

A JOURNEY TO SAITCHAR.

SAITCHAR, August 3.

WHEN in Alexinaz the day before yesterday Colonel Becker, the late chief of General Tcherniaeff's staff, told me that he was on the point of leaving for Saitchar, where he had been posted as chief of the staff of the Army of the Timok; he added that he meant to go by the route of Paratjin, as being less liable to interruption, and he advised me to take the same road. Now the road to Saitchar from Alexinaz via Paratjin, is no doubt eminently safe, but for anything of military interest which it presents, you might as well be competing with the Great Eastern Railway by driving a donkey carriage along an Essex lane. I had heard that the Turks, having forced the Gramada Pass on the south-eastern frontier, were pressing northward towards the heart of the rich and fertile district isolated from the rest of Serbia by lofty mountains and difficult passes, and my anxiety was at once to see something of this south-eastern country, and be in the way of any interesting military operations, if such should be occurring while I was on my road through this part of Saitchar. I was singularly fortunate in both my aspirations, but it was by a hair's breadth that I succeeded in reaching my destination here. A glance at the map will show you my road. Leaving Alexinaz, it bends in a north-easterly direction to Banja, and thence strikes due east to Kujujevatz; from Kujujevatz it follows the line of the Timok north to Saitchar. The Paratjin route, on the contrary, strikes northward along the Morava to that place, and then goes eastward to Saitchar through the valley of the Zmarjekaserra.

I left Alexinaz yesterday morning in a post-waggon with three horses abreast. But it was not by any means the post-waggon to which I had been accustomed in my previous journeys in Serbia. That had been a vehicle on springs, with leathern cushions, and to ride in it invested one with a genial sense of respectability. But for such a vehicle the road to Saitchar, or at least to Kujujevatz, is too rough. My conveyance was a common country cart, without the most rudimentary notion of springs, totally seatless, and covered with a semicircular hood of tarpaulin, which in the sunshine smelt very strongly of tar. There could be no mistake about its strength, there could be as little of the uncompromising character of its construction in the matter of jolting and imparting bumps. The seats in it had to be contrived out of luggage and hay, and further experience proved that in the paroxysm of a bump they had an unpleasant habit of disintegrating and letting people down heavily. The man who was comfortably seated on a saddle would suddenly find himself on the sharp edge of a stirrup; he who was as happy as circumstances would permit on a pile of rugs found it crumbling under him in all directions, and leaving him on the rattle-trap floor of a concern that continually quivered in every plank and joint, but that fortunately never came to grief. From Alexinaz we struck off at once from the Morava Valley into one of the glens which run at right angles to it. For a few miles the glen was not very greatly constricted, and there was cultivation on either side of the stream. But all at once we came to a bridge, on the other side of which the road appeared to end in the face of a sheer precipice. This is not the usual custom of roads, and I watched with interest for the solution of the problem. With a sudden burst right up against the precipice, the road sheered away to the right along the trough of a deep gorge that only at this moment made itself visible. There was only room in places for the road and stream; there were, indeed, places where there was not room for both, and where one infringed on the other. Take the pass of Killiecrankie, Hell's Glen in Argyleshire, Glencoe, that grim route through the rump of Penmenmaur from Bettws-y-Coed to Bethesda, the valley of the Kinsig from Hansig to Fribourg, mingle with these a *soupeon* of the Semmering, of the gorge that leads to Afghanistan as seen from the Punjab frontier beyond Peshawur, throw in the "Sensation Rock" on the road from Colombo to Kandy, flavor it with a dash of the undercliff between Ventnor and Blackwater, and you will have some conception of the aspect of the Bovan Pass. In one place there are sheer precipices, in another fantastically piled grey crags which the Titans might have flung in their war against heaven; in another, oak forests clinging against steep green slopes that kiss the margin of the tortured stream. Above everything rise the bare grey hills—

Their glens of black umbrage by cataracts riven,
But calm their blue tops in the beauty of heaven.

All at once the road emerges from this scene, and passes between, as it were, two doorposts of rock into an oasis in the desert of crag, cataract, and precipice. The glen widens, there is a little breadth of level land, and dotted about this, or perched on the lower shoulders of the hills, are the houses of the village of Bovan—a regular Black Forest village in its picturesqueness. There are broad undulating tracts of cultivation and pasture, and to right and left open up the mouths of the lateral valley, each with its pretty village climbing its slopes. The drive would have been a charming one but for its accessories. I do not refer to the jolting, for that is an evil of detail to which, after all, one soon gets accustomed. But in the Bovan Pass itself we had met not a few processions of men, women, and children, driving sheep and cattle before them, and followed by waggons containing sleeping children and household effects. These were fugitives from the country which the Turks are ravaging, or which in a day or two will lie at their mercy. Beyond the pass, all through the open country to Banja, the road was crowded with these melancholy corteges; the fields by the wayside were one continuous camp of temporarily halted fugitives. It was a veritable exodus—and one of the most woeful sights I have ever seen. Steadily, with fixed faces and no conversation, the men and women, the fathers and the mothers, trudged onwards. Most wore an aspect of passive resignation; the bitterness of death was passed when they had left the cottage in which their babes were born, and taken a last look at the crops which they had planted and nursed; and now they were plodding on

in a sort of reverie of listless recklessness—courtous always, poor wretches, ever ready with a touch of the sheepskin bonnet, ever willing to name in a curious monotone, as if they had got the word by heart, the village from out which they had come forth into the wilderness. All was not lost, it was true. For them there had been the opportunity to flee at leisure from the wrath to come. They had not to endure the spectacle of slaughtered children and outraged wives, as had some of the refugees with whom I have spoken. Some of them, indeed—those from about the Gramada Pass—had looked back as they moved away from their homes, into which the shells were falling, and through which the bullets were whistling, on their village already in a blaze. But with the great mass this had not been so. There had been time for them to gather their sheep and cattle together, to pack their waggons with their household objects, and to take their departure leisurely on their way to some refuge into which the Turks might not break. The goal with all was the Morava Valley; until that was reached and the lines of Deligrad were between them and the destroyer, there was no realisation of safety, far less could there be any assured repose.—'Daily News.'

A rather good story is told ament a late examination held at a university not a hundred miles from London. At their examination it is not always that the best men get through; for although a candidate may be quite up in his subject, sometimes through the crotchety ideas of the examiners questions are put which no one but the Wandering Jew could answer. At one of the higher examinations, a few days ago, one of the candidates was startled by having, amongst other queer queries, this one submitted to him:—"Give a critical abstract of the researches of Lawes, Gilbert and Pugh ('Philosophical Transactions, 1861') on the sources of nitrogen of vegetation." The bothered candidate, who could hardly be expected to carry in his head all the periodical literature of this century, answered something to this effect:—"I have never heard of those gentlemen, and I don't take in the 'Philosophical Transactions;' but if you want to know what I know about the sources of nitrogen of plants, here it is." The candidate, who is a man of position, and well known in the literary and scientific world then gave such a voluminous account of the nitrogen of vegetation that he startled the examiner, who literally disappeared for a fortnight, at the end of which time he reappeared and intimated that the candidate might pass.—'Overland Mail.'

HISTORICAL! Vide "Jurors Reports and Awards, New Zealand Exhibition." Jurors: J. A. Ewen, J. Butterworth, T. C. Skinner. "So far as the Colony is concerned, the dyeing of materials is almost entirely confined to the re-dyeing of Articles of Dress and Upholstery, a most useful art, for there are many kinds of material that lose their colour before the texture is half worn. G. HIRSCH, of Dunedin (DUNEDIN DYE WORKS, George street, opposite Royal George Hotel) exhibits a case of specimens of Dyed Wools, Silks, and Feathers, and dyed Sheepskins. The colors on the whole are very fair, and reflect considerable credit on the Exhibitor, to whom the Jurors recommended an Honorary Certificate should be awarded." Honorary Certificate, 629: Gustav Hirsch Dunedin, for specimens of Dyeing in Silk feathers, &c.

"DUKE OF EDINBURGH."—The old wooden structure that did duty as the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel, in Russell-street for so many years, has, we are pleased to observe, given place to a new brick building, erected at considerable cost, in order to meet the rapidly increasing requirements of this popular and important part of the city. The present proprietor, Mr D. HARRIS, has spared no reasonable expense in furnishing and fitting the building with every modern comfort and convenience. The situation is extremely healthy, and commands splendid views of the ocean and harbour, and is within easy reach of the business part of the city. Persons in pursuit of a respectable and comfortable residence will do well to go to the "Duke of Edinburgh" Hotel, Russell-street, Dunedin.—[Advt.]

PLOUGHING.

A PPLICATIONS are invited to 20th NOVEMBER, for Ploughing about 3000 Acres of River-Flat Land (in lots to suit applicants), on the Wantwood Estate.

Horse feed, farrier work, and stores supplied on the ground.

Further information on the station.

P. K. M'CAUGHAN.

NOTICE TO ARCHITECTS.

Competitive Designs will be received on 6th NOVEMBER, for a Three-storey Brick and Plaster Hotel and Shops on the site of the present Glasgow Arms Hotel, Dunedin.

One Hundred Pounds will be paid for the plans, detail drawings and specifications approved of.

Plan of the ground will be seen at the above Hotel.

MICHAEL MURPHY.

TO BE LET with immediate possession, a SHOP with THREE ROOMS, YARD, &c., doing a good business in the Main-street and Centre of Timaru for five or seven years, to be let cheap per week.—Address, F.F.D., Post Office, Timaru.