

A tour, performed in the years 1795-6, through the Taurida, or Crimea, the antient kingdom of Bosphorus, the once-powerful republic of Tauric Cherson, and all the other countries on the north shore of the Euxine, ceded to Russia by the peace of Kainardgi and Jassy; by Mrs. Maria Guthrie...described in a series of letters to her husband, the editor, Matthew Guthrie... The whole illustrated by a map... with engravings of a great number of ancient coins, medals, monuments, inscriptions, and other curious objects.

Guthrie, Maria.

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L E T T E R LXXII.

From the Tauric Stept, or Desert.

WE fet out from Sympheropol this morning, and bade adieu to the fine mountainous part of the Taurida, to launch once more into the Desert that occupies the Northern half of the peninsula, from the river Salgir to the Golden Gate; a tract only calculated for pastoral Tartars and their flocks; of course, we could not expect many interesting objects in our this day's journey.

I have always observed, however, that when a traveller is resolved to be pleased, and to draw some kind of amusement from every thing, instead of getting out of humour at the more barren parts of a journey, he may commonly find something or other worthy of his attention: and this was just our case; for we met with some straggling Tartar villages in the stept, and some flocks of the small lean Tauric sheep so famous for their valuable furs and the sweetness of their flesh; but we observed that they were either black or spotted, comprising but few of what is vulgarly called the *blue* colour, which brings so high a price for pelisses, muffs, caps, &c. But what more particularly attracted our attention was, a real Scythian cart drawn by a couple of dromedaries.

This was a deep vehicle, mounted on two high strong wheels, something like an English baker's cart, lined first with rushes, and then with the same felt stuff with which the Tartar tents are made.

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A covering

A covering of the same felt was laid over the top when we saw it pass, possibly to conceal the women, who, we were told, had commonly travelled in that kind of equipage from time immemorial.

Independent of what we did see, you know that I derive a fund of amusement from looking for what I very seldom find, viz. the ruins of the antient cities which once stood in the Taurida; and such was my pastime to-day in returning by the Eastern road along the coast of the Putrid Sea, for the sake of variety; as we came into the peninsula by the Western, along the coast of the Dead and Black Seas.

The Limen Zapra, as the Greeks called the Putrid Sea, seems to be a portion of the Sea of Asoff, cut off from it by the gradual formation of a long narrow sand-bank; at a very remote period, however, as it had the name of the peninsula of Zeno (Chersonesus Zenonis) in the time of the Antients.

This was the first object that drew my attention to-day in beginning our galloping hunt after antiquities, while the fleet Tartar horses carried us briskly forward; and I was not a little puzzled to conjecture how a Greek philosopher could have left his name on a Tauric sand-bank; till I recollected, that a son of the orator Zeno was made king of the Bosphorus by Marc Anthony; this solved the difficulty; and, as to the name of *Putrid* given to the lake thus cut off from the sea of Asoff, by the Chersonesus Zenonis, nothing can be more applicable; as, in fact, the narrow Straits of Jenitchi, at the end of the bar, being the only communication between them, the Putrid Sea is really nothing else than a stagnant pool, for want of sufficient circulation; exhaling a dangerous miasma during Summer, which has effectually prevented the founding of any modern city on its sickly coast. Ptolemy, indeed, mentions a couple of antient cities in this district; but in so vague a manner, that we are left to our own conjectures relative to their position.

One of the two, *Tarona*, which Ortelius places to the S. E. of Perecop, and the East of the antient Satarcha, mentioned in a former

former letter, I will venture to suppose may have stood on the Solinoy Ozero, or Salt Lake of the Russian maps; as a trade in that mineral, still a capital article, might well maintain a city on its banks; for, to look for any thing above the rank of a pastoral village in any other part of this side of the grazing plain, where there is not a source of commerce and wealth to support a city, would shew great ignorance of the principle which has in all ages collected men into large municipal bodies.

As to the position of the other city of which Ptolemy speaks, let some future traveller conjecture respecting its site, who can discover sources of wealth hidden from the rapid survey of Yours, &c.

L E T T E R LXXIII.

YOU certainly expect me to pass the remainder of the Tauric desert without finding any thing more worthy of remark; but there you are mistaken; for, on the contrary, we found a new subject of attention very much in your own line of research.

On stopping at a village, the hospitable Tartars brought us a wooden dish of their favourite *koumis*, with a small vessel of brandy, both made from mares' milk, in defiance of the opinion of chemists, who formerly asserted, that an ardent spirit could not be drawn from *milk*, till they were taught the Tartar mode of distillation in the wilds of Scythia.

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You