

R U S S I A  
ON  
T H E   B L A C K   S E A  
AND  
S E A   O F   A Z O F :

BEING  
A NARRATIVE OF TRAVELS IN THE CRIMEA  
AND BORDERING PROVINCES;

WITH  
NOTICES OF THE NAVAL, MILITARY, AND COMMERCIAL  
RESOURCES OF THOSE COUNTRIES.

By H. D. SEYMOUR, M.P.

WITH MAP, &c.

L O N D O N :  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.  
1855.

and features and manners, and retain the distinctive stamp of their origin.

Game abounds on the Steppes. The large and small bustard are seen in flocks in the districts to the north of Crimea. The "streppet," of a larger size and lighter hue than the grouse, the only English bird to which it can be compared, partridges, quails, hares, snipe, and woodcocks, are to be met with in great numbers, and are remarkable for their fine flavour. Wolves are scarce, and are never seen in packs as in Central and Northern Russia.

"Innumerable inhabitants of a smaller race people these immense plains. Among these is the *suroke*, or marmot of the Alps, which is seen in all parts of the Steppes, sitting erect near its burrow, and on the slightest alarm whistling very loud, and observing all around. It makes such extensive subterraneous chambers, that the ground is perforated in all directions, and the land destroyed, wherever the animal is found. The peasants universally give them the name of 'Wastie.'

"The *biroke* is a grey animal, something like a wolf, very ferocious, and daring enough to attack a man. The Cossack peasants, armed with their lances, sally forth and chase it over their plains.

"The most numerous of all the animals of the Steppes are the *suslics*,<sup>k</sup> which absolutely swarm in all the Steppes. They make a whistling noise like the *suroke*, but are much smaller, not being larger than a small weasel. They construct their habitations under ground with incredible quickness, excavating first of all a small cylindrical hole or well perpendicularly to the depth of three feet; thence, like a correct miner, shooting out levels, although rather in an ascending direction, to prevent being incommoded by water. At the extremity of his little gallery the *suslic* forms a very spacious cham-

<sup>k</sup> *Mus citillus* of Buffon.

ber, to which, as to a granary, he brings every morning and evening all he can collect of favourite herbage, of corn, if it can be found, and roots, and other food. Nothing is more amusing than to observe the habits of this little animal. If any one approaches, it is seen sitting at the entrance of its little dwelling, erect upon its hind-feet, like the **suroke**, carefully watching all that is going on around it. Nothing annoys it so much as water; and if some be poured into its hole, it comes out and is easily caught.”<sup>m</sup>

Such is a brief account of the Steppes which occupy a considerable portion of the Russian empire, and as they likewise form nearly two-thirds of the whole Crimea, and approach within a short distance of Sevastopol in the direction of Inkerman, this description in the main features will also apply to that peninsula.

<sup>m</sup> See Clarke's Travels, part i. ch. 12. Recently rewards have been offered for the destruction of the suslics on

account of the great injury they do to the crops and fields. They make the steppe very dangerous for riding.