

## Literature, &amp;c.

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From Hogg's Instructor.

## SCHAMYLOKU.

A CIRCASSIAN TALE.

For a hundred years Russia has striven to extend her influence over that beautiful country which is bounded by the Black Sea on the south and west, and by the river Kuban and Caspian Sea on the north and east; but the aged and youthful warriors of Circassia still sing their war-songs on the mountains, and leave their flocks and herds to sweep the invaders from their valleys. They are a primitive and pastoral people, possessing the noblest mental and physical qualities; and the knowledge of their intrinsic energy and nobility only requires to be extended that men may exclaim—Alas! that impious war should require the sacrifice of beings so gallant and devoted! The following tale is a faithful rescript of Russian policy in Circassia, and of Circassian manners and customs, and, in some of its incidents, too true.

Schamyl-Oku was the son of Schamyl-Tat, a dauntless prince of Notwhatsh, and he was the foster-child of Achmet, the wolf, who was a tarco-khass, or judge of Shapsuk. Schamyl-Tat was not a poor prince, for he had many sheep, oxen, and brood mares, and the *pschills* of his household were very numerous. They tended his cattle on the hills of Pshat; the aged of them sat with them at meals, and the young men danced before his guest-house on the moonlight evenings, or followed him, with the nobles and freemen of his fraternity, against the Moscovs, who had entrenched themselves at Anapa. It was not from poverty that Schamyl-Tat had chosen Achmet-Tughuz to be the atalik of his son. In doing so, he only conformed to a universal custom amongst the *psches* or princes, and *works* or nobles of Circassia; and though he had searched from Kabarda to Anapa, he could not have found a better tutor for his boy. The old tarco-khass was brave; the snows of nearly ninety years were upon his head, he was wise, eloquent, and patriotic, and his name was famous amongst all the tribes from the Black Sea to the river Kuban. When Schamyl-Oku was presented to Achmet by his father, friendly salutations passed between the friends; the cavalcade which had escorted the boy to Achmet's home was feasted; presents were lavishly exchanged, as was the custom on such occasions; and then the child was left to the care of the old man, that he might be trained as the son and successor of a bold and industrious prince of Notwhatsh.

Schamyl-Oku was only seven years of age when he came to reside in Dogwai, but before he had been a year in the valley he could ride the fleetest steed at full speed to the summits of its green sloping mountains; and bring down the tuneless blackbird on the wing, as he urged the charger on his fleet career. He had been placed in the saddle when he could hardly walk and the first lessons instilled into his young mind were of courage and endurance.

Although the son of a prince, his father caused him to serve the old serfs at the table, that he might learn humility and respect for age, and the boy loved to evince obedience to so noble a mandate; and his cloak, on a summer evening, was sufficient for his couch, even at this early age.

Achmet-Tughuz soon loved the boy; and if modest devotion and respect were worthy of the old man's love, Schamyl-Oku deserved it. He fed the horse of the venerable judge, and furnished his scimitar and powder-tubes; he served him as he sat at table, and lighted his pipe when he smoked; and sang to the old warrior songs of the heroes of Kabarda. The eyes of Achmet would glisten as he watched the boyish indications of courage and address in his *pkhoor*; for he felt that, when he conveyed him to the lodge of Schamyl-Tat, he could truly say, that he had received a boy, but now he returned a man—that he had trained the sapling, which had for a time been planted in Dogwai, and now he brought it back to Pshat a stately ash.

Dogwai was a lovely valley—it was so green, so peaceful and so fertile. A clear and broad stream flowed through its bosom, and mingled its waters with those of the Kuban. The hawthorn, the oak, the ash, and rowan tree, waved on the acclivities, and the black-bird, thrush, and linnet sported on their branches—but unlike their Scottish kindred, they were tuneless. The home of Achmet was situated on the southern extremity of the valley quite proximate to the mountains, for the fort of Yekaterinodar was built at the confluence of the rivers Soop and Kuban, and the Soop and Dogwai were all but frontier valleys of the northern Circassian provinces of Psadoog and Shapsuk; and consequently exposed to frequent invasion. His house was handsomely built of wood, and furnished with patriarchal elegance. Ottomans stuffed with wool, and covered with richly embroidered cloth, supplied his divan or sitting room; and his guest-house, which was never shut upon the way-farer or stranger, was even more sumptuously appointed. A double fence surrounded his settlement, and a paddock, studded with beautiful flowers, fronted his hospitable home—radiant plants clung to natural and artificial trellises, and waved their aromatic blossoms to the west wind; horses grazed in the vicinity of the dwellings, heavily clogged, that they might be caught at the first alarm, for the Russians often

marched into the valley, and it behoved all who dwelt in it to drive them out again; flowers, beautiful to gaze upon and grateful to the sense of smell, grew by the gentle waters, but the fairest flower in Dogwai was Zawoo, the grand-daughter of Achmet.

Her father had been slain in battle by his country's invaders, but Schamyl-Tat had borne his body from his foes, and laid it at the feet of Achmet, and Achmet had taught Zawoo, the star, to sing the praises of Schamyl. As her soft and melodious voice rose and fell in its rich modulations, and waivered over the fall of Arslan, the old man would bend his hoary head and weep; and as she spoke of the hero who had dashed amongst the ranks of the red-haired Moscovs, and borne Arslan from among the hoofs of their horses, Schamyl-Oku would tremble, he knew not why, and he would bless the name of his father.

Zawoo was very young, even younger than Schamyl-Oku. She was as fair a little flower as ever bloomed on the mountains of the Teberkesses, while he was one of the most beautiful of beauty-producing Circassian's sons. Alas, for love! that so beautiful a country and men and women so noble and so fair, should forever shout the war-cry and raise the wail! But the autocrat will have it so, and so it is.

The tocsin of war had sounded in the south, and Achmet Tughuz was summoned to a council of chiefs on the mountains of Azras. The young men followed him to the seat of war, and consequently the valley of Dogwai was left in the hands of women, children and very aged men—the household of the tarco-khass consisting only of a few old shepherds and their families, with Schymal-Oku and Zawoo.

Many days had elapsed since the host of Dagwai had departed; and as neither messenger nor wounded invalid had returned with tidings of those who had bravely fought and fallen, the eyes of the women were often turned towards the scouts on the hills. Schamyl-Oku partook also of the general impatience, and often rode far into the mountains, in hopes of gathering information. He visited the valleys of Sheps and Afips, but he met with nothing save inquiries in his wandering. After a day of disappointment the boy turned his horse homeward, and was walking his charger, as he mused on the issue of the war, when he was accosted by two strangers, on the brow of the mountain which divides the valley of Sheps from Dogwai. They were mounted, and wore the Circassian tunic and arms; but there was a negligence in the adjustment of their hairs, or powder-tubes, and weapons, that did not satisfy the acute boy.

"Peace be to this valley," said the elder stranger, in the Azra tongue, at the same time laying his hand on his heart, and bowing to the boy.

But Schamyl-Oku, who did not know the language of the south, only shook his head; and pronounced the word "Adighe."

"May the flocks of thy father increase, and his horses multiply," said the stranger, in the language of the north, but with a strong Georgian accent. "Canst thou lead us to a lodging for the night?"

The boy surveyed the two strangers with keen, uneasy glances, and, when he spoke, the irritation he felt was easily observable in his tones. "Thou art a Mengrelion who hast bent thy neck to the yoke of the Moscovite," he exclaimed, "and yet thou askest to sleep beneath the roof of a freeman!"

The Georgian did not seem to notice this address, but turning to his companion he said, with apparent deference, "His father has neither floc nor herds: or, if he has, he is a Giaour, for the savo seems to know that he would refuse the stranger food and shelter. He refuses to lead us; let us try to find some kindly serf who knows hospitality, and practises it."

Schamyl-Oku was too young to combat the subtle stranger's casuistry, and his cheek burned with shame at this allusion to his implied want of hospitality; but still he had an instinctive aversion to this man with his harsh unmusical voice; and his equally harsh and repulsive features.

"My father's flocks graze on the mountains and in the valleys of Pshat," he said, hastily; "but the house of my atalik is open to the stranger.—Do you come from the borders of Khu-Shkho (Black Sea)?" he said; after a pause, as he pointed down the hill and prepared to lead them to the settlement, "or do ye sell the salt of Moscovy to the traitors of Sujuk-Kaleh?"

"We are neither slaves or traitors, sage sir," said the Georgian, ironically, "we seek Achmet-Tughuz, and by thy enowby beard and strong arm, I think thou must be he."

The boy hung his head for a few moments, for he felt the force of the sneer, but quickly recovering his self-possession, he answered, somewhat haughtily, "Schamyl-Oku is young but he is the only *pshe* in Dogwai, and it behoves him to know who he leads to the home of Achmet, when Achmet has mounted his war-steed."

"If we speak to the grandson of Achmet," said the stranger, with assumed deference, "we speak to the child of a brave chief."

"Methinks you are dull," said the boy, with great vivacity. "I said that my father is of Pshat; his name is Schamyl. Achmet is my atalik, and he is now on the great mountains of Azra."

The moon was shining in all the beauty of a cloudless eastern evening, and its pale cold beams fell on the strangers as they emerged from the shade of the trees, and turned into a path that led along the mountain side. Schamyl-Oku scrutinised them closely, and

the survey did not satisfy him. He was only a child, it is true, but it is wonderful to mark the precocity which circumstances produce.

He had been borne amidst the tumult of war, and his faculties had been early stimulated to action and observance. In the mountains of Notwhatsh he had often listened to the tales of treachery, rehearsed by the old man, and Armenian or Georgian anerehants were almost invariably the agents of that foul meanness. His pistols were therefore ready to his hand, his short rifle lay across his crupper; and the child, armed like an old man and practised warrior, manifested all the caution requisite to support such a character.

"You are Notwatch, sir?" said he addressing the silent stranger; "The men of Psapooq Shapsuk do not wear the turban of Stamboul."

"He is of Notwatch," said the Georgian hastily, "but he is on a journey to the tomb of the Prophet, and he has vowed not to speak till he has prayed in mosque of mosques."

"And yet he journeys northward," said the boy coldly; "I thought that the Prophet's tomb was in Arbistan, and not in the Kuban!"

They had now approached the hamlet, and as he spoke he drew a pistol from his belt, and fired it in the air. At the signal the dogs rushed fiercely from the dwellings in the valley; the women came clamouring around the strangers for news, and it required all the exertions of the few old men to rescue them from the importunate females, and usher them into the guest house of Achmet. They were feasted with the choicest fare that could be produced; and as the Georgian presented the most aged of the *turko-khass's pschills* with a rich present, and explained the object of his visit was in reference to the manufacture of powder, it was determined that so important a personage should be furnished with a guide on the morrow, and conducted to the head quarters of the Circassians. Gradually the Georgian led the old man to talk of the extent of the Circassian confederacy, of the number of warriors in the field, of their hopes of foreign aid, and lastly, of the courage and address of their individual leaders, until Schamyl's name echoed from mouth to mouth, and young Oku, who had ministered to the strangers, turned his face to the wall to hide his pride.

The strangers stretched themselves to rest that night in the divan of Achmet Tughuz, and civilization could hardly furnish a more comfortable dormitory. But Schamyl-Oku tied his horse to an oak, laid his rifle under his head for a pillow, and lay and gazed upon the guest house of Achmet. Those who are nursed in danger scorn it in their manhood; but yet their instincts of fear are more active and acute than those of men who are nurtured in peace. Schamyl-Oku distrusted the strange guests, and although he could not say why, yet he deemed that, in the absence of Achmet, it behoved him to be more than ordinarily vigilant. Cautious, and independent, although so very young, he determined to watch these men without imparting his suspicions to any one.

We who, in northern latitudes, are accustomed to the slow development of mind and body—to the protracted growth of vegetables and their stunted fruition—might look upon the precocity of one so young as uncommon and unnatural; but Schamyl-Oku was one of many instances of equally juvenile manliness. Boys of nine years of age have been known to dash among the veterans of Russia, and sword in hand, cut their way through the myrmidons of the Czar. The boy lay and gazed upon the moon as it slowly moved athwart the sky in all its radiant splendour, and he wondered if she were the queen of all the stars: they looked so abashed and dim when she drew near them. Like the shepherds of Chaldee, he wandered with the spheres through space, led by the glorious rays on the path of speculation—peace and induction might have made Schamyl-Oku a philosopher. He was soon startled from his reverie, however, for he heard the faint scream of a child and the slow motion of horses hoofs, and starting up and mounting his steed, he followed the direction indicated by the sounds.

The house of Achmet was built upon the shoulder of the hill, and the fugitives had descended into the bosom of the valley. Thither the little Schamyl-Oku followed them, and as they emerged from the woody slopes, and struck northward along the banks of the river, he recognised the guests, and on the saddle before the Georgian was the fair young Zawoo. In a moment a bullet pierced the brain of the ingrate robber—he fell from his seat without a groan, while his startled steed bounded away, with Zawoo clinging to its neck.

"Traitor," cried the boy, fiercely as he dashed sword in hand upon the remaining stranger, "you have eaten of Achmet's viands, and you would rob him of his child!" As he spoke he struck at the silent fugitive, but his sword was driven from his grasp, his horse was slain in its mid career, and before he could extricate himself he was in the grasp of a powerful man, and was bounding along with the speed of wind ere he could recover his self-possession. They swept along the banks of the Dowai at full career, for the steed was strong and the footing secure. They turned to the east and crossed the plain of Sheps, and it was well for the spy that he did so hastily, for the scouts on the hills sought to mar his flight with their rifles. It was a gallant steed, and the rider bore himself gallantly, for he clasped his little prisoner in his arms, and directed the path of his horse with his voice alone. Fuming and snorting, the charger at last reached the shores of the Kuban; and the stranger giving a sharp clear whistle, brought a boat from the sedges and reeds that grew so luxuriantly upon the

river. He was quickly borne across the stream and entered with his captive the fort of Yekaterin-odou. He was a man of great account, this robber masquerader. Schamyl-Oku soon perceived so from the deference which the commander of the garrison showed to him. He was cold, haughty and arbitrary, and unfortunately, he was powerful. When the general Williameneff ventured to ask about his guide he smiled and answered that a child he had brought a prisoner had made carion of him. When he further inquired if his highness had seen the valleys on the Kuban said to be disposed to submission, and had gratified the curiosity which prompted him to hazard so dangerous a visit, the imperial robber strode passionately up and down the apartment, and muttered something concerning the courage and address of the children of the hills, and of their untameable love of liberty.

Young Schamyl-Oku was carried by order of his captor to St. Petersburg, and presented to his brother, the emperor. The beauty of the child interested the women of the court; the courage of the boy only required direction to be rendered subservient to the purposes of Nicholas. All the appliances at the command of the autocrat was devoted to the development of young Schamyl-Oku's military talents, and every means were resorted to in order to make him forget his kindred and his country. He was told that he was a Russian, the son of a great noble, who, together with his mother had been slain by Circassian marauders; and that he their only child, had been carried off while yet an infant, and reared among the slayers of his father. His tutors poured the virus of adulation into his young ear, and prophesied that he would yet be a hero, that the emperor would restore his father's broad lands and a thousand serfs when he had taken revenge upon the bloody Techerkesses. Schamyl-Oku listened to them, but the recollections of his green native mountains, and of his father, and Zawoo, preserved his spirit from the most unnatural contamination. He grew in strength and beauty, and surpassed all his compeers in dauntlessness and intellectual acuteness, and although he seemed to have forgotten his native land and tongue, and the very name he had borne in youth, the patriot thought and memories of home was deeply graven upon his heart. At the age of eighteen he was tall, handsome and intelligent, and Nicholas, anxious to initiate him in the practice of battle with his kindred, despatched him with a *borutshik's* commission and a contingency of recruits to the fort of Pshat, in the immediate vicinity of his native valley.

The fort of Pshat bore a greater affinity in appearance to the camps of the Romans than the modern stone tower. It occupied a wide area, and was surrounded by mud walls with yawning embrasures. Instead, however, of either donjon towers or prætorian occupying its centre, rudely constructed wooden barracks for the soldiers, and stables for the horses, were reared in slovenly confusion. There was an air of dirty neglect pervading everything within the influence of Russian cloth. The soldiers had a dreamy, brutal aspect, and gazed upon the hills of the north with a dull listlessness that might be increased by the knowledge that they were cooped within the range of their artillery; for the watchful warriors of Notwatch often led their steeds to the brow of the hill that overlooked the military post, and contemplated it as the eagle contemplates the flock of the valley.

On the first day of Schamyl-Oku's sojourn within the fort he felt peevishly excited. He who had never wept for pain or hardship felt his eyes suffuse with tears as he gazed upon the blue summit of *Noghai-Haska* and the green slopes of his own dear native home. He knew that his father lived, for he had heard the Russians through ten long years execrate his terrible name, and he had repeated it every evening since his captivity in the prayers he had breathed in his native tongue. But Achmet-Tughuz and Zawoo rose before

his mind's eye, the former in his hoary senility and unimpeachable honor, the latter in her maidenly maturity and beauty, and he sighed as he thought that time and war might have borne away the one and blighted the other. The gay and richly laced uniform of the young *porntshik* (lieutenant) possessed no attractions for him; the loose and picturesque garb of his country, as it hung gracefully upon the gallant forms of the warriors who sentinelled the hills so near him, was dearer to him, in its freedom, simplicity and nationality, than all the trappings of the most gorgeous strap of the east; and even his native tongue, the first thing connected with his childhood that a child forgets, came back to him in all its fluency, and the songs of his native valley revived within his memory fresh, vigorous, and strong. We love the cosmopolitan spirit that can recognize in every man a brother, and opens the hospitable door to the hungry and weary of every clime; we love the catholicity which destroys inimical rivalry and breaks down the embattled walls which antagonistic nationality, in its pride and egotism, has built around itself; but we to the man who professes to love all parts on the earth's surface with equal intensity, who forgets the land that nurtured his father and he, the land where his mother cradled him and where the ashes of his kindred repose. The proud and powerful emperor of all the Russians sought to eradicate Schamyl-Oku's love of home, but in this he warred with a power superior to his might; he combatted with nature, and nature was the conqueror. The young man leaned over the wall of the fort, and stretching out his arm exclaimed in the fulness of his enthusiasm