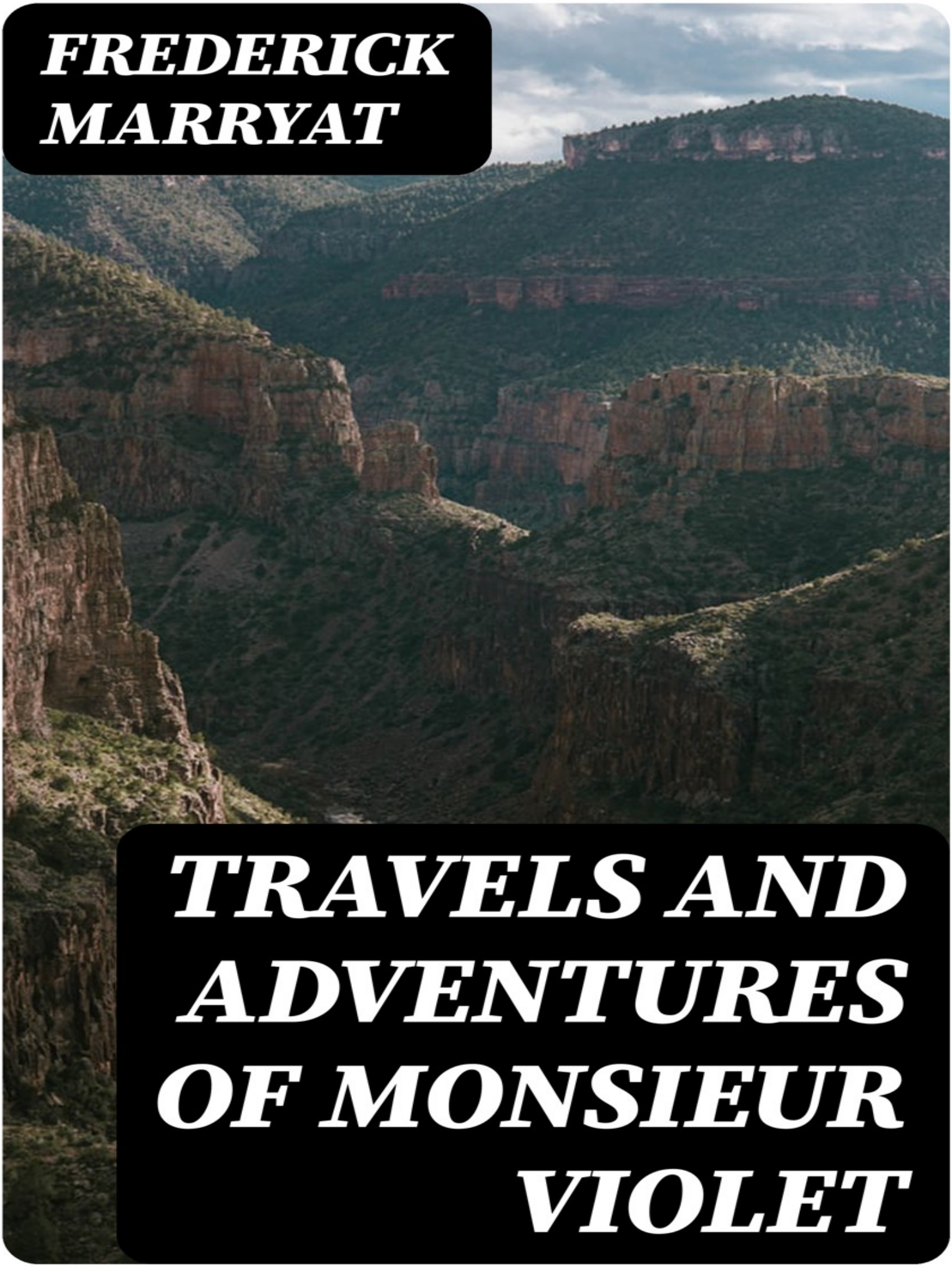
FREDERICK MARRYAT



TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES OF MONSIEUR VIOLET

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Travels and Adventures of Monsieur Violet

EAN 8596547363736

DigiCat, 2022
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Chapter One.

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The Revolution of 1830, which deprived Charles the Tenth of the throne of France, like all other great and sudden changes, proved the ruin of many individuals, more especially of many ancient families who were attached to the Court, and who would not desert the exiled monarch in his adversity. Among the few who were permitted to share his fortunes was my father, a noble gentleman of Burgundy, who at a former period and during a former exile, had proved his unchangeable faith and attachment to the legitimate owners of the crown of France.

The ancient royal residence of Holyrood having been offered, as a retreat, to his unhappy master, my father bade an eternal adieu to his country and with me, his only son, then but nine years of age, followed in the suite of the monarch, and established himself in Edinburgh.

Our residence in Scotland was not long. Charles the Tenth decided upon taking up his abode at Prague. My father went before him to make the necessary arrangements; and as soon as his master was established there, he sought by travel to forget his griefs. Young as I was, I was his companion. Italy, Sicily, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and the Holy Land were all visited in the course of three years, after which time we returned to Italy; and being then twelve years old, I was placed for my education in the Propaganda at Rome.

For an exile who is ardently attached to his country there is no repose. Forbidden to return to his beloved France, there was no retreat which could make my father forget his griefs, and he continued as restless and as unhappy as ever.

Shortly after that I had been placed in the Propaganda, my father fell in with an old friend, a friend of his youth, whom he had not met with for years, once as gay and as happy as he had been, now equally suffering and equally restless. This friend was the Italian Prince Seravalle, who also had drank deep of the cup of bitterness. In his youth, feeling deeply the decadence, both moral and physical, of his country, he had attempted to strike a blow to restore it to its former splendour; he headed a conspiracy, expended a large portion of his wealth in pursuit of his object, was betrayed by his associates, and for many years was imprisoned by the authorities in the Castle of San Angelo.

How long his confinement lasted I know not, but it must have been a long while, as in after-times, when he would occasionally revert to his former life, all the incidents he related were for years “when he was in his dungeon, or in the court-yard prison of the Capitol,” where many of his ancestors had dictated laws to nations.

At last the Prince was restored to freedom, but captivity had made no alteration in his feelings or sentiments. His love for his country, and his desire for its regeneration, were as strong as ever, and he very soon placed himself at the head of the Carbonari, a sect which, years afterwards, was rendered illustrious by the constancy and sufferings of a Maroncelli, a Silvio Pellico, and many others.

The Prince was again detected and arrested, but he was not thrown into prison. The government had been much weakened and the well-known opinions and liberality of the Prince had rendered him so popular with the Trasteverini, or northern inhabitants of the Tiber, that policy forbade either his captivity or destruction. He was sentenced to be banished for (I think) ten years.

During his long banishment, the Prince Seravalle wandered over various portions of the globe, and at last found himself in Mexico. After a residence at Vera Cruz, he travelled into the interior, to examine the remains of the ancient cities of the Western World; and impelled by his thirst for knowledge and love of adventure, he at last arrived on the western coast of America, and passing through California, fell in with the Shoshones, or Snake Indians, occupying a large territory extending from the Pacific to nearly the feet of the Rocky Mountains. Pleased with the manners and customs and native nobility of this tribe of Indians, the Prince remained with them for a considerable time, and eventually decided that he would return once more to his country, now that his term of banishment had expired; not to resettle in an ungrateful land, but to collect his property and return to the Shoshones, to employ it for their benefit and advancement.

There was, perhaps, another feeling, even more powerful, which induced the Prince Seravalle to return to the Indians with whom he had lived so long. I refer to the charms and attraction which a wild life offers to the man of civilisation, more particularly when he has discovered how hollow and heartless we become under refinement.

Not one Indian who has been brought up at school, and among the pleasures and luxuries of a great city, has ever wished to make his dwelling among the pale faces; while, on the contrary, many thousands of white men, from the highest to the lowest stations in civilisation, have embraced the life of the savage, remaining with and dying among them, although they might have accumulated wealth, and returned to their own country.

This appears strange, but it is nevertheless true. Any intelligent traveller, who has remained a few weeks in the wigwams of well-disposed Indians, will acknowledge that the feeling was strong upon him even during so short a residence. What must it then be on those who have resided with the Indians for years?

It was shortly after the Prince’s return to Italy to fulfil his benevolent intentions, that my father renewed his old friendship—a friendship of early years, so strong that their adverse politics could not weaken it. The Prince was then at Leghorn; he had purchased a vessel, loaded it with implements of agriculture and various branches of the domestic arts; he had procured some old pieces of artillery, a large quantity of carabines from Liège, gunpowder, etcetera; materials for building a good house, and a few articles of ornament and luxury. His large estates were all sold to meet these extraordinary expenses. He had also engaged masons, smiths, and carpenters, and he was to be accompanied by some of his former tenants, who well understood the cultivation of the olive-tree and vine.

It was in the autumn of 1833 when he was nearly ready to start, that he fell in with my father, told him his

adventures and his future plans, and asked him to accompany him. My father, who was tired and disgusted with every thing, blasé au fond, met the Prince more than half way.

Our property in France had all been disposed of at a great sacrifice at the time of the Revolution. All my father possessed was in money and jewels. He resolved to risk all, and to settle with the Prince in this far distant land. Several additions were consequently made to the cargo and to the members composing the expedition.

Two priests had already engaged to act as missionaries. Anxious for my education, my father provided an extensive library, and paid a large sum to the Prior of a Dominican convent to permit the departure with us of another worthy man, who was well able to superintend my education. Two of the three religious men who had thus formed our expedition had been great travellers, and had already carried the standard of the cross east of the Ganges in the Thibetian and Burman empires.

In order to avoid any difficulties from the government, the Prince Seravalle had taken the precaution to clear the vessel out for Guatemala, and the people at Leghorn fully believed that such was his object. But Guatemala and Acapulco were left a long way south of us before we arrived at our destination.

At last every thing was prepared. I was sent for from the Propaganda—the stock of wines, etcetera, were the last articles which were shipped, and the Esmeralda started on her tedious, and by no means certain voyage.

Chapter Two.

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I was very young then—not thirteen years old; but if I was young, I had travelled much, and had gained that knowledge which is to be obtained by the eye—perhaps the best education we can have in our earlier years. I shall pass over the monotony of the voyage of eternal sky and water. I have no recollection that we were in any imminent danger at anytime, and the voyage might have been styled a prosperous one.

After five months, we arrived off the coast, and with some difficulty we gained the entrance of a river falling into Trinity Bay, in latitude 41 degrees north and longitude 124 degrees 28 minutes west.

We anchored about four miles above the entrance, which was on the coast abreast of the Shoshones' territory, and resorted to by them on their annual fishing excursions. In memory of the event, the river was named by the Indians —"Nu elejé sha wako;" or, the Guide of the Strangers.

For many weeks it was a strange and busy scene. The Prince Seravalle had, during his former residence with the Shoshones, been admitted into their tribe as a warrior and a chief, and now the Indians flocked from the interior to welcome their pale-faced chief, who had not forgotten his red children. They helped our party to unload the vessel, provided us with game of all kinds, and, under the directions of the carpenter, they soon built a large warehouse to protect our goods and implements from the effect of the weather.

As soon as our cargo was housed, the Prince and my father, accompanied by the chiefs and elders of the tribe, set off on an exploring party, to select a spot fit for the settlement. During their absence, I was entrusted to the care of one of the chief's squaws, and had three beautiful children for my playmates. In three weeks the party returned; they had selected a spot upon the western banks of the Buona Ventura River, at the foot of a high circular mountain, where rocks, covered with indurated lava and calcined sulphur, proved the existence of former volcanic eruptions. The river was lined with lofty timber; immense quarries of limestone were close at hand, and the minor streams gave us clay, which produced bricks of an excellent quality.

The Spaniards had before visited this spot, and had given the mountain the name of St. Salvador; but our settlement took the Indian appellation of the Prince, which was —"Nanawa ashta jueri ê," or the Dwelling of the Great Warrior. As the place of our landing was a great resort of the Indians during the fishing season, it was also resolved that a square fort and store, with a boat-house, should be erected there; and for six or seven months all was bustle and activity, when an accident occurred which threw a damp upon our exertions.

Although the whole country abounds in cattle, and some other tribes, of which I shall hereafter make mention, do possess them in large herds, the Shoshones did not possess any. Indeed, so abundant was the game in this extensive territory, that they could well dispense with them; but as the Prince's ambition was to introduce agriculture and more

domestic habits among the tribe he considered it right that they should be introduced. He therefore despatched the Esmeralda to obtain them either at Monterey or Santa Barbara. But the vessel was never more heard of: the Mexicans stated that they had perceived the wreck of a vessel off Cape Mendocino, and it was but natural to suppose that these were the remains of our unfortunate brig.

All hands on board perished, and the loss was very heavy to us. The crew consisted of the captain, his son, and twelve men, and there were also on board five of our household, who had been despatched upon various commissions, Giuseppe Polidori, the youngest of our missionaries, one of our gunsmiths, one of our masons, and two Italian farmers. Melancholy as was this loss, it did not abate the exertions of those who were left. Fields were immediately cleared—gardens prepared; and by degrees the memory of this sad beginning faded away before the prospect of future happiness and comfort.

As soon as we were completely established, my education commenced. It was novel, yet still had much affinity to the plan pursued with the students of the Military Colleges in France, inasmuch as all my play hours were employed in the hardier exercises. To the two excellent missionaries I owe much, and with them I passed many happy hours.

We had brought a very extensive and very well selected library with us, and under their care I soon became acquainted with the arts and sciences of civilisation: I studied history generally, and they also taught me Latin and

Greek, and I was soon master of many of the modern languages. And as my studies were particularly devoted to the history of the ancient people of Asia, to enable me to understand their theories and follow up their favourite researches upon the origin of the great ruins in Western and Central America, the slight knowledge which I had gained at the Propaganda of Arabic and Sanscrit was now daily increased.

Such were my studies with the good fathers: the other portion of my education was wholly Indian. I was put under the charge of a celebrated old warrior of the tribe, and from him I learned the use of the bow, the tomahawk, and the rifle, to throw the lasso, to manage the wildest horse, to break in the untamed colt; and occasionally I was permitted to accompany them in their hunting and fishing excursions.

Thus for more than three years did I continue to acquire knowledge of various kinds, while the colony gradually extended its fields, and there appeared to be every chance of gradually reclaiming the wild Shoshones to a more civilised state of existence.

But “l’homme propose et Dieu dispose.” Another heavy blow fell upon the Prince, which eventually proved the ruin of all his hopes. After the loss of the vessel, we had but eight white men in the colony, besides the missionaries and ourselves; and the Prince, retaining only my father’s old servant, determined upon sending the remainder to purchase the cattle which we had been so anxious to obtain.

They departed on this mission, but never returned. In all probability, they were murdered by the Apaches Indians, although it is not impossible that, tired of our simple and

monotonous life, they deserted us to establish themselves in the distant cities of Mexico.

This second catastrophe weighed heavy upon the mind of the good old Prince. All his hopes were dashed to the ground —the illusions of the latter part of his life were destroyed for ever. His proudest expectations had been to redeem his savage friends from their wild life, and this could only be effected by commerce and agriculture.

The farms round the settlement had for now nearly four years been tilled by the squaws and young Indians, under the direction of the white men, and although the occupation was by no means congenial to their nature, the Prince had every anticipation that, with time and example, the Shoshones would perceive the advantages, and be induced to till the land for themselves.

Before our arrival, the winter was always a season of great privation to that portion of the Indians who could not repair to the hunting grounds, while now, Indian corn, potatoes, and other vegetables were in plenty, at least for those who dwelt near to the settlement. But now that we had lost all our white cultivators and mechanics, we soon found that the Indians avoided the labour.

All our endeavours proved useless: the advantages had not yet been sufficiently manifest: the transition attempted had been too short; and the good, although proud and lazy, Shoshones abandoned the tillage, and relapsed into their former apathy and indifference.

Mortified at this change, the Prince and my father resolved to make an appeal to the whole nation, and try to convince them how much happier they would be if they

would cultivate the ground for their support. A great feast was given, the calumet was smoked; after which the Prince rose and addressed them after their own fashion. As I had, a short time previous, been admitted as a chief and warrior, I, of course, was present at the meeting. The Prince spoke:—

“Do you not want to become the most powerful nation of the West? You do. If then such is the case, you must ask assistance from the earth, which is your mother. True, you have prairies abounding in game, but the squaws and the children cannot follow your path when hunting.

“Are not the Crows, the Bannaxas, the Flat Heads, and the Umbiquas, starving during the winter? They have no buffalo in their land, and but few deer. What have they to eat? A few lean horses, perchance a bear; and the stinking flesh of the otter or beaver they may trap during the season.

“Would they not be too happy to exchange their furs against the corn, the tobacco, and good dried fish of the Shoshones? Now they sell their furs to the Yankees, but the Yankees bring them no food. The Flat Heads take the fire-water and blankets from the traders, but they do so because they cannot get any thing else, and their packs of furs would spoil if they kept them.

“Would they not like better to barter them with you, who are so near to them, for good food to sustain them and their children during the winter—to keep alive their squaws and their old men during the long snow and the dreary moons of darkness and gloom?

“Now if the Shoshones had corn and tobacco to give for furs, they would become rich. They would have the best

saddles from Mexico, and the best rifles from the Yankees, the best tomahawks and blankets from the Canadians. Who then could resist the Shoshones? When they would go hunting, hundreds of the other natives would clear for them the forest path, or tear with their hands the grass out of their track in the prairie. I have spoken."

All the Indians acknowledged that the talk was good and full of wisdom; but they were too proud to work. An old chief answered for the whole tribe.

"Nanawa Ashta is a great chief; he is a brave! The Manitou speaks softly to his ears, and tells him the secret which makes the heart of a warrior big or small; but Nanawa has a pale face—his blood is a strange blood, although his heart is ever with his red friends. It is only the white Manitou that speaks to him, and how could the white Manitou know the nature of the Indians? He has not made them; he don't call them to him; he gives them nothing; he leaves them poor and wretched; he keeps all for the pale faces.

"It is right he should do so. The panther will not feed the young of the deer, nor will the hawk sit upon the eggs of the dove. It is life, it is order, it is nature. Each has his own to provide for and no more. Indian corn is good; tobacco is good, it gladdens the heart of the old men when they are in sorrow; tobacco is the present of chiefs to chiefs. The calumet speaks of war and death; it discourses also of peace and friendship. The Manitou made the tobacco expressly for man—it is good.

"But corn and tobacco must be taken from the earth; they must be watched for many moons, and nursed like children. This is work fit only for squaws and slaves. The

Shoshones are warriors and free; if they were to dig in the ground, their sight would become weak, and their enemies would say they were moles and badgers.

“Does the just Nanawa wish the Shoshones to be despised by the Crows or the horsemen of the south! No! he had fought for them before he went to see if the bones of his fathers were safe: and since his return, has he not given to them rifles and powder, and long nets to catch the salmon and plenty of iron to render their arrows feared alike by the buffaloes and the Umbiquas?

“Nanawa speaks well, for he loves his children: but the spirit that whispers to him is a pale-face spirit, that cannot see under the skin of a red-warrior; it is too tough: nor in his blood: it is too dark.

“Yet tobacco is good, and corn too. The hunters of the Flat Heads and Pierced Noses would come in winter to beg for it; their furs would make warm the lodges of the Shoshones. And my people would become rich and powerful; they would be masters of all the country, from the salt waters to the big mountains; the deer would come and lick their hands, and the wild horses would graze around their wigwams. ’Tis so that the pale faces grow rich and strong; they plant corn, tobacco, and sweet melons; they have trees that bear figs and peaches; they feed swine and goats, and tame buffaloes. They are a great people.

“A red-skin warrior is nothing but a warrior; he is strong, but he is poor; he is not a wood-chunk, nor a badger, nor a prairie dog; he cannot dig the ground; he is a warrior, and nothing more. I have spoken.”

Of course the tenor of this speech was too much in harmony with Indian ideas not to be received with admiration. The old man took his seat, while another rose to speak in his turn.

“The great chief hath spoken: his hair is white like the down of the swan; his winters have been many; he is wise; why should I speak after him, his words were true? The Manitou touched my ears and my eyes when he spoke (and he spoke like a warrior); I heard his war cry. I saw the Umbiquas running in the swamps, and crawling like black snakes under the bushes. I spied thirty scalps on his belt, his leggings and mocassins were sewn with the hair of the Wallah Wallahs. (See note 1.)

“I should not speak; I am young yet and have no wisdom; my words are few, I should not speak. But in my vision I heard a spirit, it came upon the breeze, it entered within me.

“Nanawa is my father, the father to all, he loves us, we are his children; he has brought with him a great warrior of the pale faces, who was a mighty chief in his tribe; he has given us a young chief who is a great hunter; in a few years he will be a great warrior, and lead our young men in the war path on the plains of the Wachinangoes (see note 2), for Owato Wachina (see note 3) is a Shoshone, though his skin is paler than the flower of the magnolia.

“Nanawa has also given to us two Makota Konayas (see note 4), to teach wisdom to our young men; their words are sweet, they speak to the heart; they know every thing and make men better. Nanawa is a great chief, very wise; what

he says is right, what he wishes must be done, for he is our father, and he gave us strength to fight our enemies.

“He is right, the Shoshones must have their lodges full of corn and tobacco. The Shoshones must ever be what they are, what they were, a great nation. But the chief of many winters hath said it; the hedge-hogs and the foxes may dig the earth, but the eyes of the Shoshones are always turned towards their enemies in the woods, or the buffaloes in the plains.

“Yet the will of Nanawa must be done, but not by a Shoshone. We will give him plenty of squaws and dogs; we will bring him slaves from the Umbiquas, the Cayuses, and the Wallah Wallahs. They shall grow the corn and the tobacco while we hunt; while we go to fetch more slaves, even in the big mountains, or among the dogs of the south, the Wachinangoes. I will send the vermilion (see note 5) to my young warriors, they will paint their faces and follow me on the war-path. I have spoken!”

Thus ended the hopes of making agriculturists of the wild people among whom we lived; nor did I wonder such as they were, they felt happy. What could they want besides their neat conical skin lodges, their dresses, which were good, comfortable, and elegant, and their women, who were virtuous, faithful, and pretty? Had they not the unlimited range of the prairies? were they not lords over millions of elks and buffaloes?—they wanted nothing, except tobacco. And yet it was a pity we could not succeed in giving them a taste for civilisation. They were gentlemen by nature; as indeed almost all the Indians are, when not given to

drinking. They are extremely well bred, and stamped with the indubitable seal of nobility on their brow.

The council was broken up, as both Christianity, and his own peculiar sentiments, would not permit the Prince Seravalle to entertain the thought of extending slavery. He bowed meekly to the will of Providence, and endeavoured by other means to effect his object of enlightening the minds of this pure and noble, yet savage race of men.

Note 1. Indians living on the Columbian River, two hundred miles above Fort Vancouver, allied to the Nez Percés, and great supporters of the Americans.

Note 2. Name given to the half breeds by the Spaniards, but by Indians comprehending the whole Mexican race.

Note 3. The “spirit of the young beaver;” a name given to me when I was made a warrior.

Note 4. Two priests, literally two black gowns.

Note 5. When a chief wishes to go to war, he sends to his warriors some leaves of tobacco covered with vermilion. It is a sign that they must soon be prepared.

Chapter Three.

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This breaking up, for the time, of our agricultural settlement took place in the year 1838. Till then, or a few months before, I had passed my time between my civilised and uncivilised instructors. But although educated, I was an Indian, not only in my dress but in my heart.

I mentioned that in the council called by the Prince I was present, having been admitted as a chief, being then about seventeen years old. My admission was procured in the following manner: when we received intelligence of the murder, or disappearance, of our seven white men, whom the Prince had sent to Monterey to procure cattle, a party was sent out on their track to ascertain what had really taken place, and at my request the command of that party was confided to me.

We passed the Buona Ventura, and followed the track of our white men for upwards of 200 miles, when we not only could trace it no further, but found our small party of fifteen surrounded by about eighty of our implacable enemies, the Crows.

By stratagem, we not only broke through them, but succeeded in surprising seven of their party. My companions would have put them to death, but I would not permit it. We secured them on their own horses, and made all the haste we could, but the Crows had discovered us and gave chase.

It was fifteen days' travelling to our own country, and we were pursued by an enemy seven or eight times superior to us in numbers. By various stratagems, which I shall not dwell upon, aided by the good condition of our horses, we

contrived to escape them, and to bring our prisoners safe into the settlement. Now, although we had no fighting, yet address is considered a great qualification. On my return I was therefore admitted as a chief, with the Indian name Owato Wanisha, or “spirit of the beaver,” as appropriate to my cunning and address. To obtain the rank of a warrior chief, it was absolutely requisite that I had distinguished myself on the field of battle.

Before I continue my narration, I must say a little more relative to the missionaries, who were my instructors. One of them, the youngest, Polidori, was lost in the Esmeralda, when she sailed for Monterey to procure cattle. The two others were Padre Marini and Padre Antonio. They were both highly accomplished and learned. Their knowledge in Asiatic lore was unbounded, and it was my delight to follow them in their researches and various theories concerning the early Indian emigration across the waters of the Pacific.

They were both Italians by birth. They had passed many years of their lives among the nations west of the Ganges, and in their advanced years had returned to sunny Italy, to die near the spot where they had played as little children. But they had met with Prince Seravalle, and when they heard from him of the wild tribes with whom he had dwelt, and who knew not God, they considered that it was their duty to go and instruct them.

Thus did these sincere men, old and broken, with one foot resting on their tombs, again encounter difficulties and danger, to propagate among the Indians that religion of love and mercy, which they were appointed to make known.

Their efforts, however, to convert the Shoshones were fruitless. Indian nature would seem to be a nature apart and distinct. The red men, unless in suffering or oppression, will not listen to what they call “the smooth honey words of the pale-faced sages;” and even when they do so, they argue upon every dogma and point of faith, and remain unconvinced. The missionaries, therefore, after a time, contented themselves with practising deeds of charity, with alleviating their sufferings when able, from their knowledge of medicine and surgery, and by moral precepts, softening down as much as they could the fierce and occasionally cruel tempers of this wild untutored race.

Among other advantages which the Shoshones derived from our missionaries, was the introduction of vaccination. At first it was received with great distrust, and indeed violently opposed, but the good sense of the Indians ultimately prevailed; and I do not believe that there is one of the Shoshones born since the settlement was formed who has not been vaccinated; the process was explained by the Padres Marini and Polidori to the native medical men, and is now invariably practised by them.

I may as well here finish the histories of the good missionaries. When I was sent upon an expedition to Monterey, which I shall soon have to detail, Padre Marini accompanied me. Having failed with the Shoshones, he considered that he might prove useful by locating himself in the Spanish settlements of California. We parted soon after we arrived at Monterey, and I have never seen or heard of him since. I shall, however, have to speak of him again during our journey and sojourn at that town.

The other, Padre Antonio, died at the settlement previous to my journey to Monterey, and the Indians still preserve his robes, missal, and crucifix, as the relics of a good man. Poor Padre Antonio! I would have wished to have known the history of his former life. A deep melancholy was stamped upon his features, from some cause of heart-breaking grief, which even religion could but occasionally assuage, but not remove.

After his death, I looked at his missal. The blank pages at the beginning and the end were filled up with pious reflections, besides some few words, which spoke volumes as to one period of his existence. The first words inscribed were: “Julia, obiit A.D. 1799. Virgo purissima, Maris Stella. Ora pro me.” On the following leaf was written: “Antonio de Campestrina, Convient. Dominicum. In Româ, A.D. 1800.”

Then he had embraced a monastic life upon the death of one dear to him—perhaps his first and only love. Poor man! many a time have I seen the big burning tears rolling fast down his withered cheeks. But he is gone, and his sorrows are at rest. On the last page of the missal were also two lines, written in a tremulous hand, probably a short time previous to his death: “I, nunc anima anceps; sitque tibi Deus misericors.”

The Prince Seravalle did not, however, abandon his plans; having failed in persuading the Shoshones, at the suggestion of my father, it was resolved that an attempt should be made to procure a few Mexicans and Canadians to carry on the agricultural labours; for I may here as well observe, that both the Prince and my father had long made up their minds to live and die among the Indians.

This expedition was to be undertaken by me. My trip was to be a long one. In case I should not succeed in Monterey in enlisting the parties required, I was to proceed on to Santa Fé, either with a party of Apaches Indians, who were always at peace with the Shoshones, or else with one of the Mexican caravans.

In Santa Fé there was always a great number of French and Canadians, who came every year from St. Louis, hired by the Fur Companies; so that we had some chance of procuring them. If, however, my endeavours should prove fruitless, as I should already have proceeded too far to return alone, I was to continue on from Santa Fé with the fur traders, returning to St. Louis, on the Mississippi, where I was to dispose of some valuable jewels, hire men to form a strong caravan, and return to the settlement by the Astoria trail.

As my adventures may be said but to commence at my departure upon this commission, I will, before I enter upon my narrative, give the reader some insight into the history and records of the Shoshones, or Snake Indians, with whom I was domiciled, and over whom, although so young, I held authority and command.

Chapter Four.

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The Shoshones, or Snake Indians, are a brave and numerous people, occupying a large and beautiful tract of country, 540 miles from east to west, and nearly 300 miles from north to south. It lies betwixt 38 degrees and 43 degrees north latitude, and from longitude 116 degrees west of Greenwich to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, which there extend themselves to nearly the parallel of 125 degrees west longitude. The land is rich and fertile, especially by the sides of numerous streams, where the soil is sometimes of a deep red colour, and at others entirely black. The aspect of this region is well diversified, and though the greatest part of it must be classified under the denomination of rolling prairies, yet woods are very abundant, principally near the rivers and in the low flat bottoms; while the general landscape is agreeably relieved from the monotony of too great uniformity by numerous mountains of fantastical shapes and appearance, entirely unconnected with each other, and all varying in the primitive matter of their conformation.

Masses of native copper are found at almost every step, and betwixt two mountains which spread from east to west in the parallel of the rivers Buona Ventura and Calumet, there are rich beds of galena, even at two or three feet under ground; sulphur and magnesia appear plentiful in the northern districts; while in the sand of the creeks to the south, gold dust is occasionally collected by the Indians. The land is admirably watered by three noble streams—the Buona Ventura, the Calumet, and the Nú eleje sha wako, or

River of the Strangers, while twenty rivers of inferior size rush with noise and impetuosity from the mountains, until they enter the prairies, where they glide smoothly in long serpentine courses between banks covered with flowers and shaded by the thick foliage of the western magnolia. The plains, as I have said, are gently undulating, and are covered with excellent natural pastures of mosquito-grass, blue grass, and clover, in which innumerable herds of buffaloes, and mustangs, or wild horses, graze, except during the hunting season, in undisturbed security.

The Shoshones (see note 1) are indubitably a very ancient people. It would be impossible to say how long they may have been on this portion of the continent. Their cast of features proves them to be of Asiatic origin, and their phraseology, elegant and full of metaphors, assumes all the graceful variety of the brightest pages of Saadi.

A proof of their antiquity and foreign extraction is, that few of their records and traditions are local; they refer to countries on the other side of the sea, countries where the summer is perpetual, the population numberless, and the cities composed of great palaces, like the Hindoo traditions, “built by the good genii, long before the creation of man.”

There is no doubt, indeed it is admitted by the other tribes that the Shoshone is the parent tribe of the Comanches, Arrapahoes, and Apaches—the Bedouins of the Mexican deserts. They all speak the same beautiful and harmonious language, have the same traditions; and indeed so recent have been their subdivisions, that they point out the exact periods by connecting them with the various

events of Spanish inland conquest in the northern portion of Sonora.

It is not my intention to dwell long upon speculative theory but I must observe, that if any tradition is to be received with confidence it must proceed from nations, or tribes, who have long been stationary. That the northern continent of America was first peopled from Asia, there can be little doubt, and if so it is but natural to suppose that those who first came over would settle upon the nearest and most suitable territory. The emigrants who, upon their landing, found themselves in such a climate and such a country as California, were not very likely to quit it in search of a better.

That such was the case with the Shoshones, and that they are descendants from the earliest emigrants, and that they have never quitted the settlement made by their ancestors, I have no doubt, for all their traditions confirm it.

We must be cautious how we put faith in the remarks of missionaries and travellers, upon a race of people little known. They seldom come into contact with the better and higher classes, who have all the information and knowledge; and it is only by becoming one of them, not one of their tribes, but one of their chiefs, and received into their aristocracy, that any correct intelligence can be gained.

Allow that a stranger was to arrive at Wapping, or elsewhere, in Great Britain, and question those he met in such a locality as to the religion, laws, and history of the English, how unsatisfactory would be their replies; yet missionaries and travellers among these nations seldom obtain farther access. It is therefore among the better

classes of the Indians that we must search for records, traditions, and laws. As for their religion, no stranger will ever obtain possession of its tenets, unless he is cast among them in early life and becomes one of them.

Let missionaries say what they please in their reports to their societies, they make no converts to their faith, except the pretended ones of vagrant and vagabond drunkards, who are outcasts from their tribes.

The traditions of the Shoshones fully bear out my opinion, that they were among the earliest of the Asiatic emigrants; they contain histories of subsequent emigrations, in which they had to fight hard to retain their lands; of the dispersion of the new emigrants to the north and south; of the increase of numbers, and breaking up of portions of the tribes, who travelled away to seek subsistence in the East.

We find, as might be expected, that the traditions of the Eastern tribes, collected as they have occasionally been previous to their extinction, are trifling and absurd; and why so? because, driven away to the east, and finding other tribes of Indians, who had been driven there before them, already settled there, they have immediately commenced a life of continual hostility and change of domicile. When people have thus been occupied for generations in continual warfare and change, it is but natural to suppose that in such a life of constant action, they have had no time to transmit their traditions, and that ultimately they have been lost to the tribe.

We must then look for records in those quarters where the population has remained stationary for ages. It must be

in south-west of Oregon, and in the northern parts of Upper California and Sonora, that the philosopher must obtain the eventful history of vast warlike nations, of their rise and of their fall. The western Apaches or the Shoshones, with their antiquities and ruins of departed glory, will unfold to the student’s mind long pages of a thrilling interest, while in their metaphors and rich phraseology, the linguist, learned in Asiatic lore, will detect their ancient origin.

It is remarkable to observe, how generally traditions and records will spread and be transmitted among nations destitute of the benefits of the art of printing. In Europe, the mass were certainly better acquainted with their ancient history before this great discovery than they are in our days, as traditions were then handed down from family to family—it was a duty, a sacred one, for a father to transmit them to his son, unadulterated, such in fact, as he had received them from his ancestors. It is same case with the Indians, who have remained stationary for a long period. It is in the long evenings of February, during the hunting season, that the elders of the tribe will reveal to young warriors all the records of their history; and were a learned European to assist at one of these “lectures upon antiquity,” he would admit that, in harmony, eloquence, strength of argument, and deduction, the red-coloured orator could not be surpassed.

The Shoshones have a clear and lucid recollection of the far countries whence they have emigrated. They do not allude to any particular period, but they must have been among the first comers, for they relate with great topographical accuracy all the bloody struggles they had to