

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

CAPTAIN M'CLURE,

THE DISCOVERER OF THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

CAPTAIN PARRY'S next expedition was to the north-east, and is the most singular and daring on record. On his first voyage to Spitzbergen he had been stopped by the vast icy sea, a frozen plain of ice, extending to the limit of the horizon. Over this he now resolved to travel direct to the Pole, and so on to Behring's Straits, by means of sledges, fitted also to act as boats when occasion required. Lieutenant, now Sir James Ross, accompanied him. In the spring of 1827, they were landed on the bleak and desolate Spitzbergen, where not even the hardy Esquimaux can support life, and where the visits of Europeans are only commemorated by their graves. In June the ship was put in harbor, the sledges manned, and they boldly launched upon the great ice plain. They travelled by night, for there was constant daylight then, to avoid the intense glare of noon, apt to produce snow-blindness. The labor was immense. Yet the brave leader keeps his men in health and spirits. No accident, no death leaves its gloomy memories on that ice plain. So they travel on for forty-eight days.

They are within five hundred miles of the Pole. The ship has been left behind one hundred and seventy-two miles—but then, they must return. Not from failing courage or physical ill, but because the whole body of ice was drifting southward at a rate beyond any progress they could make northward. Farther advance, therefore, was impossible. In sixty-one days they regained the ship, and reached England safely, Parry returning with the honorable distinction of having then advanced northward, as well as westward, beyond any navigator of the world. This trial put an end to further efforts by the north-east. From Berentz and Willoughby, all had failed who tried the passage by those 'stern, uncouth, northern seas.'

Every path, north, east, and west, within the Arctic circle, had now been tried, and still the discovery of the connection northward between the two great oceans of the world seemed unattainable. Then it was that Parliament annulled their offer of grant of twenty thousand pounds to the discoverer, probably to prevent further hazard of human life in the pursuit of a phantom; but nautical ardor could not be thus extinguished, and a year after the repeal of the act, Sir John Ross volunteered a voyage with his nephew the commander. This time Parliament gave no aid. Sir Felix Booth defrayed the expense, and Sir John Ross added three thousand pounds himself. With these funds the Victory steamer was purchased, the first steamer ever tried in Arctic navigation; and Sir John set forth, with a crew of twenty men, and three years' provision; but four years and five months elapsed before they were ever heard of again; and the Victory was seen no more. She lies buried in the ice of Regent's Inlet.

Disasters happened from the very commencement. The machinery would not work; the cold was unparalleled—ninety-two degrees below freezing-point; and the first winter the ship was hopelessly frozen in. For three years they watched and waited for release; but in vain. So they nailed the colors to the mast, and abandoned the Victory to her fate. Then the twenty men, left thus desolate on the ice plain, knew they had but one chance of life—to reach the buried stores of the Fury, left eight years before. They travelled day and night to reach them along the shore of Boothia Felix, 'the most dismal of all lands with so blessed a name,' for the space of two hundred miles, and arrived at last. The provisions were all in good order; and they were saved from famine, at least, for a while. On these stores they lived in their snow-huts for a whole year—the fourth passed in the ice.—'Very cold and very miserable, no human being near—only ice, and snow, and cold, and drift, and storm. Eternal sameness within and without; a state of waking stupefaction. But we had work to do, and we did it. What else on earth could have kept us from despair?' Thus speaks their leader. Each day from the hills they searched the horizon for a sail. Then, when summer came, they launched a boat, in hope of falling in with whalers in Lancaster Sound. A sail appears—they hail her; but she passes on. Another comes in sight; they ask her name. 'The Isabella, once commanded by Captain Ross,' was answered. 'I am the man, and my people are the crew of the Victory,' was replied from the boat. 'Impossible! Ross has been dead these two years, and his crew likewise. No wonder they were not recognized. Unshaven, dirty, dressed in the rags of wild beasts, starved to the very bone, gaunt and grim.' However, cheers of welcome were soon given, and in the Isabella they all reached home safely. On arriving, Parliament decreed Sir John Ross five thousand pounds for

his services. He had searched Regent's Inlet, fixed the position of the magnetic pole, discovered a new land, Boothia Felix; and, we may add, gave to literature a narrative unsurpassed, for deep and often mournful interest, in all the records of Arctic heroism.

We now reach the period when the name of M'Clure becomes connected with north-west expeditions—a name destined to head one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of navigation.

Captain Back had already distinguished himself as one of the best and bravest of commanders. During an expedition along the American coast, in 1833, he had discovered the magnificent river now bearing his name, which, after a course of five hundred and thirty miles, along which not a tree is to be seen, pours into the polar sea; and immediately on his return was again appointed, by desire of the Geographical Society, to command an expedition. It was for this voyage M'Clure volunteered to accompany him as mate. Captain Back set out, June 14th, 1836, with a crew of sixty men, in the Terror, a sailing-vessel—the same whose fate afterwards with Sir John Franklin is still so painful a mystery.

The expedition was ordered to proceed up Frozen Strait to Repulse Bay; from thence land excursions were to be made in all directions along the line of coast, as far as the American continent. The season, however, was unusually severe, and the ice was formidable even before entering the Frozen Strait. Enormous masses pressed upon the ship, threatening instant destruction; but they battled through them. Then a storm arose, and M'Clure beheld for the first time the fearful sight of an ice-continent impelled onward by a tempest, then shivered into mighty fragments, amongst which the ship was tossed, not in an ocean of water, but of rocks, all in violent commotion, heaving and dashing like waves around her. Suddenly a path opens through some apparently impenetrable barrier. The ship forces her way onward, and the ice closes behind, like portals of adamant. Masses higher than the maintop were piled upon every side, like gigantic towers raised by demon sorcery, ready at any moment to fall and crush them; other, many tons' weight, are heaved up from the abyss, and hurled down into it again; and no other sound throughout that frozen world for months but the crashing and grinding of the ice as the heavy masses dashed down or recoiled upon one another. Many times their united devotions had the solemnity of a preparation for death. Such was M'Clure's first winter in the polar clime.

By October, they were frozen fast for the winter in the Frozen Strait, within sight of land, but unable to reach it. 'In the dreary monotony of that ice-prison,' writes Sir George Back, 'days were weeks, weeks years. There were no marks to separate one day from another, no rule whereby to measure time. All was one dull, cheerless uniformity of dark and cold. And now,' he continues, 'in June, '37, I am drifted into Hudson's Straits, on some of the very same ice that originally begirt the ship, without having had it once in my power either to advance or retreat.'

When the ice at last broke up, they steered homeward, in their crazy, leaky, damaged vessel; but suddenly a new danger beset them. Just as the cheers reechoed for the freed ship, they saw her slowly rising, and heeling over to port. 'Then it was we beheld the strange and appalling spectacle of a submerged berg, fixed low down, with one end to the ship's side, while the other, with the purchase of a long lever placed at right angles with the keel, was slowly rising to the surface.' All rushed on deck. The ship was on her beam-ends, the lee boats touching the water. All felt they trembled on the brink of eternity, but there was no confusion; all worked, all did their duty. The boats were lowered, manned, provisioned; every thing in readiness for the expected capsize of the ship. The ice of the berg was four fathoms thick. They set to cutting it with saws. All day they worked—all night; one hour's rest was granted, then they worked again out on the cold ice, in the cold night air, till some, wearied and worn, worked on mechanically with their eyes shut. Suddenly there was a grating sound of breaking ice. In an instant the ship righted, and the broken spars and the massive berg were in commotion together. The crew sprang on deck, and three joyful cheers commemorated an escape never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

When within a week of home, further dangers perilled their lives. A violent storm arose; the water rushed in so violently, that even with all the unceasing exertions of the crew, the ship could scarcely be kept afloat. Chains and ropes were bound round the rent sides; but as successive seas rolled over them they watched with intense solicitude the coil of seventeen turns of strong whale-line that had been passed round the injured part, well knowing that if it gave way, the vessel must go down. A last effort was made to reach Lough Swilly, on the Irish coast. A sail

came in sight, but there was no time to make signals, they were pressing onward for their lives. At length land was announced. They signalled for pilot, none came; so they glided on, passed the lights in the fishermen's huts, and at midnight, the 2d September, 1837, dropped anchor, the first time for fifteen months, in Lough Swilly. The sudden change to security from the terrors of death, left them that night in a state of feverish excitement. When morning came, the exhausted crew were landed, housed, tended, cared for by the hospitable inhabitants.—The ship was fast going down by the head; three hours later, and the mast all have sunk. She was run ashore, and then a frightful opening was discovered—keel and stern-post were rent and riven asunder, leaving a passage several feet wide for the free ingress of the water. And thus they had traversed the Atlantic.

After a month's rest, they proceeded to England when the ship was taken out of commission and put into dock. Such was M'Clure's first experience of polar expeditions, in what Captain Penny calls the unparalleled voyage of the Terror. His promotion followed immediately, as Sir George Back declared he would not leave London until his young friend was gazetted to his lieutenantcy. (To be continued.)

From the Westminster Review.

SCHAMYL,

THE PROPHET-WARRIOR OF THE CAUCASUS.

SCHAMYL is of middle stature, has fair hair, grey eyes overshadowed by thick well marked eyebrows, a regular well-formed nose and a small mouth. A peculiar fairness and delicacy of skin distinguishes his countenance from that of his fellow countrymen, and his feet and hands are singularly well shaped. The apparent immovability of his arms in walking indicate the determination of his character. His manner is noble and dignified. Perfectly master of himself, he exercises a silent influence over all who come into contact with him. A stern impassivity, which is undisturbed even in moments of the greatest danger, is his characteristic expression. A condemnation to death falls from his lips with the same calmness as he shows in conferring on a brave Murid the sabre of honour won in some sanguinary fight. With traitors or other offenders, whose death he has once determined upon, he converses without manifesting a shade of angry or vengeful feeling. He regards himself as simply the instrument in the hands of a higher power, and holds, with the Sufis, that all his thoughts and decisions are the immediate inspiration of God. His eloquence is as fiery and persuasive as his ordinary manner is calm and commanding. 'Flames sparkle from his eyes and flowers are scattered from his lips,' said Bersek Bey, with whom Schamyl lived a few days after the taking of Akhulgo, when he resided for a time among the chiefs of the Dechighe and Ubiche tribes, in the hopes of raising the Western Caucasians against the Russians. * * *

It is very difficult to arrive at any clear idea of what has occurred in the Caucasus within the last five or six years; but it would appear that Schamyl again broke through the fortresses of the line and devastated Kabardah, both in 1840 and 1850; while M. Taillandier, writing in 1853, states on the authority of an officer of the army of the Caucasus, that the Russians had just suffered a sanguinary defeat at the hands of Schamyl who had carried off considerable artillery stores, and reconquered eight leagues of territory; where is not stated. However, as our purpose is not a history of the war in the Caucasus, but the illustration of the character and influence of Schamyl, the incompleteness of our information is of no great importance. Enough has been said to show that to the most heroic courage and endurance he joins military abilities of the highest order.

But it is not alone on these grounds that the Prophet-Warrior claims our admiration. Of a mob of scattered tribes, divided by innumerable feuds, he has made a nation capable of the most complete unity of action, and law-giver is as pre-eminent as his religious enthusiasm. With a strong hand he has swept away all the old boundaries of race and tribe, however consecrated by tradition, and has completely reorganised the country over which he rules. It is divided into twenty districts, each of which is governed by an officer termed a Naib, whose business it is to preserve order; to superintend the proper raising of taxes and recruits; to limit and control disputes and blood-feuds; and to see that the Scharyat is strictly fulfilled. Every five of these districts again, are under the superintendence of a Governor uniting, within himself the spiritual and temporal power, in answerable to Schamyl alone, who allows to certain of his favorites only, absolute power over life and death; while the others must refer to himself in such cases. Each Naib has a deputy or coadjutor. In every aoul there is a Cadi or Elder, whose duty it is to make regular reports to his Naib of all important occurrences, and to carry out the orders which he may receive from him, while the local Mollah has spiritual care of the

soul. Every man capable of bearing arms has right of access to his Cadi or Naib at a fixed time of the day, when audiences are held and business transacted. Rapid communication through all parts of the country is ensured by a sort of flying post. In each aoul several swift horses are kept saddled and bridled, and when a state messenger arrives, bearing a passport sealed by the Naib of the district, it is the business of the Cadi to furnish him instantly with a fresh horse and a guide to the next post. In this way Schamyl's messages and orders are transmitted with incredible swiftness.

The standing army of five or six thousand men is thus kept up; every ten houses of an aoul must maintain a warrior, one house providing the man, and the other nine his horse, accoutrements, and support. The family to which he belongs is, so long as he is alive, free of all taxes, but he must never be without his arms, and must be ready day and night, to march at a moment's notice. Furthermore, every male from fifteen to fifty, is liable to be called out for the defence of his aoul, or, in extraordinary cases, to the general army; and in the latter case, each horseman of ten houses commands the men of those houses.

Schamyl's body guard is composed of a selection from the Murids, and its members are called Murtosigators. Only the hottest enthusiasts among the Murids, men of whose entire devotion Schamyl is well assured, are chosen for this post, which is considered among the Caucasians to be in the highest degree honourable. The prophet puts the most implicit confidence in those whom he has once selected, and they on the other hand renounce every tie, and place their lives in his hand. If unmarried, they must remain so; and if married, they must strictly avoid their families during their period of service. Like Schamyl himself they must live frugally, and carry out the Scharyat to the very letter. They wear peculiar insignia, and receive regular pay, with a share of all spoils; there are usually about one thousand of them, five hundred of whom always surround Schamyl's person—access to which is very difficult. In time of peace the Murtosigators are Schamyl's apostles, and considerable sums are placed at their disposal for the carrying out of their propaganda. At the same time they form a most efficient body of police, whose accusations might at once destroy the most powerful Naib. In war, they constitute the heart of Schamyl's troops and the terror of the Russians, who have never yet succeeded in taking one alive.

At first, schamyl had no revenue but what was derived from his razzias; but, at present, all the tribes pay a yearly tithe, and if any slain warrior leaves no direct heir, his property goes to the state. Schamyl has also confiscated what might be called the church property of Lesghistan, consisting in the gifts of the pious to the mosques and shrines; the Mollahs receive in exchange regular pay, and the wandering dervishes, who lived on these gifts, have been either incorporated with the army or driven away.

Schamyl's financial rule is ordinarily distinguished by extreme economy; and he is said to possess large concealed treasures—but if a valorous action is to be rewarded, or a hostile tribe won over, he will expend great sums. He has instituted a regular system of decorations, consisting of medals, epaulettes, and stars; while, on the other hand, his criminal code contains a no less exactly proportioned series of punishments, from the rag tied round the right arm, which is the stigma affixed to the coward—to decapitation, shooting, and stabbing to death. A stern and even-handed justice characterises all Schamyl's judgments, and he would long since, like Hamsad Beg, have fallen a victim to the blood feuds thus created against himself, were it not for the watchful devotion of his body-guard, the Murtosigators, who constantly surround him in public.

VOLTAIRE'S RIDDLE.—What is the longest, and yet the shortest thing in the world; the swiftest, and the most slow; the most divisible, and the most extended; the least valued, and the most regretted; without which nothing can be done; which devours everything, however small, and yet gives life and spirit to every object, however great? Answer—Time.

Nothing sets so wide a mark between a vulgar and a noble soul, as respect and reverential love and womankind. A man who is always sneering at woman is generally a course-profligate, or a coarser bigot.

It was said by a former King of Prussia, that as we are intellectually blind the Deity lent us religion as a stick to guide us on our way; but instead of using it as heaven intended we began to belabour each other with it.

Nicholas has called his brother-in-law, the King of Prussia, 'an angel of peace.' An angel, after the Russian view, has, of course, two wings; one of infantry and one of artillery.—Punch.