined. I think it was the *Natrix longissima* of Laurentius, and the *Natrix*

Var.

*Var. b.* of the *Syst. Natur.* If I had examined it more carefully, I believe I should have ventured to say it was a distinct species from the *Natrix vulgaris*: it not only varied in the characters mentioned by Laurentius, but the eyes were quite different. Near the baths I saw some rocks of compact limestone.

This county is endeavouring to promote the cultivation of silkworms. Last year it produced five hundred pounds worth of silk; and some ribband-weavers have been enticed from Vienna to work it up. Attempts are likewise making to purify the native Natron, which is found in such great abundance in this part of Hungary. Some samples given me were very good; but I could not learn the price: and on this in commerce all depends.

I visited the prisons, and I found them but too full. The Wallachians are the most uncultivated and ferocious people of Hungary, and justice is obliged to be administered to them in all its horrors. In 1785 they rebelled in Transylvania, and with great cruelty murdered many of the nobility. Their priests, whom they call *Popes*, are uncommonly brutish, and it is calculated that in twenty executions there is always a *Pope*. Now, or till within a few years, the most frightful punishments were inflicted upon them, flaying, empaling, &c. &c. But the most shocking punishments I have read of, were those which were inflicted on the leaders of the peasants' war in the beginning of the sixteenth century in the Banat. They are too  
frightful



frightful to detail. The chief, as king, was set upon a red hot iron throne, and an iron crown was put on his head, and a sceptre of the same in his hand, both red hot. In this state, half roasted, nine of his principal accomplices, nearly starved to death with hunger, were let loose upon him, with threats of instant death, if they did not fly upon and eat their pretended king. Six obeyed, and fell upon him and ate him. Three others who would not, were immediately cut to pieces. Yet under all this torment the unfortunate man never murmured!!

I know not if ever an English traveller was at Gross Wardein before; but I was here made as much of as though I had been a very great personage. I had invitations from all quarters; and the *Vicecomes*, or lieutenant of the county, was so kind as to offer me every assistance I could want, if I would take the trouble to examine the mountains towards Transylvania: but my time, unfortunately, would not permit me to extend my journey further, and I fixed my departure for next morning. The morning came, but not my horses; the Judge, or his substitute, got drunk, and forgot to give notice to the peasants; and it was ten o'clock before I set out. I took the same road I came, and returned to Debretzin. I stopped at the lake near Kis-maria, where the *Natron* is collected and purified; but there was nothing in the process worth relating. The *Szekso* is collected on the sides of the lake, and in some other places: in dry weather,

when the lake is low, the water of this is likewise rich in Natron. A *kible* of *Szekso*, or impure Natron, is sold for two shillings and eight-pence, and six *kible* yield about one hundred weight of pure Natron. It is said by Mr. Rückert, in Crell's Chem. Annals for 1792, that 10,000 cwt. of pure Soda, or Natron, might be made yearly, and sold at the price of potash. ——— Ten thousand hundred weight? If I have not made an error in transcribing, he must certainly mean in all Hungary.

I only passed the night at gloomy Debretzin, and then pushed on to Tokay, which I reached about four in the afternoon. I passed through the district of the Haydukes: six or seven towns, with two-and-twenty thousand inhabitants, form this district. They are the descendants of some troops which, in the beginning of the last century, at the termination of a war, were settled here, and received lands on condition of rendering military service. They have their own magistrates, and are not under the government of the county. Judging from externals, they are not more opulent than their neighbours. From Debretzin to Tokay the country is quite flat, being part of the great plain: it grows a good deal of corn and Indian wheat, but it is chiefly pasture land.

By the road-side I found a large party of zigeuners. How admirably they are pourtrayed by Cowper in these lines:

I see a column of slow-rising smoke  
 O'ertop the lofty wood that skirts the wild.  
 A vagabond and ufeless tribe there eat  
 Their miserable meal. A kettle flung  
 Between two poles upon a stick tranverse,  
 Receives the morsel; flesh obscene of dog,  
 Or vermin, or, at best, of cock purloined  
 From his accustomed perch. Hard-faring race!  
 They pick their fuel out of every hedge,  
 Which kindled with dry leaves, just saves unquench'd  
 The spark of life. The sportive wind blows wide  
 Their fluttering rags, and shows a tawny skin,  
 The vellum of the pedigree they claim.

Hungary may be considered as the seat of this people. They are here very numerous, and lead the same vagabond life they do in other countries. Several of the later Hungarian sovereigns have endeavoured to render them sedentary, but with not much success; they still stroll about the country as tinkers and musicians, but are not seen in such hordes as formerly. It is but a few years ago (I think under Joseph II.) that about a score of them were condemned and executed in the Great Hontor county for being—*Anthropophagists*; but, when it was too late, it was *suspected* that their Judges had been too hasty in their condemnation. They were not seen in Hungary before 1418. What their numbers are I could never learn; but when the neighbouring country of the Buccovine

was lately ceded to Austria, of seventy thousand inhabitants, one thousand were gipsies.

The *Citillus*, earless Marmot, had begun its depredations on the corn, though it was still green : at the mouths of their holes lay heaps of *arista* and chaff.