

PACHO'S TRAVELS IN CYRENAICA AND MARMARICA.

[Concluded from our last Number, p. 501.]

It is not given to every man, to acquire reputation by an excursion into a little corner of the earth, which is, as it were, at one's door, and under one's eyes. But M. Pacho has proved himself to be precisely the man to explore Cyrene. Every thing goes on wonderfully well when the traveller is suited to his journey; but, unfortunately, this perfect accordance is uncommonly rare. If Ledyard had been sent into Cyrenaica, he would have rapidly traversed that country; on his return, he would have printed some concise and energetic notes, stamped with a sort of genius; the scenes and the ruins would have furnished him with picturesque representations; he would have described the manners of the inhabitants, by their resemblance or their contrast with those which he had observed at the other end of the world: but we could not expect any thing complete or finished from him. This companion of Cook was merely a traveller; he had not the patience to compare the ruins which he had seen, with other ruins of past time which are spoken of in books; he had no taste for such an occupation, and a quarter of the time which it would consume, would have sufficed him to reach, a second time, the Polar Circle, or to go to Tombuctoo, if death had not prevented him. Even Belzoni himself, who from a quack became an antiquarian, though he might delight in the midst of the ruins of Cyrene, was no writer. He was anxious to be moving, rather than curious to relate well; and required a striking, gigantic, and, so to speak, a dazzling subject; composed of facts which needed no embellishment, which the most meagre statement could not render dull, and such as, when once in circulation, pass from mouth to mouth, like the news of a victory: he revelled in the pyramids, the obelisks, and the tombs of the Pharaohs. On a subject of ordinary interest, and containing nothing of a popular description, he might have produced a work useful to science; but it would have been shapeless and charmless, with but little embellishment; good as a book of reference, but tiresome reading.

Very different from this will be the work of M. Pacho, if he complete it as he has begun it. He has not only made a very useful voyage; he has not only filled up a chasm in the geography of the north-east of Africa, designed with care all the monuments which offered themselves to his view, copied numerous inscriptions with unequalled fidelity and exactness, collected plants, determined a latitude approached from more than sixty different points, and, lastly, studied the manners and customs of the inhabitants: but on his return amongst us, he availed himself of the advice of our learned men, he searched in libraries for all that related to the country which he had just visited; and, when he began to write about it, he

reduced his journal to a just proportion, and by carefully expunging all those private details which interest none but the traveller himself, gave a proof of his taste in a subject which demanded it. In short, this man, buried so long in Libya, (for the voyage to Cyrene was not his first enterprise,) has shown himself a skilful narrator. Clear and precise in technical details, he knows how to relate an historical fact, to describe a country and its manners, and to analyse and communicate the immediate impressions of the scenes of nature on his mind. Many of these merits we have already remarked on, in our account of 'The Historical Introduction to Cyrene;' the rest became evident to us, in perusing 'The Account of Marmarica.'

Every one, by consulting his memory, will easily find the situation of Marmarica. It is that part of the shore which extends to the left of the Nile, behind the island of Crete, and opposite to Greece; a small country, in some parts capable of culture, and which appears in every respect to belong to Egypt. Indeed it may be said to have had the same origin as Lower Egypt; for if one was, according to the expression of the ancients, the daughter of the Nile, the other was, at least, fertilized by its alluvial discharges. The ancient Egyptian tradition, so confidently related by Herodotus, will be remembered. The Egyptian priests used to say, that before the time of Menes, the Nile flowed through Memphis, and lost itself among the sands of Lybia; but that prince made it a new bed on the east of this town, and forced it to return between the two chains of mountains which form its valley. In the time of Herodotus, not only was the ancient bed of the river visible, but also the embankment that closed up its entrance, which the Persians preserved with the greatest care. Even now this channel is not unknown; it may be traced across the desert, and passes to the west of the lakes of Natron. It is even said that decayed timber, masts and yards, the wrecks of ships which formerly navigated it, still point out its track; the Arabs continue to give it the name of *Bahr bela md*, or the 'sea without water.' It is traced on the map of M. Pacho; and, from the direction which he gives it, it would seem that the river took its rise in Marmarica below the Lake of Marcotis. But at the same time that Egypt is indebted to the new bed of the Nile for the Delta and its wonderful fertility, does not the eastern part of Marmarica owe, to the ancient course and rich *alluvia* of the same river, those germs of fruitfulness, which distinguish it from the arid sands by which it is surrounded. But we will leave this conception, which may possibly have no foundation, and pass on to the exact information which M. Pacho gives us.

All the country, comprised between Alexandria and the Gulph of Bomba, covers an extent of one hundred and fifty-six leagues from east to west. A tract of cultivable land stretches along the sea-coast, and extends ten, or fifteen leagues at most, towards the south.

Beyond that lies nothing but a burning desert, where, at long intervals, one meets with small spots of fruitful land, which Strabo, the philosophical geographer of antiquity, very ingeniously compared to the spots on the leopard's skin. The tract of land which has been mentioned, is crossed on every side by chains of hills, rising progressively in height the further they are removed from the sea-coast, which are intermingled with plains, and sometimes during winter discharge large torrents of water down their sides. The soil of Marmarica bears testimony on every hand to great natural changes, at the same time that its state of devastation presents a picture of great human revolutions. Sea-shells are incrustated on the rocks, plants petrified by the sea are scattered over the hills, and the substratum of the soil is composed of bay-salt and granite intermixed; in short, an assemblage of minerals of different kinds, incongruously heaped together, forms the general characteristic of this country. In traversing it, says M. Pacho, the traveller experiences a painful sensation. The uniform nakedness of the place renders him more sensible of the destruction of the towns, and of the absence of their inhabitants. He sees before him nothing but gloomy plains and burning hills; he advances, but the aspect is the same; and in the midst of this vast picture, without life as without colour, scarcely is he informed of the presence of man by the distant bleating of the flocks, and the black specks of the Arab tents.

This picture of the desert, which separates Egypt from Cyrenaica, explains, in some degree, the ignorance in which Europe has remained with regard to the Libyan Pentapolis, in spite of its vicinity and all the charm of its ancient recollections. In Marmarica, however, inhospitable as it is, dwell Arabs who are mild, peaceable, and benevolent towards strangers; while in Pentapolis, where the earth is as fertile and delightful as ever, the present inhabitants are vile and bigoted, and feel nothing but hatred and contempt for those who are not Musulmans. The first form the tribe of the *Aoulud-Aly*, the second that of the *Haraby*.

According to the documents which M. Pacho has been able to collect, the population of the country, comprised between Alexandria and the mountains of Cyrenaica, amounts to about 38,000 souls. All the men are armed, but they do not all possess horses; the number of horsemen amounts at most to 4,000.

Marmarica, or rather its most easterly parts, formed, in ancient times, the Egyptian states, called Mareotis and Libya, and it is still subject to the Pasha of Egypt. But his authority extends only to the west of *Berek-Marzah*, or, according to other reports, to the foot of *Catabathmus Magnus*, farther towards the west, which would assign him a much greater extent of territory. To reconcile these accounts,—the one given by M. Pacho, and the other by a German traveller, (M. Scholz,) who preceded him without having

at all times the same success,—it is only necessary to remark, that, between the territory of the Dey of Tripoli, and that of the Viceroy of Egypt, there exists a considerable space, which is not, properly speaking, under the power of either of them, but may be considered as the hereditary domicile of the ancient aboriginal tribes. This (and the nature of the place is singularly adapted for the purpose) is the resort of the vagabonds who have deserted their tribes, and of the disreputable hordes, who flock together from all parts of the north of Africa, to rob, to plunder, and to commit still greater atrocities. Under the name of *hedjadja*, with which they disguise themselves, they scour the neighbouring countries, and receive, from the pious Musulman, the reception which he supposes he is giving to the real *hedjadja* or pilgrims, who, coming from Morocco, and other northern parts of Africa, direct their steps towards Mecca. In general the sovereignty of the viceroy of Egypt, in all that part of his government, is purely nominal; but he has not neglected by his severity to inspire with a salutary fear the inhabitants of the desert, as well as all those who live near the valley of the Nile. He has done more, and by a trick, which we will relate hereafter, he has destroyed the organization of the celebrated tribe of the Aoulad-Aly, whose bravery caused him much inquietude.—The Dey of Tripoli does not exercise a more real authority over Cyrenaica.

Having given a general idea of the country which M. Pacho has illustrated in his first volume, we proceed to follow him. We shall have cause to be astonished that he has contrived to extract so much information from a country so barbarous and obscure; and we may take it as a good omen for the volume which he is preparing on Pentapolis, where the monuments of art, rivalling the scenes of nature, will present him at every step with picturesque appearances to describe, and interesting recollections to detail.

Experience has often proved that, in Africa, an escort is sometimes more injurious than useful to the researches of the traveller. If he takes one, he secures his life against insidious attacks, but he becomes, so to speak, the subject of his protectors; if, on the contrary, he ventures alone, or with his own people, into these savage countries, his motions are unrestrained, but he is incessantly surrounded by dangers. M. Pacho assures us, that, even though his slender pecuniary supplies had not deprived him of the power to choose between these two modes of travelling, he should have preferred the adoption of the latter. He limited himself to two guides, whom he took to point out to him the situation of the wells and the monuments. A young Orientalist, M. Muller, who had already accompanied him to Syouah, wished still to follow in his train. The little caravan included altogether about nine persons; they took with them twelve camels and four dromedaries: the former were intended to carry the baggage of the travellers, whilst the

latter, being lighter, were to serve for more rapid excursions. Having at length obtained a letter from the Viceroy of Egypt to the Dey of Tripoli, M. Pacho quitted Alexandria, on the third of November, 1824.

The environs of this town are so well known, that he does not stay to describe them. A very narrow neck of land extends between the sea and the lake Mareotis, from Alexandria to Aboukir; which, on that side, has always been the settled boundary of the base of Delta. M. Pacho employed one day in visiting the ruins of Aboukir, the ancient *Topousis*, which had already been explored and described by several members of the commission of Egypt. He searched in vain for some vestiges of Egyptian art; he could discover nothing which bore the peculiar and perfectly distinctive characters of it, with the exception of a temple, the date of which cannot be placed higher than the first Lagides; all else is purely Grecian, Roman, and Arabian.

'I then thought,' says M. Pacho, 'and in the end I was convinced, that the Egyptians had raised no monuments, nor built any towns in Marmarica, before their submission to the Turks, and that, previously to that period, this country might have been inhabited only by wandering tribes, and perhaps also by the *Berberes*, and the *Africo-Phœnicians*. If the Egyptians, anterior to the conquest of Alexander, had established colonies and erected monuments on this coast, some traces of them would be seen. The extraordinary solidity of their monumental architecture gives countenance to this opinion, and the hieroglyphic emblems, with which they were wont to adorn it, would at least be found engraven on some of the ruins. Had new edifices displaced those of the Egyptians, the same reason still exists; and here, as in other places, the vestiges of antiquity would be discovered on more modern monuments.'

Aboukir forms part of the *Ouadi-Mariout*, or valley of Mareotis, famed in antiquity for its vineyards, and which, in the time of Makrizy, (the 14th century of our era,) was still covered with gardens and houses, which extended themselves as far as the province of Barkah. Of those groves and gardens, mentioned by the Arabian historians, there remains not the least vestige; and what is more, not a single tree, though wild, overshadows the country. Its vegetation is generally woody, but never ramiferous, not even in the trenches, which serve to carry off the rain water; but, on every side, the ruins of ancient towns show that this district was formerly very thickly peopled. The soil, though for the most part clayey, is in some places cultivated in rice and corn fields, by one of the four bodies, or *bednat*, of the great Arab tribe of *Aoulad-Aly*. Nevertheless, there, as in the Oases, you find ruins and monuments lost in the midst of the sands, which proves the encroachment of the desert on the cultivable lands.

'The reason of it is,' says M. Pacho, 'that the Christians, and after them the Arabs, from religious motives, established their dwellings far from those of the ancient inhabitants, which being thus abandoned, the trees that surrounded them have perished for want of care, and, this bulwark being destroyed, the desert has advanced. It is probable that, in a few more centuries, the sands, impelled by the south winds, and continuing their encroachments, will end by covering the face of the valley of Marcotis, till they come in contact with the waves of the opposite sea.'

Ascending from this valley, where he took occasion to sketch some Lagidian and Arabian monuments, of which the one in best preservation is a strong castle, called the *Kasser Lamald*, and mistaken by M. Scholz, for a mosque,—M. Pacho entered the desert, which extends from the promontory *Dresich*, to within thirty leagues of Alexandria, and as far as the *Catabathmus parvus* of the ancients.

How sterile soever this desert may now be, it must have been very populous in former times, as well as the valley of Marcotis, which precedes it. It is impossible to travel for a single half-hour, without meeting some vestiges of ancient villages, reservoirs for the reception of the rains, and canals for their conveyance. Ruins of another description have induced M. Pacho to believe, by their situation on the heights, the thickness of their walls, and the wells with which they are provided, that they may be the remains of the military posts, designed, in former times, for the protection of the towns and the public roads, against the incursions of the ancient wandering tribes. 'These conjectures,' says he, 'acquire greater probability, when it is remembered that the Romans were often obliged to engage with the Marmarides, not for the purpose of subjugating those colonies, but only that they might preserve a free communication between Egypt and Cyrenica.'

We come at length with our traveller to *Catabathmus parvus*. Ptolemy mentions two *Catabathmuses*, in Marmarica; and this name, which he gives to two ancient towns, is equally applicable, as we know, to the valleys which were within their jurisdiction. Whether the Arabs have been guided by this tradition, or simply by the aspect of the places, it is, in either case, remarkable that they also give the names of *Akabah el Soughaier*, and *Akabah el Kebir*, that is, the little and the great descent, to the very places which are called *Catabathmus parvus*, and *Catabathmus magnus*, by the Alexandrian Geographer.

The hills of *Catabathmus parvus* are about five hundred feet above the level of the sea; that is, one hundred feet less than the Great Pyramid, which is already reduced two hundred feet, by the sands which centuries have heaped around its base. But these hills are only the first step of the heights which rise progressively, as far as the mountains of Pentapolis. They extend into the inte-

riot, from the river to the Oasis of Ammon. M. Pacho traversed them eleven days after his departure from Alexandria, and encamped for the night by the side of a torrent formed by the rains. Here he describes a scene, which, to us, appears full of beauty :

The two banks of the torrent were covered with Arab tents, the dark colour of which was contrasted with the pale green of the incipient vegetation. Nature was beginning to recover from the languor to which she is reduced, in these districts, during nine months of the year. The rains were penetrating into the crevices of the earth, hardened by the scorching rays of the African sun. These genial showers had been expected with impatience, and their arrival was celebrated with transports of joy by these Arabs, wandering in a country where the flowing of rivulets and the bubbling of fountains are unknown. How interesting is the sight the inhabitants present in this happy quarter of the year! All the families, dispersed over the extent of land which stretches from Alexandria to the gulph of Bomba, are then in motion; they inquire of each other which parts are first favoured by the care of providence; if any such place is mentioned, they make haste to repair to it; camels and mares are indiscriminately yoked to the plough, the cart is speedily turned up, and receives the grain, which, together with milk, is to form the chief subsistence of these people, who, though barbarians indeed, are hospitable and simple in their manners. The waters of the torrent had attracted the great number of Arabs, whom we found upon its banks. Such contentment reigned among them, that it was evinced even in their labours. In one place they were furishing their plough-shares, and in another measuring out the grain they were about to sow,—preparations which were made with a liveliness and joy, remarkable in men naturally grave and taciturn. Their flocks, in particular, appeared to receive new life: the slender steed was seen bounding by the torrent, or reclined among the bushes, whilst the patient camel, feeling his limbs refreshed, and forgetting his immense size and his quiet habits, gambolled heavily upon the plain. And all this contentment of the men, and enjoyment of the animals, was produced by a sight the most common in our country—a small strip of germinating verdure, and a sheet of running water, in this arid region! The satisfaction of their own desires disposes even the most barbarous nations to benevolence; and, accordingly, we were kindly received by this pastoral society. My title of Christian did not produce any unfavourable impression. I told them that we were going to Derne, upon commercial business, and they appeared to believe it. The chief of the camp even wished to celebrate our arrival by a splendid repast. According to the ancient custom, which has ever been observed by these wandering tribes, he directed a sheep to be slain and served up entire to the guests. Ibrahim, which was the name of the chief, treated me with a respect and frankness, to which the Arabs had not yet alto-

gether accustomed me. I had fresh occasion to remark, that the ideas of these men frequently acquire in precision, what, from the nature of their bringing up, and their manner of life, they lose in extent.

* The projects of *Mohammed-Aly*, and, above all, his organization of the *nizam-el-djedid*, (troops after the European model,) were the subject of conversation among all the inhabitants of the country. Ibrahim addressed some pertinent remarks to me, upon the events which were transpiring in Egypt, and on the consequences which were likely to ensue, when objects, more interesting than the political discourses of the chief, attracted my attention. While the more elderly women were preparing for the hospitable meal, and spreading the carpets in the tents, the young girls, after having taken up the waving folds of their dresses, dispersed themselves about the neighbourhood to collect dried herbs and thorns, which are the only combustibles, in a country destitute of trees. I watched the rapid motion of their slender forms, and the untutored graces of their walk, or rather of their run; and I listened with pleasure to their songs, the powerful intonations of which were strongly contrasted with the voices of the young virgins. According to their usual custom, one of them recited the whole song, her companions repeating only the chorus; and whilst the former sang, to a simple and slightly varied air, the unhappy love of a young warrior for *Patneh*, 'the finest flower of the desert,' but belonging to a hostile tribe,—representing the lover, solitary in his tent, become insensible to the spirit of revenge, unfaithful to the law of kindred, and heedlessly allowing his toare to go astray in the valley,—the others interrupted her from time to time, repeating altogether, "*Hia alem ! hia alem ! O, love ! O love !*"

* The songs had ceased, and night had succeeded to the cheerful picture which had been placed before my eyes. Never before had I been equally struck with the simplicity, I will even say the happiness, of an Arab's life; and I was absorbed in a variety of thoughts, with which, however, it would be an unnecessary waste of words to trouble the reader. The voice of Ibrahim roused me from my reflections, and the *bismillah* (grace before meat) called us to commence the repast. All the principal persons in the camp assisted at this banquet; and while, by the light of the fires, the chief gravely did the honours, the young girls, dressed like the female figures in ancient statuary, presented us with a large basin of milk, from which we all drank round. But it is time to put an end to these details and resume the thread of my narration.

We, too, will stop here for the present, at the foot of *Catabathnus*, in imitation of one of *M. Pacho's* predecessors, who, dispirited by obstacles, left to our traveller the palm which he has won.