THE NEWS

IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY:

Six Dollars per Annum, in Advance:

Single copies, 20 cents; two or more, 15c.

☞ Papers delivered at the Post Office on Sunday, between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock p.m.

OFFICE—POST OFFICE BUILDING.

ADVERTISING:—One Square (ten lines or less) one insertion : : : : $1 50
One Square three insertions : : : 2 50
Two Squares three insertions : : 5 00

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[For the Deseret News.]

THE SAW-MILL'S SONG.

Inscribed to Bernard Snow, Little Cotton-wood Kanyon, February 26, 1855.

Hark! how the saw-mill goes,
How thick its sounds are set:
It stops!—the run o'erflows,
And all is dripping wet.
The wheel is on its rounds,
The noisy saw does say,
In harsh discordant sounds,
"Make money, make money,
Work while 'tis call'd to-day,
To-morrow never pay—
Haste, in sunshine make your hay!"

Now it has changed its tone!
The course-log feels its force,
Moss rents, and bark, and stone,
And knots, that mar its course.
Still, up and down it goes,
And through the wood it frets,
While from its sound this flows,—
"Go neighbor—pay your debts!
Pay your debts, pay your debts;
Then you'll be free from those
Who'd take you by the nose,
When you can't accept receipts!"

Anon—the log is changed—
Mountain mohogany!
With care 'tis all arranged,
'Tis off—in agony
It slowly cuts along!
As if in pain 'twere writhing,
While still it sings this song,
"Brother! pay your tithing,
Your tithing, your tithing;
And help the Church along,
To rob her, it is wrong!

G. S. L. City, March 9. LYON.

QUOTING SCRIPTURE.—A worthy deacon in the town of F—— was remarkable for the facility with which he quoted Scripture on all occasions. The divine Word was ever at his tongue's end, and all the trivial, as well as important occurrences of life, furnished occasion for quoting the language of the Bible. What is better, however, the exemplary man always made his quotations the standard of action. One hot day, he was engaged in mowing with his hired man, who was leading off, the deacon following in his swath, conning his apt quotations, when the man suddenly sprang from his place, leaving the swath just in time to escape a wasp's nest.

"What is the matter?" hurriedly inquired the deacon.

"Wasps!" was the laconic reply.

"Booh!" said the deacon, "the wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are as bold as a lion!" and taking the workman's swath, he moved but a step, when a swarm of brisk insects settled about his ears, *and he* was forced to retreat, with many a painful sting, and in great discomfiture.

"Aha!" shouted the other with a chuckle, "the prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."

The good deacon had found his equal in making application of the sacred writings, and thereafter was not known to quote Scripture in a mowing-field.

"MR. WITNESS, you stated that my client manifested great astonishment when you told him the facts just stated. *Now, how did he manifest* astonishment?"

"He looked astonished."

"But what were the indications of astonishment, sir? You seem to be a very smart witness, and you ought to be able to tell me this."

"Oh, I merely judged of his feelings by his general appearance."

"That won't answer, sir. If you can't describe the appearance of my client, when astonished, in order to give the jury an idea of it, suppose you look astonished once yourself?"

"That I will do, if you will show me something astonishing."

"Well, now, my sharp fellow, what would astonish such an astonishing witness as yourself, hey?"

"Why, if you want to paralyze me with astonishment, just show me an honest lawyer!"

"Th—the wi—witness can take his seat."

THAT'S A FACT.—If you want to learn the value of a dollar, go and labor in the burning sun two days as a hod carrier. This is an excellent idea; and if any of our young gentlemen had to earn their dollars in that way, how much less dissipation and crime we would witness every day. So of our fashionable young ladies, if they like some of the poor seamstresses of our large cities had to earn their dollar by making shirts at ten cents a piece, how much less finery would be seen about them, how much more truthful notions would they have of the duties of life, and their obligations to the rest of the world.

COPPER.—The consumption of copper in the United States is put down at between 8,000 and 9,000 tons annually, of which only about 1,800 tons are produced in the country. About 7,000 tons are consumed by the rolling-mills, and distributed over the different markets of the Union, the remaining 1,600 tons being disposed of in the manufacture of sheet brass, kettles, wire, buttons, &c. There are six copper works, containing seven rolling-mills and three smelting furnaces, in the States.

TRUE COURAGE.—What can be more honorable than to have courage to execute the commands of reason and conscience; to maintain the dignity of our nature, and the station assigned us; to be proof against poverty, pain, and death itself, so far as not to do anything that is scandalous or sinful to avoid them; to stand adversity under all shapes with decency and resolution? To do this is to be great above title and fortune. This argues the soul of a heavenly extraction, and is worthy the offspring of the deity.

SPADES CALLED SPADES.—Foreigners do not well understand the constitution of our Congress. They would comprehend it better if one place were to be denominated *the* House of Inheritance, and the other body the House of Corruption.—[The Uncle Sam.

[Rather sharp shooting for a paper with that title to indulge in.

MIND.—It is mind, after all, that does the work of the world; so that the more there is of mind, the more work will be accomplished. A man, in proportion as he is intelligent, makes a given force accomplish a greater task—makes skill take the place of muscles—and, with less labor, gives a better produce. If all the mechanical labor of England was performed by hand, it would require every full-grown man in the world.

☞ We have all heard of the smiles of Providence. I was much pleased with uncle Jim's ideas on the subject. "Good morning, uncle Jim." —"Good morning!" "Well, you have had your daughter married, have you?" "Yes." "Well, really Providence has smiled upon you." "Smiled! no, bless you, *she snickered right out!*"

☞ An exchange, describing a counterfeit bank bill! says—the vignette is cattle and hogs, with a church in the *distance!* A very good illustration of this world's doings.

DESERET NEWS.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

VOL. 4. GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 1855. NO. 52.

HISTORY OF JOSEPH SMITH.

APRIL, 1841.

Thursday, 8.—"Thursday morning, April 8. At an early hour this morning the different quorums, who had previously been organized, came to the ground and took their seats as follows: The First Presidency, with the Presidents of the quorums on the stand, the High Council on the front of the stand, the High Priesthood on the front to the right of the stand, the Seventies immediately behind the High Priesthood, the Elders in the front to the left, the Lesser Priesthood on the right.

On motion, resolved, that this Conference continue until Sunday evening.

President Joseph Smith declared the rule of voting to be, a majority in each quorum; exhorted them to deliberation, faith, and prayer; and that they should be strict and impartial in their examinations. He then told them that the presidents of the different quorums would be presented before them for their acceptance or rejection.

Bishop Whitney then presented the First Presidency to the Lesser Priesthood. President J. A. Hicks presented them to the Elder's Quorum. President Joseph Young presented them to the Quorums of the Seventies. President Don Carlos Smith presented them to the High Priest's Quorum. Counsellor Elias Higbee presented them to the High Council; and the clerk then presented them to the Presidents of all the Quorums on the stand, and they were unanimously accepted. John C. Bennett was presented with the First Presidency as assistant President until President Rigdon's health should be restored.

The Presidents and Counselors belonging to the several quorums were then presented to each quorum separately, for approval or rejection, when the following persons were objected to, viz:—John A. Hicks, President of the Elder's Quorum, Alanson Ripley, bishop, Elder John E. Page, one of the Twelve Apostles, and Noah Packard, high priest. Bishop Newel K. Whitney moved their cases be laid over, to be tried before their several quorums.

President Joseph Smith presented the building committee of the "House of the Lord," viz:—Alpheus Cutler, Reynolds Cahoon, and Elias Higbee, to the several quorums collectively, and were unanimously received.

President Smith observed, that it was necessary that some one should be appointed to fill the quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the room of the late Elder David W. Patten; whereupon President Rigdon nominated Elder Lyman Wight to that office; which was unanimously accepted. Elder Wight stated that it was an office of great honor and responsibility, and he felt inadequate to the task; but inasmuch as it was the wish of the authorities of the Church, that he should take that office, he would endeavor to magnify it.

Resolved that James Allred be appointed to the office of High Councilor, in the place of Charles C. Rich, who had been chosen a Counselor to the President of this stake, and that Leonard Soby be appointed one of the High *Council*, in the room of David Dort, deceased.

The choir sung a hymn, and after prayer by President Rigdon, the meeting *adjourned for* two *hours*.

Conference met pursuant to adjournment. A hymn was sung by the choir.

President Rigdon delivered an interesting discourse on the subject of "Baptism for the dead."

President Joseph Smith followed on the same subject: and threw considerable light on the doctrine which had been investigated.

The choir then sung a hymn; and after prayer by *Elder* William Smith, Conference adjourned until to-morrow morning at 10 o'clock.

Friday, 9.—Friday morning, Conference met pursuant to adjournment.

The quorums reported that they had investigated the conduct of the persons who had been objected to, and that they had rejected Alanson Ripley and James Foster. Leave was given to James Foster to make a few remarks respecting the charges preferred against him; after which it was resolved that Elder James Foster continue his standing in the Church. Resolved that, as Alanson Ripley has not appeared to answer the charges preferred against him, that his bishopric be taken from him.

President Joseph Smith made some observations respecting the duty of the several quorums, in sending their members into the vineyard, and also stated that labor on the Temple would be as acceptable to the Lord, as preaching in the world, and that it was necessary that some agents should be appointed to collect funds for building the Temple.

Resolved that John Murdock, Lyman Wight, William Smith, Henry W. Miller, Amasa Lyman, Leonard Soby, Gehiel Savage, and Zenos H. Gurley be appointed to travel and collect funds for the same.

A hymn was then sung by the choir. Prayer by President Don Carlos Smith.

President Joseph Smith then stated that he should resign the meeting to the Presidency of the Stake, and the President of the High Priests' Quorum.

The building committee were called upon to address the assembly. Elder Cahoon spoke at length on the importance of building the Temple, and called upon the Saints to assist them in their great undertaking. Elder Alpheus Cutler made some very appropriate remarks.

Conference adjourned one hour.

Conference met pursuant to adjournment.

Elias Higbee spoke on the same subject. Elder Lyman Wight then came forward and addressed the meeting at considerable length.

The clerk read a letter from Elder John Taylor in England, to President Joseph Smith, which gave an account of the prosperity of the work of the Lord in that land.

On motion, adjourned till to-morrow morning at 10 o'clock.

The Twelve Apostles visited the Zoological Gardens at Manchester, England.

Elder W. J. Barrett writes from Australia: "he had arrived safe at Adelaide, after a rough passage, but had not baptized any persons. The obstacles to the introduction of the work of the Lord are very great, the people giving themselves up to prostitution, drunkenness, and extortion."

Saturday, 10.—The weather was unfavorable, consequently no business was transacted.

Sunday, 11.—The Conference again met.

Elder Zenos H. Gurley preached on the literal fulfilment of prophecy.

President Rigdon made some observations on baptism for the remmission of sins.

Conference adjourned for one hour.

Conference met, and was addressed by the bishops of the Stake, who stated the situation of the poor who had to be supported, and called upon the Saints to assist in relieving the necessities of the widows and fatherless.

Elder Lyman Wight made some observations on the subject.

President Joseph Smith then addressed the assembly, and stated that in consequence of the severity of the weather the Saints had not received as much instruction as he desired, and that some things would have to be laid over until the next conference. As there were many who wished to be baptized, they would now go to the water, and give them opportunity.

The procession was then organized, and proceeded to the Mississippi.

After the baptisms were over, the Conference adjourned to the 1st of October next.

JOSEPH SMITH,
R. B. THOMPSON, Clerk. President."

"Bolton, April 11, 1841. Elder P. P. Pratt,—I thought good to give your readers (through the medium of the Star) a short account of my labors in England. I landed in Liverpool on the 6th of April, 1840; and after attending the Preston Conference, I went to the Staffordshire Potteries, where there were about 100 Saints; I remained there three months. The work continued to prosper, and 80 were added to the Church in that time. I then left the Church there to the care of Elder Alfred Cordon, and in company with Elders Kimball and Woodruff visited the churches in Herefordshire and vicinity. Hundreds received our testimony, and were baptized. From thence we proceeded to London, where we met with much difficulty in introducing the fulness of the gospel; the hearts of the people were barred against the truth, but the Lord blessed our labors, and we succeeded in establishing a branch of the church there. My health being poor, I was counseled by my brethren of the Twelve Apostles to return to the field of my former labors in Staffordshire; which I did, leaving in London but eleven members. Since that time, my labors have been chiefly confined to the limits of the Staffordshire conference, which has until lately included Birmingham and Macclesfield, containing 18 branches of the church, 580 members having been added since the time I commenced laboring there. Many have been called to the ministry, who are faithful men, and willing to receive counsel. Although I have suffered much bodily affliction during the past year, the Lord has blessed my labors abundantly, and I can say I never enjoyed myself better in the discharge of my duty, than I have on this mission. Among the greatest blessings I have enjoyed, has been the privilege of attending four general conferences, and meeting in council with the Twelve Apostles. I can assure you that a meeting with those in whose company I have suffered so much tribulation for the gospel's sake, both at home and abroad, by land and sea, is to me a privilege indeed. I am now preparing to return home with my brethren, according to the instructions of the First Presidency of the Church; and as I take my leave of the Saints in this land, my prayer to God is that he will preserve his people from the hand of Satan, and prepare them for the coming Redeemer, who is near at hand.

I remain, your servant for the Gospel's sake,
GEO A. SMITH."

Tuesday, 13.—Elder H. C. Kimball left Manchester for Preston.

THE STEPPES OF SOUTHERN RUSSIA.

The physical peculiarities of the southern provinces of Russia are likely to exercise no little influence on the future development of the vast empire, and as few books of real value have appeared on the subject in England, we believe we shall do a welcome service to our readers by condensing for them the information contained in a work, recently published in Germany, by a gentleman who resided many years in different parts of the Czar's dominions, and was himself a frequent witness to the scenes he describes.

The steppes, as they are generally called, extend from the borders of Hungary to those of China. They constitute an almost uninterrupted plain, covered in spring and autumn by a luxuriant herbage: in winter by drifting snows, heaped up in some places, and leaving the ground bare in others; and in summer by clouds of dust so excessively fine, that on the calmest day they hang suspended in the air, having the appearance rather of vapor exhaled from the ground, than of earthly particles raised by the agitation of the atmosphere. The slight undulations that occasionally occur assume but rarely the character of hills, but artifical hillocks or tumuli are frequently met with, the origin of which it is impossible to trace through the darkness of bygone ages.

The most singular characteristic, however, of the steppe, is the total absence of trees, on soil remarkable for its richness and the luxurinance of its herbage. For hundreds of miles, a traveler may proceed in a straight line without encountering a bush, unless he happen to be acquainted with a few favored spots known to the Tartar sportsmen, to whom they answer the purpose of game preserves. Countless herds of cattle roam over these noble pasture grounds, on which a calf born at the foot of the Great Chinese Wall, *might* eat his way along till he arrived a well fatted ox on the banks of the Dniester, prepared to figure with advantage at the Odessa market. The poor animals suffer much during the hot and dry summers, when every blade of grass is parched up; but the careful herdsman, who has provided himself with an abundant stock of hay, is able to keep his beasts alive till autumn returns to gladden them with fresh abundance.

Wherever a ridge of hills occurs, of sufficient height to afford protection against the northern blasts that come sweeping in an unbroken course from the shores of the Arctic Ocean, the character of the country is changed. In the Crimea, for instance, though the northern portion partakes of all the rude characteristics of the steppe, the south coast, sheltered by the central mountains, enjoys a climate equal to that of Italy, and allows the vine and the olive to be cultivated with as much success as in Provence. What these mountains are to the southern coast of the Crimea, the Himalayas are to India, which, if divested of *her* mountain fence and laid open to the breath of the North Pole, would soon be converted into a new steppe; the icy blast driven far into the tropics would quickly sweep her jungles and pagodas from the earth, and her fair fields, invaded by the Tartar and his herds, would cease to excite the cupidity of foreign adventurers.

A country constituted by nature as are the Russian steppes is evidently destined rather for a wandering and pastoral people, than for a settled and agricultural population; for in regions where but few prominent objects occur, there is but little to attach man to any particular spot. The Russian government, however, in a spirit of perversity not unusual in governments over which public opinion exercise but little influence, appears to have prescribed to itself the task of converting the nomadic tribes into settled agriculturists, and the steppe itself into one vast corn-field. German and Balagrian colonists have been tempted, by an offer of peculiar privileges, to establish themselves in different parts of the country, in hope *that their* example might gradually wean the native tribes from their roving habits. Where the colonists have been located in the vicinity of *large* towns, the plan has been attended with partial success; but the foreigners soon discover the capabilities of the country, and, in proportion as their means increase, rarely fail to invest their surplus capital in the purchase of flocks and herds, the numerical amount of which constitutes the customary standard by which wealth is estimated throughout the steppe.

We have described the steppes as one vast plain, but it must be borne in mind that this plain is of an elevated character, and terminates at the Black Sea in an abrupt terrace, rising above the water to the height of from 122 to 180 feet. The rivers which intersect this plain, and which in spring are swollen by the rapid thaw of the accumulated snows of winter, cut deep furrows in the surface, and as they frequently change their courses, they occasionally leave dry ravines that break in some measure the uniformity of the country. Little importance would be attached in other parts of the world to the trifling elevations and depressions thus formed; but in the steppe, the slightest variation of surface becomes a landmark of importance, and separate denominations are given by the inhabitants to every peculiarity of shape which the ground is made to assume under the action of water.

The rain-water flows but slowly away from the level surface of the steppe, and often, after a succession of rainy weather, remains for many days upon the ground, the depth of several inches. A portion of this water is absorbed by the soil, but the greater part finds its way slowly and imperceptibly into the rivers, carrying along with it a sufficient quantity of earth to impart a black and turbid look to all the streams that intersect the steppe. Many of the rivers, indeed all but the principal streams, are fed only by the rain and snow, and their beds, consequently, are dry in summer. Each of these ravines terminates in a waterfall, formed originally, no doubt, by the terrace that bounds the sea; but in proportion as the water wore away a channel for itself, the waterfall gradually receded, and in the course of ages, made its way farther and farther into the interior of country. In some instances this gradual retrogression of the waterfall or termination of the river-bed, is sufficiently rapid to be noticed by the inhabitants, who frequently pretend to be able to determine the average number of feet which a ravine works its way backward year by year.

The elevation of the ground being so nearly alike throughout the whole of the steppe, the ravines formed by the action of the rainwater are of nearly equal depth in every part of the country. They are seldom less than a hundred feet deep, and seldom exceed a hundred and fifty. These ravines, *ruipolotsh*, with their lateral branches on each side, as their edges are at all times exceedingly abrupt, offer to the traveler, as well as to the herdsman driving his lowing and bleating charge across the plain, an impassable barrier, to avoid which it is often necessary to go round for many miles. The consequence is, that several roads or tracks are always sure to meet at the head of a ruipolotsh, which thus becomes a spot of some importance throughout the surrounding country. In winter, the ravine is usually filled by the drifting snow, and is then extremely dangerous to any one not well acquainted with the country. Men and cattle are at that season often buried in the snow-drifts, and their fate is ascertained only when the melting of the snows leaves their bodies exposed at the foot of the precipice.

Occasionally, in passing over the steppe, the traveler perceives a slight depression of the surface, as if a mighty giant had laid his hand upon the plain and pressed it down. In such national basins, called *stavoks* by the natives, the rain collects, and though the soil soon absorbs the water, the place generally retains some moisture long after the rest of the country has been parched up by the summer heats. The stavok, it may easily be supposed, is, at such a time, an object of no trifling importance to the herdsman, and is carefully guarded against the intrusion of strangers. A belief prevails upon the steppe, that the stavoks are holes formed by the ancient Mongolians, who dug out the earth to *form their* tumuli, but there *is* no good *reason* to suppose that the depression has originated otherwise than by a slight sinking of the subjacent strata.

The climate of the steppes is one of extremes. In summer the heat is as intense as the cold is severe in winter, the waters of the Black Sea exercising apparently but little influence in tempering the atmosphere. This is accounted for by the abrupt rise of the coast, which arrests the strata of air immediately above the surface of the water, and leaves a free course only to those portions of the air that fly at a higher level. The steppe therefore has, usually, an arctic winter and a tropical summer, and enjoys, only during spring and autumn, short intervals of that moderate temperature to which its geographical position, in the temperate zone, would appear to entitle it.

The snow storms of southern Russia are terrible. The howling blast lifts the snow in vast columns, and fills the whole atmosphere with a thick drift of flying snow; every ravine or hollow is filled by the whirling storm, and roads and landmarks are buried, and cattle and men caught in these storms, are overwhelmed. Even the government couriers are allowed to stop at such times; these usually last about three days, when a lull comes over the face of nature.

The winter of the steppe, in intensity of cold, frequently surpassed the severest seasons known on the shores of the Baltic, and the cutting blasts from the north, sweeping huge masses of snow into the Black Sea often cover it with a thick coating of ice for many leagues. In the winter between 1837 and 1838, the maximum height of the thermometer for four weeks was—10 degrees R., and several times it fell below 30 degrees—(32 degress below the zero of Fahrenheit,) a temperature at which, in St. Petersburg, it is customary to close churches and theatres. The steppe, accordingly, participates in all the severity of a Russian winter, but enjoys few of the advantages which to the Northern Russians go far to redeem the intensity of the cold. In Northern Russia, and even in the Ukraine, the snow remains on the ground during the greater part of the winter, and the sledges quickly wear the surface of the road into a smooth mass of ice, over which the heaviest goods may be transported with a speed and facility surpassed only by a railroad. The Russian, therefore, usually prefers the winter months, not only for traveling, but also for the conveyance of heavy goods from one place to another. To the denizen of the steppe this natural railroad is unknown. The storms that prevail throughout the greater part of the winter keep the snow in a constant state of agitation, and prevent it from 'caking' on the ground. The snow, in consequence, never covers the steppe, but seems to lie scattered over it in patches, according as the wind may have drifted it about.

When the snow melts on the steppe, the spring may be said to commence. This usually takes place in April, but May is sometimes far advanced before the mass of water has had time to find its way into the rivers. During this melting season, the surface of the steppe is converted into a sea of mud, through which neither man nor beast can wade without peculiar danger. Through every ravine rushes a torrent of the dirtiest water that can well be imagined, and about the dwellings of men the accumulated filth of the winter is at once exposed to view, by the disappearance of the snowy mantle that, for a season, had charitably covered a multitude of sins. This operation is frequently interrupted by the return of frost, and the descent of fresh masses of snow, for there is no country, perhaps, where winter makes a harder fight for it, before he allows himself to be beaten out of the field.

For a few days, perhaps, a delightful south wind will diversify the plain with tulips, crocuses and hyacinths; then all at once a rude northeaster will come scouring from the Ural mountains, making the flowers vanish in a trice, and enveloping the whole scene anew in one white shroud; another shift of the wind, and a gale from the northwest will come sweeping along, discharging its heavy clouds, and wreathing the face of the steppe from the Ural to the Carpathians. When at last boisterous old Hyems has really been forced to beat his retreat, a most delightful period of the year succeeds, and the steppe, covered with a beautiful and luxuriant herbage, smiles like a lovely oasis between the parched desolation of the summer and the dreary waste of the winter. The whole earth seems clad in the color of Hope, while the sky assumes that of Truth; and though it is certainly monotonous enough to behold nothing but blue above and green below, yet the recollection of past hardships, and the consciousness of present abundance, makes the season one of rejoicing to the native, and even excites for a while the admiration of the stranger.—The latter, however, is certain, before long, to grow weary of a spring unadorned by a single flowering shrub, unvaried by a single bubbling brook. Not a hill to break the tedium of the landscape, through which a well-mounted rider may gallop for hundreds of leagues, and scarcely meet an object to make him conscious that he has quitted the spot whence he started! From Hungary, he may urge his steed to the borders of Circassia without passing one grove of trees; from the Carpathians to the capital of Mongolia he will not once be gladdened by a sound of a streamlet murmuring over its pebbly bed.—Grass, grass, grass—and nothing but grass! Nor must this grass be supposed to resemble that which embellishes the velvet lawn of an English park. The herbage of the steppe is so coarse, that an English laborer would have to look long before he found a place soft enough for an afternoon nap; and then, the tulips and hyacinths must not be judged of by the beautiful specimens reared by a Dutch florist.

Thunder and lightning are frequent throughout May, but a thunder storm on the steppe is, comparatively, but a poor kind of spectacle, there being neither trees nor rocks for the lightning to show his might upon, nor mountains, by their reverberating echoes, to give increased majesty to the pealing artillery of heaven; but these discharges of atmosphere electricity, though they want the grandeur of the alpine tempest, are dear to the people of the steppe where they are always accompanied either by showers or night dews, so that as long as it thunders there is no lack of fodder for the cattle.

In June, the lightning ceases to play, and the periodical drought announces its approach, the whole month passing frequently away without depositing a particle of moisture on the ground. The consequences of this begin to manifest themselves in July, when the heated soil cracks in every direction, opening its parched lips in supplication for a few drops of water that are not vouchsafed. Heavy and tantalizing clouds, it is true, sweep over the steppe, but instead of showering their blessings on the thirsty land, hurry away to the Carpathian mountains or to the sea.

The sun at this season rises and sets like a globe of fire, but the evaporations raised from the earth by the mid-day heat seldom fail to give a misty appearance to the sky towards noon. The heat, meanwhile, is rendered intolerable by its duration, for any thing like a cool interval never occurs, and shade is not to be thought of in a country where hills and trees are alike unknown.—This season is one of great suffering to all living beings on the steppe. Every trace of vegetation is singed away, except in a few favored spots; the surface of the ground becomes browner and browner, and at last completely black. Men and cattle assume a lean and haggard look, and the wild oxen and horses, so fierce and ungovernable in May, became as tame as lambs in July, and can scarcely crawl in August. Even the tanned skin of the poor *Khakhols* (as the Russians call the inhabitants of the steppe) hangs in wrinkled folds upon their hollow cheeks; their steps are feeble, and every thing about them assumes a dejected and melancholy look. Ponds dry up, wells cease to furnish water, and the beds of lakes are converted into sandy hollows. Water now rises in price, and becomes an article which it is worth a thief's while to steal.

The few springs that continue to yield must have a guard set upon them night and day, or the legitimate owner will scarcely keep enough to slake his own thirst. At this season, thousands of cattle perish on the steppe of thirst, while, as if to mock their sufferings, the horizon seems laden with humid clouds, and the parched soil to the cheated eye in the distance the appearance of crystal lakes and running streams. Such is the faithful picture of a dry summer on the steppe, but, of course, the description does not apply every year. The years 1837 and 1838, for instance, were remarkable for their humidity; but in general, the summer is a period of wretchedness over the whole face of the steppe, and three or four thirst-and-hunger summers frequently succeed each other. The following description of the summer of 1835 is given by an eye-witness:

'The last rain fell early in May, and throughout the summer the whole steppe presented an endless black plain, in which the eye sought in vain for a green spot. Scarcely a breath of wind ever stirred, and the nights were as sultry as the days. However exhausted the frame might be, it was scarcely possible to obtain any refreshing sleep. The moment either man or beast stirred, a thick black cloud was raised from the ground; nor could even a bird rise without filling the atmosphere with a column of what looked more like smoke than dust. Even the plants that were most carefully tended by the hand of man had a sickly look. The wheat, that usually rises to so luxuriant a height, scarcely peeped from its furrows, with its red blades and corniess ears. The hunger and thirst of the poor horses rose to a scarcely credible pitch, and the wretched animals were only alive by driving them into the corn-fields, to crop what had been intended as food for man.

The few wells from which water could be obtained were guarded against intrusion by locks, and chains, and bars; but these were broken without hesitation, and even where sentinels had been set, they were driven away by the famishing multitude. All business was at a standstill, for no merchant could venture to send a caravan from the coast, when it was known that a draught of water could not be had by the traveler without fighting for it.—Many of the *taboons*, (herds of half-wild horses) were broken up altogether, the animals refusing to submit to any control, and dispersing in different directions in search of water. Strangling horses were everywhere to be met with, rushing madly up the ravines, and sniffling the air in search of a few drops of moisture to cool their burning thirst.'

In many respects, the summer on the steppe is more cruel even than in the Sahara of Africa, or in the Llanos of Spanish America, for in neither does the moisture so completely disappear from the soil, and in the African desert, wherever there is water, a little terrestial paradise of date trees and flowering shrubs is certain to be grouped around; but in the steppe, even the rivers flow only between grass, and reeds are the only shrubs by which the banks are fringed, while from the parched and gaping earth not even a cactus or an aloe peeps forth into which a thirsty animal might bite to moisten its lips with the juce.

In August, the dryness of the atmosphere reaches the extreme point: but before the end of the month, the night dews set in, and thunder storms are occasionally followed by rain. The leaden dusty sky becomes clear and blue again, and every thing reminds you that the delights of autumn are approaching. The temperature of September is mild and refreshing, and the detestable black dust of the steppe, kept down by frequent showers, no longer gives to every creature the complection of a negro. A fresh green herbage quickly covers the whole plain, and man and beast in a short time recover their strength and spirits. Could Darius and his troops, when they invaded Scythia, but have endured the thirst of July, they might easily have kept their ground in September, and would have had abundant leisure to prepare their winter quarters.

Delightful the autumn of the steppe unquestionably is, but short and fleeting are its charms, for October is already a gusty Scythian month, marked by cold rains and fogs, and usually closing amid *zamets* and *viugus;* and as to November, that is set down as a winter month even by the most seasoned Russian, and the severest weather of an English January might almost be deemed autumnal, compared to the cold that often prevails at Odessa in November.

One of the first words that a stranger learns in the steppe is *burian*. The constant topic of the farmer's lamentations is *burian;* and the gardener, the herdsman, and herd, join with equal bitterness in hearing maledictions on the detested *burian*. The curiosity of every new arriver is, therefore, soon excited by an expression of such constant occurrence, and after some inqury he finds that every plant or herb on which the cattle will feed is known by the general name of *trava*, and that every woody, wiry stem, which they turn away, is ruthlessly classed in the condemned list of *burian*. Weeds of various kinds are, indeed, of frequent occurrence, owing to the salt and acid nature of the soil; and many, which with us remain modestly concealed by the grass, shoot up into bushes on the steppe, driving the gardner and husbandman to despair, and seldom rendering any other service either to man or beast than that of helping to boil the Russian's national dish of *borsht*. The thistle deserves the first place among the *burian* of the steppe. We have but little notion in England of the height to which a thistle will often grow in Southern Russia, where it not unfrequently assumes the form and size of a tree, overshadowing with its branches the low-sunken dwellings of the Troglodytes of the steppe. In places peculiarly favored by thistle, this description of *burian* will sometimes grow in abundance, as to form a little grove, in which a Cossack on his horse may completely hide himself.

Another description of weed that stands in very bad odor in the steppe, has been aptly denominated *wind witch* by the German colonists. This is a worthless plant, that expends all its vigor in the formation of innumerable thread-like fibres, that shoot out in every direction, till the whole forms a light globular mass. The little sap to be obtained from this plant is bitterer than the wormwood and even in the driest summer no animal will touch the wind-witch. It grows to the height of three feet, and in autumn the root decays and the upper part of the plant becomes completely dry. The huge shuttlecock is then torn from the ground by the first high wind that rises, and is sent dancing, rolling, and hopping over the plain, with a rapidity which the best mounted rider would vainly attempt to emulate. Hundreds of them are sometimes detached from the ground at once on a windy day, and when seen scouring over the plain, may easily be mistaken at a distance for a taboon of wild horses.

The Germans could not have christened the plant more aptly, and in bestowing on it the expressive name by which it is known among them, they no doubt thought of the national legends long associated with the far-famed witch-haunted recesses of the Blocksberg.—The wind dances with which fancy has enlivened that ill-reputed mountain are yearly imitated by the wind-witches on the steppe. Sometimes they may be seen skipping along like a herd of deer; sometimes describing *wide circles* in the grass; sometimes rolling madly over one another, and sometimes rising by hundreds into the air, as though they were just starting to partake in the diabolical festivities of the Blocksberg itself. They adhere to each other sometimes like so *many enormous burrs*, and it is not an uncommon sight to see some twelve or twenty rolled into one mass, and scouring over the plain like a huge giant in his seven-league boots.—Thousands of them are yearly blown into the Black Sea; but with this *salto mortale* ends the witch's career, who loses in the water all the fantastic graces that distinguished her while ashore.

As next in importance among the *burian* of the steppe, the bitter wormwood must not be forgotten. It grows to the height of six feet, and sometimes, in a very dry summer, the cattle will not disdain to eat of it.—All the milk and butter then becomes detestably bitter, and sometimes particles of the dry wormwood adhere to the wheat, in which case the bitter flavor of the plant is certain to be imparted to the bread.

Poisonous herbs are but little known in the European steppes, but in those of Asia there is a great abundance of venomous fungi, which spring up in autumn in such quantities, that at times the plain appears to be covered with them as far as the eye can reach. They are mostly white, and sometimes make the steppe appear in the morning as though there had been a heavy fall of snow during the night. The noon-day heat generally destroys them, but the following night often produces a fresh crop.

We might, of course, extend our list of the botanical peculiarities of the steppe much further, but, upon the whole, the variety of plants that grow upon this vast grazing land of the Tartars is more limited than would be supposed. Botanists, we believe, reckon only five hundred species as native to the steppe, and each species usually grows in large masses. For leagues together the traveler will see nothing but wormwood; and, on leaving so bitter a specimen of vegetation, he will come to a tulip bed, covering many thousands of acres; and at the end of that, to an equal extent of wild mignionette, to which cultivation has not, however, imparted the delicious perfume which recommends it to the horticulturist of more civilized lands. For days together, the droshky will then roll over the same description of coarse grass, ungainly to look upon, but on which the sheep thrive admirably, and which is said to give to the Tartar mutton a delicious flavor that the traveled epicure vainly looks for in the gorgeous restaurants of Paris, or in that joint-stock association of comfort and luxury, a London club.

A singular phenomenom of the steppe manifests itself when man presumptuously attempts to invade it with his plough. The disturbed soil immediately shoots forth every variety of *burian*, against which the farmer must exert unceasing vigilance, or else farewell to the hope of a productive harvest. If the same land is afterwards left fallow, the *burian* takes possession of the field, and riots for a few years in undisturbed luxuriance.—A struggle then goes on for some years longer between the weeds and the grass; but the latter, strange to say, in almost every instance triumphs in the end, and a beautiful pasture-ground succeeds, which goes on improving from year to year, till it attains its highest degree of perfection. A re-action then ensues. A species of coarse grass, known by botanists under the name *stipa pinnata*, takes possession of the ground, which it covers with its hard and woody stems, till the farmer taking advantage of the first dry weather in spring, clears away the whole plantation by setting fire to it.

The burning of the steppe is the only kind of manuring to which it is ever subjected, and is generally executed in spring, in order that a fresh crop of grass may immediately rise, like a young phœnix, from the ashes. This department of Tartar husbandry is usually managed with much caution, and the conflagration rarely extends beyond the limits intended to be assigned to it; but sometimes a fire arises by accident, or in consequence of a malicious act of incendiarism, and then the 'devouring element,' as our newspapers call it, rages far and wide, sweeping along for hundreds of leagues, destroying cattle and corn-fields, and consuming not only single houses, but whole villages, in its way.

These fires are more particularly dangerous in summer, owing to the inflammable condition, at that season, of almost every description of