

grasses." Between the Danube and the Don it consists of savannahs covered by a rich vegetation, supplying with abundant pasturage the numerous flocks of sheep and herds of horses which compose the personal wealth of the Cossack and the Tartar. Wide tracts, however, and especially in Lithuania, are still loaded with natural forests, where the wolf roams unchecked, and the stag finds a secure asylum from the hunter.

[Towards the eastern extremity of Europe the traveller approaches the Steppes \* proper; they begin at the river Dnieper, extends along the shores of the Black Sea, occupy all the country north and east of the Caspian and of Independent Tartary, and stretch far away towards "the rising sun," to sink into the low levels of Siberia.

For hundreds of leagues you traverse a landscape which presents no striking change; a dead dull level of thin but profuse pasture; unrelieved by hill or wood, unfreshened by fountain, spring, or stream. In winter their monotony is even more apparent, for upon the entire area lies a deep shroud of snow, which the winds drive in showers of icy particles through the whistling air, while above the sky is cloudless, and the sun shines with an almost mocking brilliancy.

Not less fatal in its effects than the winter cold, which everywhere withers and smites to death the thin verdure, is the scorching heat of summer. The sun then rises and rests "like a globe of fire," drinking up every drop of moisture from the panting earth, which, for days and days, is unrelieved by any passing shower. The dust fills the air like a heavy mist, and the cattle perish in thousands. The plague of fire sweeps over the entire scene, and converts it into a charred and blackened waste.

It is evident that in such a country only the hardest plants can thrive, but even these are wanting over the dreary region that lies along the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas. It is destitute of fresh water—well and brook and spring are all cursed with saltiness. The very surface of the ground is covered with a saline efflorescence,

\* [The word "steppe" is supposed to be of Tartar origin, and to mean "a level waste destitute of trees."]