

## C H A P. XVI.

## KESMARK TO VASETZ—THE KRIVAN MOUNTAIN.

THE evening after my return to Kesmark I walked over to Nehre ; here all was joy and merriment. The wedding-day of a near relation of Mr. Horvath was kept here : besides feasting there was dancing. In genteel company French dances are in use ; but we had some rough school-boys, who danced in the Hungarian style, like the recruiting parties at Pest : and besides the flapping of hands on their breeches and boots, and the jingling of spurs, this was further improved by the dancers throwing themselves on the floor in strange postures, and with such violence as though they were *des possédés* : these dances are sometimes called gipsy dances. Towards twelve the music struck up a march ; the bridegroom then took his bride by the hand and conducted her to the temple and altar of Hymen, and the whole company followed ; there we took leave of them, wishing them every kind wish. A very, apparently, strange question had been put to me by a young lady a few days before concerning this wedding. She said to me in German, with a great deal of coolness, "Pray, Sir, do you know when the *copulation* is to take place between Mr. — and Miss B.?" I stared, and blushed, I dare say, likewise :  
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upon this she repeated the question, and, thinking I did not rightly understand her, laid an emphasis on the pentasyllable. As I still paused, she said, "Sir, when are Mr. — and Miss B. to be married?"—If I had thought at the time either in Latin or in German, there would have been no *double entendre* in it; but I thought in English and French. Yet we will charitably hope that in both senses it took place whilst our globe now made its diurnal revolution, and that within this period both the ceremonial and the essential part of matrimony were celebrated. The next day I took leave of this kind and hospitable family, and returned to Kesmark.

This town and neighbourhood manufactures a good deal of linen, and even figured table linen; and, when Poland was in a flourishing state, carried on a considerable trade with it in wines, as this is the nearest Hungarian *entrepôt* for this article; and from hence there are passages through the mountains into Galicia: but this trade has now much declined.

Dr. Pfeiffer has for many years been cultivating the *Isatis tinctoria* upon a pretty extensive scale for indigo: some of this, which he assured me was of his own fabric, appeared equal to the best Spanish indigo; but the misfortune is, that the price is as high, or higher than the real indigo: the lower sorts are only used by the dyers of Kesmark. But the climate of this part of Hungary he finds to be too backward; he is obliged to manure the land, and cannot pluck the  
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leaves more than, I think, twice a year. He or some of his friends are making attempts with it in the more southern parts of Hungary. The inhabitants of this town amount to near 4000.

I finally left Kesmark the next morning, the 20th of August, and continued my tour westward. The corn harvest had commenced a week or ten days before, and now every body in this part of the valley was in the midst of it. Barley, oats, and rye are the principal grain cultivated here; wheat is only sown in small quantities. Flax is a staple commodity; and there is a method in use here of breaking and beating it, after it has been steeped and dried, which appears to me very convenient: this is by the means of stamps, such as are used in pounding of ore before it is washed on the hearth, only these are entirely of wood, as the bottom likewise is on which they fall: velocity of motion rather than weight is required. They are in general an appendage to a corn-mill; and to such they are but a very trifling additional expence. The owners of the flax manage it themselves; and all they have to do is to put it under the stamps, turn it about, and take it out again. The *douceur* to the owner of the mill is very trifling.

Gros Schlagendorf is only a stage distant from Kesmark. Here I stopped, and dined with the Lutheran minister; and I intended after dinner to have continued my journey: but I found him a botanist, and a sensible good kind of man. I therefore was readily prevailed

on to stay the night with him. He had collected a few plants from the neighbourhood, and some alpine ones; but none which I had not found. His taste for botany he acquired at Leipfic, where he had studied. But the desire of knowledge generally flags when we have none with a similar taste to communicate with: many years had slid away without a single conversation with a botanical friend. I was a good deal surpris'd at first on entering his room, to see in the window the *Systema Vegetabilium* of Linnæus. We planned two or three excursions, but the next morning was rainy, and prevented us from stirring out till after dinner. We then walked up to the rocks at the foot of the alps to a spa; it is pretty sharp with fixed air. All the rocks here are granit.

The next day we took a walk further up in the mountains, to see a rock which some of the inhabitants of Kesmark were working for the sake of the garnets which it contains. But these *precious* stones, which are found in a kind of foliated granit, are the same coarse kind that are generally found in similar rocks. Where the *mica* lies in the greatest quantities, there are the garnets; so that detached specimens belong to the *Gneissum glandulosum* Syst. Nat. \*, though the rock itself is the *Gneissum alpinum*. This is the only rock of the granit kind which I had hitherto seen in these mountains, which had

\* *Gneissum glandulosum*,

Ex mica nigra & granatis rubris compositum.

any thing of a foliated texture ; and here it was only partial, forming short thick veins and patches amongst the common granit. The *Ring Ouzel* and the *Corvus Caryocatactes*, Nut-cracker, were very common in the woods, and Marmots amongst the rocks.

In returning home in the evening we met some peasants on a party of Bear shooting. The valley which lies at the foot of this chain of mountains is cultivated to their very foot, and the bears at night leave the woods, and come into the corn-fields, and eat the corn. These peasants told us, what indeed I had heard before in Dauphiné, that these animals draw the standing corn through their fore paws, then rub the detached ears between them, blow away the chaff, and eat the grain. One of the party had nearly lost his life a few years ago in this diversion: seeing a young one alone, he fired at it and wounded it, when he was immediately attacked by its mother, who had been concealed by some bushes: at one blow of her paw she brought off a great part of the scalp. Besides protecting their corn, the peasants have another inducement to shoot these animals: this is the profit arising from the sale of their skins, one of which brings them two or three guineas. However savage these animals may be, they seem to be less so than that species of animal called man; for children go into the woods and collect the berries of the *Vaccinia*, &c. which is a depredation on the bears, who feed upon them, without there being an instance of their having received an injury from them; nor has any person, without making the first attack.

The next morning I pursued my journey westward, accompanied by my host. We stopped at Botsdorf: the *Judex Nobilium*, Maryaschy, not being at home, for whom I had letters of introduction, we called at the Lutheran minister's, and dined with him.

In the afternoon I went and examined the rocks which form the south side of the valley; and here these, coming down from the Konisberg, extend so much to the north, as almost to unite with the great Carpathian chain. They are of compact unstratified-lime-stone, like that of the *Fleisch-Bank*, and of the rocks and hills of the county of Gomer.—In half an hour's investigation I collected several rare plants. On one small rock I found the *Campanula carpatica* and *Campanula lilifolia*, *Daphne Cneorum*, and *Centaurea montana* growing together; and in crossing a brook, which lies between these rocks and the village, I found the *Epilobium Dodonæi* in great abundance. The Slavonian language here begins again to be spoken; and in this language the minister addresses his congregation.

In the morning I went to Czirba. I waited upon the Minister, who received me in a very friendly manner, and invited me to see a lake in the mountains. We took a ride there. Though Mr. Korabinsky in his map has placed it close to the village, probably from its bearing the same name, yet it is three hours distant, and amongst the mountains. It is five or six times as large as any I had hitherto

seen, and had some water-fowl upon it. I returned immediately, and, though pressed to stay the night, I pushed on to Vafetz: and there, as usual, I put the minister to contribution; for, as this is not a much frequented road, there are no inns upon it, only *cabarets* where the peasants drink their brandy. And the Lutheran ministers or pastors, though not possessed of the great incomes of our clergy, are at their ease, and can exercise the kind offices of hospitality towards a stranger. They seem to be in regard to income about on a level with the Scotch clergy.

Vafetz is the highest situation in the whole valley: the harvest here was only beginning: and the water coming down from the mountains runs now to the west: hitherto it had run to the east. I had chosen this village as the place from whence I intended to ascend the Krivan. This is generally said to be the highest of all the Alps in the Carpathian chain; but this opinion is not supposed to be founded upon any measurement.—As I purposed to pass two or three days upon it, it was necessary to carry up some provisions; and, as usual, I ordered a horse for the next morning; but here was the most drunken and idle village judge I had yet met with. He disappointed me; and as the horses were all grazing in the mountains at three or four hours distance, I was obliged to defer this excursion till the next day. This was a great mortification; for the weather was very fine, and the Krivan, having got in the night a cap of snow, looked sublime.

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The next day I was equally unfortunate, and through the same cause; but my botanical friend of Groß Schlagendorf, who had promised to be of the party, came with a light chaise and three horses, and we set off, but much against my advice, in the chaise. The chaise itself, from the badness of the road, soon became a sufficient load for the horses, and, as we ascended, the road became worse and worse. It was the road by which timber from the woods, which cover the lower part of these mountains, is brought down. Though there is a winding road even as far as the old Gold mine, which is situated above three-fourths up the mountain, yet we were glad to leave our chaise behind us before we had reached half way up to the mine, and transport our provisions ourselves. We lost so much time, and the distance was so great, that it was late in the evening before we reached the mine, where we had agreed to pass the night, as we knew there was a shed here, which some years ago had been built as a shelter for the miners.

In travelling amongst alps, there is in general a deficiency of every thing except water; this even failed us here, and we were at a loss for some time to think what we should do. We had plenty of brandy, an excellent thing as a dram, but no substitute for water. But adverting to the frequency of water in mines, I sent my servant to see if there might not be some there; he found but little, yet a great deal of ice: this we melted in a tin drinking cup, over the fire which we made with the remains of the old shed. There could not have been a worse place  
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for passing the night at, if it had not been for the remains of the shed, than this; for no *Krumbolz*, or any other kind of wood, grew here, and the roughness of the climate may be conceived by the ice we found in the mine and by the height, which by the barometer I found to be 1425 yards above Vafetz, and 2318 yards above the level of the sea: and the shed was of more use to us as fuel than as shelter; for the top was off, and the sides were almost down.

At night the wind was very boisterous, and often threatened to blow these crazy remains in pieces. In the middle we made our fire, towards which we turned our feet, and our bolster was a beam of wood. This gave rise to some sparring amongst us; for we could not leave it to get nearer the fire, and we happened to be very disproportioned in respect to the length of our bodies: so that, whilst the minister of Vafetz, who was five feet nothing, was complaining of cold, I, from being five feet something, and in the middle, as the *place d'honneur*, and my brother botanist, from his hexapodal length, were, at least so far as concerned our feet, too hot. We therefore agreed like a little family composed of members with different interests. The morning was as windy as the night, and we had some mists. Though from the nature of the rocks I had no expectation of a rich botanical harvest, yet I was very unwilling, after having had so much trouble in coming thus far, not to ascend to the top of this mountain; for it is generally said to be the highest; and this is the opinion of Mr. Fichtel\*, who supposes its height somewhat

to exceed 2000 fathom above the level of the Danube. My spiritual friends were not only very unwilling to turn out to scale the top, but they absolutely refused to accompany me. My guide was equally unwilling, and assured me solemnly, that he never was at the top, and knew not the way. My servant was not more inclined than the rest, but made it a point of honour to run the same risk as his master; and when the guide saw I was resolved on setting out without him, he likewise promised to accompany me. Whilst my spiritual friends were thinking whether it was prudent or not to run this risk, and expose such consecrated vessels to so much danger, a violent squall came on and carried away the remains of the shattered roof of the shed which former blasts had respected. Like as the *take care of number one, and charity begins at home*, of an officious unfeeling friend, when generosity and selfishness are pleading their opposed interests in the feeling breast of an irresolute man, often determine the equipoised balance in favour of the latter, so this pitiful blast determined my friends to leave me; and when I set off to go up the mountain, they set off to go down it.

After walking about an hour and an half chiefly over great loose blocks of granit, I reached the top; and the first thing the guide did was to take up a stone, under which were two or three trifling copper coins that a former traveller had hid there; and now the fellow acknowledged that he had been on the top several times. This mountain is by far the most easy to ascend of any I had yet met

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with in this tour, and by keeping on the *lee* side we were very little incommoded by the wind. Here I collected nothing: the rocks were covered with the same Lichens I had found in much lower situations. My barometer was still in good order, and showed the height of this mountain to be 2781 yards above the level of the sea, and 1888 yards above the village of Vafetz; the Krivan is therefore something lower than the Lomnitz Peak. Clouds and mists which prevented the prospect, with the barrenness of the rocks, soon made me return to the mine: and here I had no inducement to stay; for these rocks were no less barren of alpine plants, and the mine was soon seen. It is only remarkable on account of its very elevated situation, which is the highest perhaps of any one in Europe. Though it is now quite forsaken, yet the excavations still remaining, and the road to it, after the woods cease, which is quite a made road, show that it must have been of some real or supposed importance. The road was made by the Emperor Maximilian. The ore is native gold in a small vein of greyish white fat *Quartz*, but in so small a quantity that a guinea's worth of this gold has always cost two or three guineas: the vein is in granit. Having no motive to remain here, I hastened down to Vafetz.