

CIRCASSIA.

SPEECH

OF

STEWART E. ROLLAND, ESQ.,

AT A PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT THE

CORN EXCHANGE, PRESTON, OCTOBER 1, 1862,

TO RECEIVE THE

DEPUTIES FROM CIRCASSIA.

LONDON:

HARDWICKE, 192, PICCADILLY.

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Circassia, Russia, and England.

THE persistent efforts of Russia to subjugate the Circassian nation have led to the presentation of the following Memorial to her Majesty:—

TO THE QUEEN FROM THE CIRCASSIAN DEPUTIES.

August 26, 1862.

As your Majesty is aware, since the world existed, no nation has attempted to conquer our country. Russia only some time ago, under the pretence that she got our country by treaty from the Ottoman Government, invaded us with an overwhelming force, and began against us a war of extermination, which she has waged for forty years, and which she is still waging, at the cost of many thousand human lives.

The Ottoman Government, never having possessed our country, had no right whatever to give us over to the Russians. There is no other affinity between us and the Ottomans than the similarity of creed and faith which makes us look upon the Sultan as the successor of our Prophet.

While we were quietly dwelling in our homes, which we inherited from our ancestors, and anxious to keep the integrity of our territory, Russia overstepped our boundaries and actually tried to subdue our country. This statement needs no proof, as this system of encroachment has been Russia's policy towards many other nations weaker than herself. During the Crimean war we were accused by the Allied Powers of want of sincerity, not having participated with them against our common foe. This is true, but it was not the fault of our nation, as it proceeded from want of union and energy between our leaders.

Russia, in order to deceive the world, conceals the very object of her continual warfare against us and ours. She diffuses the report amongst the civilised world that she is fighting the Circassians simply because they are a savage, uneducated, and unruly people; that, if left alone, would destroy the property belonging to her subjects in our immediate neighbourhood.

It is now to show that their allegations are untrue, and to implore your Majesty's protection, that we come to this country. About two years ago, desiring to enter into the family of constituted nations, the Circassians and

Abasians elected a kind of Parliament, which is now ruling our joint nation, numbering about a million souls.

In consequence of this arrangement, not only is there a constituted Government in our country, but all the surrounding nations, as well as those who come to us for trading purposes, are not submitted to any kind of vexation.

Should any dishonest person attempt any wrong, the injured receives redress and restitution of property, and the malefactor is severely and lawfully punished; if the property is lost, in that case compensation is given from the public money.

To increase the security as well as the well-being of the inhabitants, we lately framed many well-calculated laws, which are put into execution by the constituted authorities in each province.

Russia being invidious of all the reforms we introduced into our country, made a great effort to crush our improvements. She invaded us, as before stated, with an overwhelming force, destroyed some of our townships, burnt our dwellings and temples, confiscated all our goods, butchered our men, and captured our women and children; in short, she began that work of destruction against us, to enumerate the atrocity of which would baffle description.

Our elected chiefs, foreseeing the dreadful consequences of this onset, and the misery which was threatening both the invader and invaded, adopted well-calculated means to prevent bloodshed among both parties; they selected some plenipotentiaries whom they sent to Tiflis to come to an understanding with Russia. Our claims consisted as follows:—

“This territory is ours; we have inherited it from our ancestors, and to keep it in our power is the reason why we have been so long at enmity with each other. We have now adopted a new constitution, and our intention is to govern our territory with strict justice and humanity, without injuring any one. A people that are endowed with such good feelings ought to inspire sympathy to a great Power like yourself; it is not becoming, therefore, to its honour to destroy such an innocent neighbour. You have shown, on many occasions, sympathies towards people who claimed their independence; why should you not now show the same towards us? We are exerting our utmost in order to rule our country according to justice, and the new laws which we have framed; we will treat with justice our fellow-citizens, and respect the lives and property of those foreigners who come among us. Is it, then, the duty of a great Power like you to destroy us and our small nation, or to help us to carry out our reforms? We are resolved to submit our case to all the great Powers; you are one of them, and we place our cause in its true light before you. Do us justice, and do not destroy our property and temples; do not shed our blood when you have had no provocation. It is a stigma on all great Powers to destroy human life when there is no necessity; and it is at variance with everything that is just and right to capture helpless women and children in the prosecution of the unjust war you have been carrying on against us for a very long time. You have been deluding the world that we are a savage tribe, and under this pretence you have been waging war against us; we are human beings like yourselves. Pray do not shed our blood, as we are resolved to defend our country to the last.”

The above memorial has been presented, not only to the Governor of Tiflis, but to the Emperor himself, when he came there. Still we had no justice, and the Russian sword has remained unsheathed against us. In fact, their tyranny was not confined to capturing our cattle, burning our dwellings, and temples, and other unheard-of atrocities, but in order to

starve us on the mountains they destroyed all our growing crops in the plain, and captured our land. In fact, they have treated us in an unbearable and barbarous manner, unprecedented in the annals of war. Driven to despair, we resolved to make a last firm stand against our enemies, with all the energy we possessed, and the war was carried on with fresh vigour, eight months ago, causing the sacrifice of twenty-five thousand human lives, on both sides, and an immense destruction of property. While we are on one side repelling our enemies, and on the other trying to improve the government of our country, Russia, by brute force, is trying to conquer us; on the neutral Black Sea she is capturing, whenever she can, every ship carrying any of our countrymen, so that we have no home on land, no means of travelling or refuge by sea. Still we would rather die than submit to the yoke of Russia. If we were to emigrate, abandoning our homes, for ages protected by our forefathers, who shed their blood for them, our poverty would prove a great obstacle to our doing so; in fact, how could we take away our own wives and children, and the widows, orphans, and helpless relations of those slain in this war? Such an undertaking would decimate the emigrants, and blot out for ever our Circassian name from the face of the earth. In presence of these insurmountable difficulties, we have resolved unanimously to submit our case to every great Power, with an intimate conviction that they would highly disapprove of the conduct of our foe, and stigmatise it as it deserves. Our eyes are most particularly turned towards your Most Gracious Majesty, as well as the people of your country, whose freedom, love of justice, and sympathy for the oppressed are known even in our unhappy land. We implore, therefore, your protection, with a conviction that you will help us in our trial. To attain this desirable object, we have been sent here on behalf of the Circassian and Abasian communities, in order to lay most humbly our case before your powerful throne, that you may know our sad condition, and interfere to prevent the utter extermination of a nation numbering a million of souls,* and who are the same flesh and blood as the rest of the world. This is the case we have to submit to your Most Gracious Majesty on behalf of the Circassian and Abasian people, and they have no doubt your powerful assistance will enable them to attain the object of their desires, namely, to protect their name, homes, and honour, and to rule their country peaceably and lawfully.

HADJI HAYDER HASSAN.
KUSTAN OGLI ISMAEL.

To this memorial the following answer was returned:—

Foreign Office, Sept. 12, 1862.

GENTLEMEN,—I am directed by Earl Russell to acknowledge the receipt of the Petition which you addressed to the Queen on the 26th ult., complaining of the conduct of Russia in regard to Circassia, and I am to acquaint you that her Majesty's Government cannot interfere in the matter therein referred to.

I am, Gentlemen, your most obedient humble servant,

E. HAMMOND,

Hadji Hayder Hassan Effendi,
Kustan Ogli Ismael Effendi.

On Wednesday evening, October 1st, 1862, a public meeting was held in the assembly-room of the Corn Exchange, Preston;

* This alludes only to the Circassians and Abasians. There are the Lesghians and other cognate tribes, making altogether four millions.

Lancashire, for the purpose of receiving the two deputies above mentioned, and to hear the grounds on which they sought to enlist the sympathy and assistance of Great Britain against the subjugation of the Caucasus by Russia. The chiefs wore their national costume, and, on entering the room, they were received with much applause by the audience, which amounted to between fourteen hundred and fifteen hundred persons. The chiefs were attended by an interpreter, and accompanied by Stewart E. Rolland, Esq., of the Army and Navy Club, London, who was to address the meeting on their behalf.

Mr. Councillor I. J. MYRES, who occupied the chair, in opening the proceedings, said:—I have been requested to take the chair this evening, and I do so with pleasure. I hope I shall at all times be ready to hold out the right hand of fellowship to the oppressed. (Applause.) I believe we are assembled here to-night to hear a tale of woe, and I trust that you will give a patient hearing to the gentlemen who will address you. I will not, in the onset, make any remarks, but I will leave the parties to tell their own tale, and, after that tale is told, I will leave you to exercise your own judgment as to the expression of feeling you are disposed to give. This meeting has been called together to receive the two Circassian Chiefs who have been sent to England on a mission by the Circassian people. You have, I dare say, nearly all seen the placard convening the meeting, and I will, therefore, introduce to you the Gentlemen I refer to. I must state, however, in the first instance, that as the two Chiefs do not speak English, they have brought with them an interpreter, who will, in the English language, render the sentiments expressed by the Chiefs to this Gentleman, Mr. Stewart Rolland, and he will then state to the meeting the sentiments enunciated by the Chiefs. That may, perhaps, appear to some of you a rather round-about mode of procedure, but there is no other course that we can adopt for ascertaining the sentiments of the Chiefs. I will not detain you at present by further remarks, but I will at once call upon Mr. Rolland to introduce to you the subject on which we are met together. (Applause.)

Mr. ROLLAND, who was received with great cheering, said:—Mr. Chairman, and Men and Women of Preston,—It is no rhetorical clap-trap when I say that never, in the whole course of my life, have I felt so deeply oppressed as I do at this moment. Presently it will be for me to explain why, and why every man and woman here present should feel as deeply impressed as I do myself. (Hear.) The course of the evening's proceedings has already been sketched out by your worthy Chairman. It will be as follows: it will be necessary that you should hear, word for word, as near as

possible, the case that has led these two heroic men sitting on my left hand to be here to-night, and it will then be for me somewhat to amplify and to explain the subject, and for you to draw what conclusions and deductions you please, and resolve to take no action, or else to determine to take some action, and, if some action, of what nature, following on what you have heard. First, it is contemplated that you should hear from the lips of the Chiefs themselves, to be translated to you subsequently by those of others, why they are here to-night, what standing they are on, why they claim your sympathy, and what they think of England. Before, however, calling upon the Chiefs to do so, it may be desirable very briefly to say—what is probably passing in the minds of every one of you—that here before you this night are men representing a nation of heroes. Ransacking history, you have read of those deeds which have called forth our enthusiasm and caused the blood to bound as we read of the heroes of Greece and Rome, but here are the representatives of those who have rivalled those deeds—men dying for their country, mothers sending out their sons to certain death, men dying in defence of their hearths and homes. Here is enough to kindle our enthusiasm; here are the witnesses before you; here are the two living witnesses of these things come to tell you of their despair and their determination. (Applause.) Let me detain you only a few minutes while I refer to Circassia. That independent corner of the Caucasus has now been nigh upon fifty or sixty years battling step by step, hearth by hearth, household by household, for very life, for very liberty, its people not able to move one inch upon their own mountains without risk of Russian followers, not able to bathe in their own waters without risk of capture and of slavery, and a fate far worse than certain death; village by village burned down, flock after flock destroyed on the mountains, a thick cloud, as it were, rolling against them; and yet these men, less than a quarter of the population of Scotland, and with a territory smaller than Scotland, have, unassisted by the rest of the world, stood alone unconquered and unabashed for fifty years. (Applause.) Let me, then, before entering upon the history of this struggle, ask the interpreter to take his place by their side, and question the chiefs why they are here, and from what they are suffering.

The Interpreter having gathered the sentiments of the Chiefs, translated the same.

MR. ROLLAND then continued:—What I am desired to convey to you is this: That they felt as near despair as brave men can feel; or, to use the words absolutely employed by them, they were in the fire night and day; that feeling this fire surrounding them

more and more every night and every day, they looked for an escape; that they counted upon their hands what were the nations in the world; that they had heard of the English nation, and had been told that the English nation was a great nation, a nation that protected the distressed; therefore their wives and their children, their little ones and their old men, said to them, one and all, with groans and tears, "You must go to that nation and get us help." And they said, "We will go, and we will tell that nation that if they don't give us help we shall become the slaves of Russia—we can't help ourselves—or we shall be destroyed by Russia. We grown men will not become slaves, but those who come after us may become slaves, and then these slaves will be an army in the hands of Russia to attack that great English nation." That is the substance of the speech, as near as possible. (Applause.)

The Circassian Chiefs again addressed the Interpreter.

Mr. ROLLAND:—They desire me to tell you that for forty years, of every hour of the day and of the night, not one hour has passed without seeing a house or a village of theirs in flames; their fathers, brothers, sons, mothers, and old men, carried away as slaves; or seeing some other horrors perpetrated, of which you may read in history, but of which you have here living witnesses to tell you. They say further, that unless you help them they must go down; that they must be burnt and destroyed; that there is no nation they look to, to help them, but you—that is, the people of England; and that if they are not so helped, and if they are so destroyed, at the last day they will bear witness against you at the judgment-seat of God, and the sin shall lie at your door. (Applause.) They conclude by saying that all the world knows how few they are and how brave they are; that the time has now come when the world must see them perish—in other words, must consent to their perishing—or some one must stand forward to help them. They wish that I should continue to you a statement on their behalf. I need not tell you that these men are not versed in political agitation or in diplomatic arrangements. They are men who know how to fight the foe, sword in hand, but they are not used to public meetings, resolutions, and the like of that. (Loud cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN:—Is it not desirable that we should call on the gentleman who has so ably introduced the subject, to give us such particulars as it is in his power to give in reference to the subject on which we are assembled together? Those in favour of that course will please to signify the same by a show of hands. The whole assembly appeared to respond to the call.)

Mr. ROLLAND continued:—It is a very strange thing for me to

feel myself standing in this hall of Preston addressing so very large an audience to-night; but the last time I stood here it was with somewhat of an analogous feeling; yet I had not the same sense of oppression nor the same cause for it that I feel now. I dare say many of you now present were also present in this room when Count Zamoyski addressed you on the condition of Poland. Why, surely that was an event for Poland. Has she not been for years upon years the watchword for all sorts of resolutions? Has she not been talked about, voted for, and cheered to the very echo? And, on the night to which I allude, a grander reception was given to Poland than was ever given before, for there stood before you, the people of Preston, one of Poland's heroes, one of the noblest and bravest of the Poles that ever lived—a man who never bowed the knee or head to Russia, who told the tale of the sufferings of his own country, showed what Poland had been, and the shortcomings of England to her. (Applause.) That was no light matter; it was as the resurrection of a corpse, as a ghost rising from the grave to haunt you. The meeting of that night was productive of results—results startling beyond all comparison when one considers what might have been expected, for the unanimous feeling of that meeting was embodied in a resolution of sympathy; and that resolution was conveyed to Count Zamoyski's compatriots at Warsaw, and they were induced and encouraged by that same token of sympathy from the town of Preston to persist in their passive, and, so to speak, silent, and unaggressive resistance to Russia yet a while longer; in a word, patience was sent to the oppressed Poles at Warsaw. (Hear.) But if such was the case that night, what have you here before you to-night? Then you had before you a distinguished man—a man whose name fills men's mouths. Count Zamoyski is of royal blood, was a general in the British service, having served in the Crimea as a general officer, to whose visits Lord Palmerston's gates and Lord Derby's gates are open—(applause)—a man who dined with Louis Napoleon, and who will be the prime minister of Poland should she ever be resuscitated. He came to speak of dead men, of a perished nation—a nation past and perished by the fault of England. (Hear, hear.) But here to-night you have two men before you whose lives have not passed like those of the Poles, who traverse sea and land, imploring with sighs and tears help for their country; not men having access to the great, not men whose names fill newspapers, but men who know nothing but the rifle and the sword, whose lives have been passed on their humble hearth-stones, defending at the point of the sword their country with their blood, and with their few hundreds, their few thousands, contending against the whole might of the Muscovite Empire for the possession of their

hills and fertile valleys—men who can now simply say, “We are surrounded by fire; come and help us.” (Cheers.) Are you not moved and excited by the sight of two such men as these? But listen to the story of the wrongs of these men and of their nation. I will tell it briefly, for if I were to go through it chapter by chapter and verse by verse, it would occupy me not one night, but seven nights. Probably some of you may say, what can be done in the matter? I will show you how you have not prevented aggression upon them. Most of you know what Circassia comprises, I dare say. I fear that this little map [showing one] does not explain much to those who do not know. If the people of England are not making advances in everything, they are, at all events, making advances in geographical knowledge. Very few Englishmen heard anything of the Crimea before fifty thousand Englishmen died there, and we have a different knowledge of India to what we possessed before the horrors of the Indian revolt. Your Ministers are giving you at least geographical knowledge by their acts. This little patch that you see on the map represents the Black Sea. Look at the map, and you see a wall commanding the passage between the East and the West—that is, a wall between those vast lines of nations, including Thibet, Tartary, India, Persia, and Turkey, which extend from the great wall of China to the Black Sea; on the other side, westerly, you have all the ports of the Mediterranean, and all nations on the shores of that sea having communication through the Bosphorus to the eastern shores of the Euxine. The Caucasus is the gate of that wall. These mountaineers being independent, the whole trade of the Eastern world may find its way to the Circassian harbours, where your ships may meet the Eastern traders, and exchange our manufactures for their productions and their gold to an amount perfectly unlimited. By so doing the prosperity of the English workman and the good-will of the Oriental, the tranquillity of India and the peace of the world, are alike ensured. In a word, you have free trade in its truest and most unrestricted sense.

On the other hand, that gate in the possession of the Muscovite, not alone is that trade cut off from you, but these tribes are turned to hatred, in preparation for the day when the tide of Eastern invasion under Russian guidance shall be simultaneously turned upon India and upon Europe. You recognise, then, a common interest between these Chiefs and yourselves. (Yes.) That little wall along the sea-coast shut off the Black Sea, which was connected with the Mediterranean by the straits of the Bosphorus—that little wall cut off the communication between the argosies of Europe and the nations of the East: and that wall has been the barrier that protected the West from the wild hordes of

Tamerlane, and also the East from the incursions of the Western nations. Fifty or sixty years ago the country to which my friends on my left belong was inhabited by a race of mountaineers, a race somewhat analogous to what we read in Sir Walter Scott of the clans of the Scottish Highlands of three hundred years ago; by bold, hardy, simple-minded men, living on the flesh and the milk of their flocks and herds, at the same time brave and unaggressive, not descending into other countries, and not attacked by others—having their feuds amongst themselves but molesting nobody else. Such had been their history from time immemorial. Whoever heard of any one desiring or daring to invade Circassia; who then ever coveted their mountains? But thirty or forty years ago—and I take the Treaty of Vienna for my base or starting-point—all this was changed, and I think I may do well to read to you a short passage from a remarkable document, such as those which Count Zamoyski in his address told you of, a despatch to the Grand Duke Constantine, which had been seized at Warsaw, in which is laid down what Russia means to do to the whole world, and here is a little extract from a Memoir drawn up by the Emperor Nicholas for the instruction of the present Emperor Alexander. This is the passage relating to Circassia:—

“Our inheritance is the East, and we must not suffer our activity in that quarter to relax for a single moment. Our aim is and remains Constantinople, which is destined in our hands to become the centre of the world and the eternal door to Asia. For a long time England has had the supremacy of the ocean, but the same position which we have attained on land will be occupied by our maritime power. The possession of Constantinople, the Dardanelles, the whole littoral of the Black Sea are indispensable to us. This sea is to become one great Russian port and cruising ground for our fleets. The Emperor Alexander claimed Constantinople and the Dardanelles when Napoleon proposed the partition of Turkey to him. At a later period, at the Congress of Vienna, he himself made a like proposal to the French Cabinet. The great Catherine foretold in prophetic spirit that the execution of the grand scheme would be reserved for her second grandson. Our hero Emperor Nicolai has taken the task upon himself. Everything of a higher order on which Mussulman life rested has disappeared, old forms and habits are upset, all higher education and activity are wanting; the complete dissolution is near at hand. Europe will try to oppose our taking possession of Turkey; our conquest advances step by step without any considerable sacrifice on our part; it extends already to the vicinity of Stamboul. Our apparent moderation restrains even our enemies from taking up arms. Things, too, are not quite ripe yet. The erection of forts and arming of all important spots on the Black Sea is an indispensable preliminary. We have to continue our struggles with the tribes of the Caucasus. It is sometimes troublesome, but it exercises our armies and covers our preparations in the Black Sea. Our moderation in the Treaty of Adrianople deprived England itself of every pretext for interference, yet we obtained everything that we wanted. By fostering Egypt we continued

afterwards to weaken Turkey. Events of the utmost importance to the splendour of our arms are not far distant. We keep the Divan in good disposition towards, and at the same time in dependence upon us. It is most essential to confirm the Sultan in his pseudo reforms, and to push him on in the same way, but it will be expedient to throw obstacles in the way of any real improvement for the military regeneration ; of equal importance is it that the Porte should never get clear of financial embarrassment."

This is the explanation why Russia had persistently aimed to conquer and to subjugate Circassia. You understand these mountains [the Caucasus] are the key to the Eastern world. No conqueror has tried to gain that key heretofore. Russia has made that attempt, and is making it; and here are two men in Preston, the only two men in Europe, attempting to resist it. (Applause.) But how did Russia, then, in the first instance, seek to get possession of the Caucasus? There are some little passages even in my own memory respecting it. I am not a very old man, but I recollect thirty years ago things were not done secretly and unknown as they are done now. Thirty years ago I recollect the agitation, and the talk then was about the Polish question. In those days questions were asked of ministers and answers were expected. In these days men talk enough about matters; there are meetings got up, questions are proposed to be asked of the ministry, and people are reminded that ministers can do nothing in the matter, and there is an end of the affair. Thirty-six years ago matters were different, and the claims put forward by Russia, the right of possession to the whole shore of the Black Sea, were not unquestioned, were not suffered to pass without liability of being questioned. I will not fatigue you. I have here a recapitulation of the whole of this political question, of the whole of the Treaties that took place in the matter, but it would take me far too long to read the whole of the documents, and exhaust your patience. And after all, this is not the way it ought to be dealt with, just by talking about the matter one evening, and hearing one man talk of it for a single evening; but such of you as really wish to express your sympathy with Circassia should investigate the whole subject thoroughly at your leisure. Russia founds her claims upon Circassia and the coasts of the Black Sea on a treaty with Turkey, ceding, as is alleged, the Caucasus. The real position of the matter, however, is this:—Turkey never had any rights over these independent mountaineers; Turkey never did make over these mountaineers. Therefore when Russia declares that Turkey ceded to her certain rights over these mountaineers, she refers to a document which, for such a purpose, is mere waste-paper (hear, hear), because the right, on the part of Turkey, never existed. If a merchant, or any other person, were to go to

his lawyer, and tell him to convey a house which did not belong to the merchant to another person, the lawyer would say that such a document would be mere waste-paper, because the man would have no title. Turkey never agreed or intended to convey to Russia rights over Circassia which she never exercised. Circassia was never conquered, or attempted to be conquered, by anybody, and when the tide of the Ottomans swept over the Byzantine territory, not a single Turk was ever seen on their mountains except as their guests. I will ask the interpreter to inquire of the Chiefs whether that is not so.

The Interpreter put the question.

It is so. The Chiefs say, "We dwelt on our hills a thousand years before ever an Osmanli saw the walls of Stamboul." How then, could Turkey surrender rights over a country which she never possessed? And yet Russia, foe to both her and Circassia claims Circassia, because she says Turkey gave it to her, but, as I have just stated, Turkey could not give it. That, I think, disposes of the absurdity that the claim of Russia to the Caucasus is based upon a treaty with Turkey. It is very true that England, who calls herself the invariable supporter of Turkey, felt it to be her highest duty, two years before Russia claimed these forged rights, to attack Turkey and destroy her fleet at Navarino. It was then said that Circassia had been conveyed to Russia by Turkey. However that might be, it was not a palpable possession; it was something like many of the Irish estates just before the passing of the Encumbered Estates Act, that is to say, a *quasi* claim against the parties in possession, but woe to the man who undertook to go round and collect the rents! Thirty-five years ago a Russian soldier would have as soon dared to go beyond the limits of his own Empire as the receiver of the rents of the Irish estates would have dared to collect those rents except he were accompanied by fifty mounted policemen. Let me tell you how the present state of things came to pass. Circassia was always a very sore subject to Russia, even when she got her pretended title to it. The case is a very analogous one to the forgery of Mr. Roupell.

Mr. Rolland then referred to the *modus operandi* by which Roupell, by means of forged documents, disposed of the property of his relatives. He then went on as follows:—

But speaking of these forgeries brings me to the time when Russia attempted to take possession of Circassia. That was not until the end of 1829. We know, furthermore, by these wonderful Russian despatches seized, as Count Zamoyiski told you, at Warsaw, that Russian diplomatists tried England on various points. These things were kept from the people, and never found their way into the newspapers; the mere seizure of the despatches

brought them out. The Russians continued their advance, and England knew nothing of it. And so step by step Russia went on, and then, having sufficiently crushed the Polish insurrection and constrained the removal of their forces, the army of Russia was advanced to the plains of the Caucasus. The fighting went on. The efforts of the Circassian race rose with the emergency. They united in one body, and began to make head against their invaders. And yet, then, the country of the Circassians had scarcely been explored by Europeans beyond the shores of the Black Sea. The Turks had heard of it, but Circassia remained uncontaminated by them. They believe that Circassia has been infamously treated; they look upon the Circassians as their elder brothers, nay, even as their fathers, whom they are bound to defend and respect; for, proud as the Turks are, in the presence of a Circassian they treat him as their superior. Long ago Lord Chatham, the great and master mind of the British Parliament, had said, on the occasion of an aggression of the Empress Catherine on some part of Turkey, "The man who does not recognise the vast importance to the British empire of one Turkish village, with that man I will not condescend to argue." So said Lord Chatham a hundred years ago. But I could add an amendment for Turkey, and say that the man who does not recognise the bulwark of Circassia, with that man I cannot argue. We come now to 1834. Turkey, rotten and unsound under certain administrative reforms, began to revive under the new remodelled system of Mahmoud. Russia, having long ago quelled the Polish insurrection, had been able to concentrate her forces on the hills and in the valleys of the Caucasus, and Circassia, as I have already detailed to you, battling with Russia, though unassisted by the rest of the world. Now at that time William the Fourth reigned, and he was disgusted with the factions of England. He had been insulted by the Reform party, who had in an especial degree insulted his wife, Queen Adelaide. He had been betrayed by the Duke of Wellington and the Tory party, and he might well say of both parties, "A plague on both your houses." Especially the King was disgusted with both factions for the subordination they had given to the Cabinet of St. Petersburg. The King consulted with Sir Herbert Taylor, and learned that he had heard of an extraordinary young Englishman who had made his way into the East, and had found out a new country there—Circassia. "Discovered Circassia," said the King; "what is the meaning of that?" "One David Urquhart," said Sir Herbert, "who is the first European that has trod the Caucasus. He has found out an arm to resist Russia. He has found out that Russia has designs on this people and the rest of the world; that she is

determined to conquer. He has found out these mountaineers; that they have simple hearts, that they are children in diplomacy, and they have ports ready for the commerce of this nation." On the occasion of Mr. Urquhart's visit to Circassia, (one of the Chiefs present could recollect that visit) the people came about him, and said to him that he had told them many things that could save them, told them how to resist their enemy; that they must open their ports to the commerce of other nations, and by that means, and by keeping their hand on their sword, they would force back Russia. This young man, having staid in Circassia until he had seen these sentiments fasten upon the minds of the mountaineers, departed to England. William the Fourth said, "I see all this. I see no right there is in the Treaty made by Russia to bar my country's ships from commerce with these shores of the Black Sea. Do you fit out a vessel; the matter is arranged." A vessel, the *Vixen*, is fitted out by a Mr. Bell, and that vessel sails to Constantinople, and from Constantinople for Circassia, with a freight of salt. The vessel, at Constantinople, is visited by Lord Ponsonby, our ambassador there, and she set sail under the happiest auspices. But in the mean time, while the vessel is putting forth from the Bosphorus, there was, meanwhile, coming up a storm in the Black Sea, for no vessel that ever yet sailed was freighted with such results to the world as that same craft, the *Vixen*, for she carried with her, as it were, the honour of England and the safety of the rest of the world. She arrived at the port of her destination. We pride ourselves on the phrase that "Britons never shall be slaves," but on that occasion the words were not verified. They were shown, at all events, not to be true, for a Russian cruiser fired a shot across the *Vixen's* bows, and afterwards carried her into Russia, and she is now a member of the Russian fleet. (Shame, shame.) It is very right and proper for every one of us to have the honour of his country at heart, and how gratifying it must be to us to meet, new christened, in the list of the Russian fleet, with the schooner *Vixen*, for she was confiscated. (Shame.) Why, you may say to me, "These statements are monstrous." I confess that if I heard them for the first time at a public meeting, I should say, "This fellow who has come here to tell us such a tale is a mountebank, who is insulting us." But do you doubt the statement? I have a report of a certain debate in the House of Commons in 1848. Is it your pleasure that I should read the full passage to corroborate what I say? (Loud cries of "Yes, yes.") The debate was at the period of March, 1848, on the occasion of a motion by Mr. Anstey for the production of certain papers relating to past transactions of the

foreign policy of Lord Palmerston. This is a part of the remarks he made:—

“At the time that Mr. Urquhart was engaged in the prosecution of this treaty the King was engaged with Sir Herbert Taylor in devising means, with the consent of the noble Lord (Palmerston), for the purpose of re-opening the entire question of the treaty of Adrianople. I come to the case of Circassia, and I speak in the presence of the noble Lord. I say, then, that Mr. Bell, with the free knowledge of the noble Lord and with his sanction—certainly without any expression of disapproval—after full notice, after receiving from the noble Lord a statement that no blockade had as yet been notified by Russia on the coast of Circassia, and that, therefore, by proceeding to the coast of Circassia there was no danger of confiscation under the international law of blockade—under all these circumstances, and after making all these applications to the noble Lord, Mr. Bell, in compliance with the wishes of his sovereign, equipped the *Vixen* at his own expense for a commercial voyage to the Circassian coast. For the same purpose he put on board of her a cargo of salt, an article which is there in great demand, and which had been, and which it was thought would become again, a principal object of commerce between England and Circassia. The *Vixen*, with Mr. Bell on board, left the English coast and proceeded on her voyage to Constantinople and Circassia. On arriving at Constantinople Mr. Bell put himself in communication with Lord Ponsonby, whose favourable judgment of the claims of Circassia and of the rights of Great Britain in Circassia the House has already heard stated by himself in the letter I just now read. Lord Ponsonby approved of the voyage, and only cautioned him to take care not to violate any blockade. He was right; because whether Russia was or was not entitled to the territory of Circassia, still if she kept up a sufficient blockade on any part of the coast, then, under the law of nations, confiscation would properly take place against any vessel breaking it. Mr. Bell being already prepared to adopt this course, most cheerfully undertook to do so. Lord Ponsonby and every member of the British Legation publicly expressed their approval of this procedure, and went down to the waterside in a body, and there witnessed the departure of the *Vixen* from Constantinople to the coast of Circassia. Arrived on the coast, Mr. Bell took her into the harbour not in the occupation of Russia. There was no Russian force there nor in the neighbourhood; there was nothing whatever to give Russia occupation, or even the name of it; there were no Russian ships in sight, or in the offing. Nothing of the kind had been seen until a Russian vessel of war came into the harbour thirty-six hours after the *Vixen* had cast anchor, and at a moment when the owner and some of the officers were on the shore engaged in fixing the dues demanded by the Circassian authorities, and payable on the value of the goods. It was thirty-six hours after the *Vixen* arrived, and while her people were so engaged that the vessel entered this port, coming not coastwise but from the open sea. She sent a boat, and effectively took possession of the *Vixen*. I beg the House to observe that this seizure was grounded by the captors themselves upon a pretext, as the Russian admiral, in a despatch which I have here, states, of her having violated not the quarantine laws, nor yet the customs laws of Russia, but the international law of blockade. The despatch states that she was captured as having broken the blockade, which, he said, was an efficient blockade, and kept up by the Russians on that coast. This false pretext of the Russian admiral, however, proved only exceedingly insufficient to justify the measures of the Russian Cabinet—measures taken, as the details prove, in concert with the noble Lord, so as

to enable the Russian Government to obtain both the confiscation itself and the recognition of that confiscation by the English Government, and thereby at once the formal acknowledgment of the treaty of Adrianople, an entire extinction of Circassian independence, so far as that independence rested upon the hope of support from England. Therefore, in the despatch which came from St. Petersburg announcing to you the confiscation of the ship had followed the seizure, the confiscation was grounded no longer upon the inapplicable laws of blockade, but upon certain municipal regulations of Russia, which were there stated to have been made in 1831 and 1832 by the Russian authority for the purpose of establishing quarantine and custom-houses on the coast of Circassia. Mr. Bell urged a remonstrance: the noble Lord was obliged to put himself in communication with the several parties, but he did so in such a manner as effectively to assist Russia and defeat Great Britain. By the papers before Parliament it appears that to that insolent and false statement of the Russian Cabinet, in answer to the application of Mr. Bell, the noble Lord delayed to reply for the space of seventy-three days. I will here observe that whenever there is any correspondence pending with foreign States, the noble Lord's delays are always very great and very frequent—that is to say, whenever the effect of the delay is to injure England. During the whole of this intervening period, to whatever inquiries were made in this House the noble Lord always gave assurance that things were going on very well. But upon being asked for the papers in connexion with this subject, the noble Lord always refused to do so, giving also his reasons. I beg the House to hear them and to bear them in mind. They explain the views upon which the noble Lord has always acted when the question of producing or not producing the papers which illustrated his policy has come before the House. Well, on the 17th of March, 1837, Mr. Roebuck had moved for papers on the treaty of Adrianople and the *Viven* case, then pending. The noble Lord then said: 'If these papers are found to bear on the case in question'—that is to say, on the case of the *Viven*—their production at the present time would only be injurious; and such of them as bear upon bygone cases obviously can be of no use to the honourable and learned Gentleman who has moved for them.'

Mark the gross inconsistency of the phrase: the noble Lord first says that if the papers moved for relate to the main question their production would be only injurious, and in the next breath he says that if they do not relate to the main question their production can obviously be of no use! And this is the man who has the honour and the interest of England so much at heart.

A VOICE:—He must be a liar. (Cheers.)

MR. ROLLAND:—Mr. Anstey goes on to say:—

"It is hard for any honourable member of this House to find himself censured now for moving for papers of this importance, when you perceive that in former Parliaments such reasons have ever been found sufficient to justify the noble Lord in denying them to the House. If, the noble Lord says, they relate to any case that is pending it may be injurious to produce them; but if, on the other hand, they relate to a case that is passed and gone, they can obviously be of no use to the gentleman who moves for them or to the House. It did not enter into the mind of the honourable and learned Gentleman on the occasion referred to, nor was it the policy of the noble Lord to state, that although their production might be too late to save the parties more immediately concerned, it might be very useful for bringing to

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condign punishment the Minister who had betrayed the interests of his country."

(Hear, hear.) Well, it seems that Lord Durham had said that Russia was perfectly justified in the capture of the *Vixen*, and on this point Mr. Anstey says:—

"I spare the House the recital of the painful and disgraceful termination of this business. Suffice it to say, that when the matter was ripe for conclusion, Lord Durham, acting, as I fully believe, in concert with the noble Lord, falsely stated in a despatch of three or four lines—not more, at least, was laid before Parliament—that the Cabinet of St. Petersburg was fully justified in seizing the *Vixen*, for the Russians were in actual occupation of the place, and that there was even a Russian fort there. It is a most unfounded statement. There was not even a blockading squadron in the offing, much less a Russian fort on any part of the coast of the place. I have here the evidence of well-informed persons, who report that there was no fort at all either then, nor for many months afterwards. It is distinctly stated that there was no such fort. I believe that in fact the assertion was made in order to lay the ground which should enable the noble Lord to write his next despatch, and this, the King being now in imminent danger of that death which soon followed, was no longer delayed. The noble Lord knows better than most men when to tarry and when to precipitate. That despatch contained an unqualified recognition of the right of Russia to do what she had done."

I must intrude on your patience once more. These are the words addressed by Mr. Anstey to the British House of Commons:—

"I charge (said he) the noble Lord with the wilful and deliberate betrayal of Circassia, the ally of England, who had been encouraged by and recommended to open trade with this country. I charge the noble Lord with her betrayal to the deadly foe of this country as well as their own; and I charge him further with the deliberate betrayal and violation of the honour and safety of Great Britain, and of the rights of British merchants, whose losses remain uncompensated to this hour. I charge the noble Lord with having done this with the desire and with the effect of transferring to a foreign Power the dominion of an independent territory, which it was necessary for that Power to possess in prosecution of her designs against our Indian Empire. I further charge the noble Lord with having deceived the Parliament with false statements and suppressions of fact in reference to this matter. And I charge him with having practised the same deceptions upon his Colleagues and upon his Sovereign. Therefore, Sir, combining these charges together, and as the necessary result thereof, I, in the last place, charge the noble Lord with the superadded guilt of High Treason."

(Cheers.) Do you cheer at the mention of the guilt of a man, and that same man a British Minister? How can you, as Englishmen, where the honour of England is so much concerned, cheer at such a tale?—ought you not, rather, to feel the deepest shame? Permit me this digression. If you say, "We will deliberate—we are unprepared to go into this matter until we know

more about it," well and good; but to applaud when you hear such charges as these, what must you be?

A VOICE:—It is not cheering for the Minister, but for those who brought the charges against him. The Minister is to-night, I believe, being laid bare before this meeting, and I believe, from what I see, from the faces of those around me, that the meeting will take steps for informing themselves, a great deal better than many have hitherto done, concerning that Minister's doings. The cheer was to you, sir; the disgrace belongs to the Traitor to his nation. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. ROLLAND:—I thank you; but I do think that a statement of that kind—the kind to which I have referred—should be received in a similar way as we drink the toast of the memory of the great departed dead. Surely, if we drink such a toast in solemn silence, when a statement is read so greatly affecting the honour of England, it should be received with equal silence.

ANOTHER VOICE:—The honour was intended for you.

Mr. ROLLAND:—I am perfectly conscious of the very great attention you have given me, but I don't see that in anything I have just said there is a claim to applause. But let us do right in this matter. Let us not condemn a man unheard. I have got here the reply of the Minister as well as the charge. The charge is very plain, but we may learn something more from the reply. What was the reply? Lord Palmerston said:—

"I do not think that it would have been very advisable or very gratifying to this House, or very acceptable to the country, that we should have involved England in a war with Russia, upon the question of whether the Treaty of Adrianople did or did not concede to Russia the interior of Circassia. We might have had our wishes on the matter. We might have sympathised with a brave and gallant nation fighting under circumstances of *unparalleled* conflict, opposing only such rude arms as they could prepare against the disciplined and well-equipped legions of a vast and mighty empire. It was impossible but that any man should feel a great sympathy with such persons, or can doubt that there was one motive which inclined the English Government to avoid hastily pronouncing an opinion in favour of the Russian claims."

You see that Mr. Bell's vessel having been confiscated, he makes a charge against Russia that our Government were bound to enforce, as he was sailing under the immunity of the British flag. The Minister so accused replies, "That under the peculiar circumstances the English Government were not entitled to demand anything from the Government of Russia." I ask, what was the result of the whole case? Look at the solemnity of the proceedings. Is there anything in the world more solemn in theory than the British House of Commons? Is it not just a court of law to try cases, to determine, decide, and especially to

judge cases and circumstances affecting character? Who was the criminal charged? The Minister who is answerable for the whole machinery of the Government. Here was a case in which not only an inquiry was made, but one in which an accusation was made against the Minister. Here was a case in which the House of Commons was analogous in its functions to a court of law. Suppose I committed a felony, that I forged a cheque, and you laid an information against me before the magistrates, and that I was committed to take my trial for the offence, and that before the jury, the offence having been clearly proved to be within the clear meaning of the law, I merely said, "It is not a case which ought to be tried," and that I walked out of court, what, I ask you, would be the general opinion concerning me? Here, then, is a much higher charge. A private man, a merchant, a banker, such a man as Mr. Roupell, may be punished for forgery, but a Minister guilty of betraying the interests of his country—what does a charge like that involve? We see a man who is charged with being a traitor to his country escaping the consequences of such a charge because it was held that the House of Commons could not proceed with the debate. But, mind you, there is vengeance above. What were the results? (Applause.) I think you'll not cheer, but groan. A charge was made, a reply was given, when Lord Dudley Stuart said he should divide the House, but at that moment the minute hand of the clock pointed to six o'clock. Mr. Speaker then said, "It is not competent for the noble Lord to divide the House," and the House adjourned, and the minister charged with high treason quashed his trial because the clock had struck six! (Shame! shame!) Such is this country! Mr. Chairman, I don't want to be rhetorical, but I can't help feeling, that as the tones of that clock resounded through the House of Commons, they sounded, as it were, the knell of England's honour, the ascendancy of Russia's designs, and the departure of the honour of the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.)

So much, then, for the case of the *Vixen*. After this debate relating to the *Vixen*, in 1848, we heard but little of Circassia save through the medium of European newspapers. We heard the results of the gallant struggle in which these warriors took a part; we heard of the irruption of tribes of Cossacks, who had descended by the eastern slopes into Circassia, and of their being repulsed with the greatest loss; we heard of convoy after convoy being cut off, and forts being captured by night, but of the Circassians being still unconquered; we read here, that these heroic mountaineers, furnished often only with swords of the rudest manufacture, with guns manufactured by themselves,

often with arrows for projectiles, and yet with these rude but trusty weapons, we hear of them defending and holding their mountain-passes against all the engineering skill of a Todleben, the designer of the giant forts of Sebastopol. (Applause.) And so the struggle went on from 1838, for ten years, up to 1848, and up to 1852 and 1853. For fifteen years the Circassians held their own, still surrounded, and surrounded, and surrounded by their implacable foe, but still unconquered, as unconquered they remain to the present day. (Applause.) But then there came a new phase in affairs, and we all heard the bustle of the arming of nations against Russia, and of the fury of our nation being aroused against her designs. I will do the people the justice to say that they had a certain sense of the wrong that had been done, a certain sense of justice to be done, when they undertook the defence of Turkey against Russia. I do say the feeling was right, but its ulterior objects were left to men who had worked out the question of the *Vixen*; to the same Minister who had surrendered England's rights to Russia. The meeting will not fully understand all the matter, but it was thought we were going to put an end to the crafty designs of Russia, that we were going to give the Muscovite a blow, and people threw up their caps for Turkey, and said (not knowing that they were themselves betrayed), "Now is the time for Circassia to gain independence!" I myself attended many meetings in which I pointed out the danger to England if that independence was not secured at the end of the war. I and a colleague were received with the greatest hostility in the town of Kidderminster, and, was myself placarded as a Russian agent. What was the course pursued by us, and what was the immediate cause of the virulent attack upon us? A letter was addressed by Mr. Urquhart to Circassia, in 1854, in which were stated the wrongs that Circassia had suffered at the hands of the British Minister. It was translated and sent, and copies of it appeared in several of the English newspapers, more especially in the London *Morning Advertiser* and the *Morning Herald*. It was of such a nature as to render us liable to pains and penalties. It was such a charge, such an allegation against the then Government—the coalition Government—that if they had dared to prosecute, would have rendered us liable to fine and imprisonment. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the charge, the Government took no action against the authors of the accusation. For they dared not. I will not go into the details of the Crimean war, except to say that at its termination nothing was said about restoring Poland, or restoring the rights of Circassia. Now, I believe I shall carry with me the sense of this meeting when I say, that what had made this war popular in England at

the outset, was not the feeling of any glory or territory to be gained by England in carrying on that war; what was expected was the giving of liberty to the nations oppressed by Russia, and consequent liberty to England to trade with those nations, and especially the wrongs of Poland and other countries. But the war ended, and where was the restoration of Poland or the independence of Circassia? Did your Prime Minister, after trying conclusions with Russia, say one word about Circassia, in behalf of her people? Was not Circassia forgotten? ("Yes.") Did not Russia go on assailing fort after fort, no man saying "This thing shall not be done?" Those years passed away, and then we came to the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris. And now let me read some portions of that same Treaty of Paris in March, 1856, after the conclusion of the Crimean war.

Article 11, of the Treaty of Paris, says:—

"The Black Sea is neutralised; its waters and its ports, thrown open to the mercantile marine of every nation, are formally and in perpetuity interdicted to the flag of war, either of the Powers possessing its coasts, or of any other Power, with the exceptions mentioned in Articles 14 and 19 of the present Treaty."

Article 12 provides as follows:—

"Freed from any impediment, the commerce, the ports, and waters of the Black Sea shall be subject only to regulations of health, customs and police, framed in a spirit favourable to the development of commercial transactions. In order to afford to the commercial and maritime interests of every nation the security which is desired, Russia and the Sublime Porte will admit Consuls into their ports situated upon the coast of the Black Sea, in conformity with the principles of international law."

Article 13 says:—

"The Black Sea being neutralised according to the terms of Article 11, the maintenance or establishment upon its coast of military maritime arsenals becomes alike unnecessary and purposeless; in consequence, His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias and His Imperial Majesty the Sultan engage not to establish or maintain upon that coast any military maritime arsenal."

The 14th Article states, that

"Their Majesties the Emperor of all the Russias and the Sultan having concluded a Convention for the purpose of settling the force and the number of light vessels necessary for the service of their coasts, which they reserve to themselves to maintain in the Black Sea, that Convention is annexed to the present Treaty, and shall have the same force and validity as if it formed an integral part thereof. It cannot be either annulled or modified without the assent of the Powers signing the present Treaty."

The Convention referred to is as follows:—

"Article 1. The High Contracting Parties mutually engage not to have in the Black Sea any other vessels of war than those of which the number, the

force, and the dimensions are hereinafter stipulated.—2. The High Contracting Parties reserve to themselves each to maintain on that sea six steam-vessels of 50 metres in length, at the line of flotation, of a tonnage of 800 tons at the maximum, and four light steam or sailing vessels of a tonnage which shall not exceed 200 tons each."

"The Black Sea is neutralised; its waters and its ports thrown open to the mercantile marine of every nation:" "The contracting parties engage not to establish any military maritime arsenal on the coasts of the Black Sea." Well, I will ask our friends here whether Russia has not established forts on the Black Sea; and whether, to all intents and purposes, Russia has not a military maritime force there?

The Interpreter put the question to the Chiefs, and gave their reply.

Mr. ROLLAND:—They say that every corner of their sea-coast is watched by a Russian vessel of war, and that at every point of the shore that cannot be commanded by a vessel of war, there Russia has planted a fort ("Shame"): that so far from Circassia trading with foreign vessels at her ports, it is impossible without incurring the greatest danger to themselves even to embark therefrom. What was the Treaty worth, then? But this Treaty was not allowed to pass unquestioned in the House of Commons. On the 19th of February Lord John Manners asked whether any communication had passed between the British Government and the other parties to the Treaty of Paris, respecting the execution of Article 12 of that treaty. He said he put that question in consequence of a rumour that a document had been sent by the representatives of the great Powers at Paris, with reference to an application to them by certain Circassian chiefs, and he wished to know if the noble Lord had any objection to the production of that document. Lord Palmerston replied:—

"I beg to say that the noble Lord should have given in his notice a more precise description of the question he intended to put. He wishes to know whether any representation was made by certain Circassian Chiefs to the Conference at Paris, or to the French or English Governments, and what answer was returned to them; and also whether there would be any objection to lay before the House the application of those Chiefs. I request to be allowed to communicate with my noble friend, the Foreign Secretary, as to the latter point, for the purpose of determining whether the documents are such as can properly be laid before Parliament. But speaking from recollection, I may say that an application was made by certain Circassian chiefs, who represented that they had been attacked by Russians, requiring aid, moral or physical, from the Allied Powers who had been engaged in the war with Russia. Now, with regard to that point, it must be borne in mind, first of all, that the Circassians did not deem it expedient to co-operate with the English and French troops in that war. . . ."

"We were entitled to require from Russia, on the conclusion of peace, certain conditions with regard to the Black Sea and the fortified

places in the territories which we occupied. The course of military operations, however, did not extend to the eastern shores of the Black Sea, therefore we did not stand in a position of being entitled from our military success to demand from the Russian Government any stipulations as to their relations with the tribes and people inhabiting that region."

We see what the stipulations of the Treaty were—that Russia should keep the Black Sea open, and permit perfect freedom of trade to all nations. We see that Russia does not act up to these stipulations, but has kept up a blockade of one portion of that coast. The noble Lord knows this, and yet he says, "The course of operations did not extend to the eastern shores of that sea!" Can you explain the discrepancy between the Treaty itself and the statement of the Minister in the House of Commons? Is it not all just of one piece? Is it not a necessary conclusion from the case of the *Vixen*? I am really ashamed to have trespassed so long on your time and attention. I have a letter here from a gentleman who has been associated with us some time, from Mr. Beales, a barrister, of London, who is one of the oldest members of the Polish Association. It is at the option of this meeting whether I read it or not.

The question that the letter be read having been put and carried, Mr. Rolland read as follows:—

4, Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, Sept. 30, 1862.

SIR,—I regret that my professional engagements will prevent my being present at the meeting to be held at Preston to-morrow evening, on the subject of Circassia—a subject in which I take a deep interest. Although I have for many years taken an active part in endeavouring to enlist the sympathies of our country in favour of Poland, in hope that some practical step might be taken to secure its independence against the absorbing grasp of Russia, and in detestation of the cruel oppression by which Russia has endeavoured to stifle that independence, I am disposed to consider the case of Circassia as one of more undisguised and more brutal force exercised against all right, and laws, and justice, both national and individual, than even that of Poland. The struggle between Russia and Poland may be more or less one for political superiority and national power between the two nations; as Poland rises, Russia must, more or less, fall; but in the case of Circassia, Russia had herself nothing to fear from the natives of that country or their independence. She could have, and can have, no other motive for the long struggle in which she has endeavoured to enthrall the Circassians than that of a mere lust of conquest, or, as it were, a rounding of her dimensions by obtaining the Caucasus and the Circassian shore of the Euxine for her boundary in that quarter; or else of obtaining a better position for attacking and subverting the Ottoman Empire, and also attacking the British power in India. In some haste, I am, Sir, with best wishes for the success of your meeting, yours faithfully,

EDMOND BEALES.

To Mr. Singleton, Preston.

There is still another letter which I must read to you. It is from Lord Pensoy to Mr. Urquhart. It is as follows:—

Constantinople, March 23, 1836.

I had been led to believe that you had changed your mind respecting Circassia. No! I did not believe it, but I heard it. I am delighted with the manner in which you have treated that subject. It is admirable. I hope you have approved of what I have done in my despatch respecting it. I considered it from the beginning next in importance to the possession of Constantinople itself. But it is only lately that I have known the facts of the total freedom of that country from every legal subjugation and tie to the Sultan, and therefore the total illegality of any title assumed to it by Nicholas. If we had any man in England worth a straw, he would soon settle this matter; but our statesmen are grown pédars, like Joseph Hume, but without the sagacity that distinguishes the Israelite, who carries about his wares for sale to nursemaids and scullions. . . . I do not fear Russia one bit at present, nor have I any dread of her future power provided we have either wise heads or stout hearts left in England to direct and take the commonest means for our own security and interest."

I may well conclude this address by re-echoing these words: all that is wanted are a few wise heads and stout hearts to make us safe. Trust not to the House of Commons—trust not to men of station; prove them first, and then trust them. I don't recommend you not to trust them, but try them first, and then you will see if you can trust them. A very simple thing it is to destroy Russia; a very simple thing it is for Russia to destroy you. It is a mere matter of playing on a chess-board. Have you all informed yourselves on these matters and done what you could? No man in this room can lay his hand on his heart and say that he has done so. No man can do that; no man here will do that. But are we happier for not having done that? Is the condition of Preston so prosperous? Is the condition of England at present a magnificent tide of prosperity? Perhaps you may say, "It is very much better for us to leave all foreign matters to the Ministers. You find nothing is to be done. It is better for us to confine ourselves to home affairs, and not meddle with foreign ones. It will be much better to let the country go on as it does." Many of you are in a state very different from what you were in even four or five years ago, and are suffering privations and distress; but are you aware that you may yet suffer what these men have suffered? Do you suppose that there is not a state even worse than the distress you are suffering? They have known what suffering was, and have had to fight in defence of their hearths and homes, subjugated, but fighting to the last.

[At this moment Colonel Lapinski entered the room and took a seat on the platform. Mr. Rolland announced the name of the Colonel to the meeting, and said that the Colonel, in despair for the restoration of Poland, had organised a Polish legion, and that he and his compatriots had fought in behalf of Circassia. He had not the honour of Colonel Lapinski's personal acquaintance, but

it was gratifying to him to know that he was one who had shared alike in the sufferings both of Poland and Circassia. The Colonel, however, desired to be excused from addressing the meeting as he did not speak English, but he was glad to find himself present at the meeting, as a Pole and a compatriot of Count-Zamoyski, and an ally of the Circassian brotherhood.]

Mr. ROLLAND:—I was just now saying that whatever your distress at present may be, you do not know the full measure preparing to be meted out to you. Don't believe that that Power which has destroyed Poland, and which is eating the heart out of Circassia, has not equal terrors for you. Her design is nothing less than universal dominion. Her design is to cut off and cripple our trade, and so hold you in dependence on her for the bread you eat. England might be the most prosperous nation in the world, did she but act uprightly, did her sons compel their ministers to act uprightly. But there is a limit to all God's mercies; no man will God help who does not help himself. It is not for you to say, "We will leave all these matters to those who have the management of these affairs." You must yourselves see that these duties are done. I only in conclusion will say that this is a place for physical suffering, but here before you are two men who can tell you of sufferings far greater than you have endured. I will tell you how the distress will come. Russia exists by the sale of her hides, corn, flax, and the like; by this alone can she get money to convulse the world. You have pledged yourselves to exist by manufacturing. But she has succeeded, by the aid of the Minister who abandoned the *Vixen*, in monopolising the supply of corn to you; she is succeeding in cutting off from you the supply of cotton, for her hand is to be traced in the American civil war; gradually she will make your industry dependent on her flax, and what cotton you require will pass through her hands, for you must now go to the East for what cotton you want; and abandoning Circassia, you abandon the East to her. Mistress then at once of your food and your staple, what is there you can deny her? and bad as you may think your condition now, you have men in this room who can tell you of sufferings you do not as yet know. Hunger, I fear, you know too well; but as yet you are unacquainted with military conscription, and police permissions, without which you cannot quit your own town, and forced labour and stripes. These all await you, unless you say, as one man, "We will study these things; we will be ashamed of the wrong we have suffered to be done; and we, twenty millions of working men, will say as one man, we will no longer sanction our own ruin, but we will have the laws of England enforced against the Minister who does these things." Is it not painful to

feel that we do not know which of these things may be coming next? But a state of distress is coming greater than that you now know. I wish to God nothing were coming. But that time is coming nearer and nearer every day if steps be not taken to avert it. It has been carried on and arranged by wicked men for your enslavement. You have to arouse yourselves, lustrate yourselves from the national crimes you have tacitly sanctioned, and let each man ask himself what he ought to do to save his own soul from this national guilt, and let there be no more of taking things for granted, let us not look only to our own hand-to-mouth selfishness, and then we may be a free nation, and then you can honestly sympathise with those who have endured these horrors, because it is real assistance you are giving, and not a mere profession of the lips.

The CHAIRMAN said he had listened with much pleasure to the address the meeting had just heard, and it seemed to him that a fitting question that had occurred to him might be put by some present to the audience, namely:—"What could be done to maintain the independence of Circassia?"

A VOICE.—Petition Parliament.

Mr. ROLLAND again stepped forward and apologised for an act of omission. He then read the memorial of the Circassian chiefs, as it appears at the head of this report.

Mr. W. SINGLETON then moved:—"That this meeting regards with indignation the answer of the English Minister to the appeal of the Circassian chiefs, and resolves that a Committee be appointed to draw upon Address to the Queen, praying for the fulfilment of the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris, 1856, as they feel that each blow struck by Russia against the Circassians is a blow against England." They were only asking for the fulfilment of one of the stipulations of the Treaty, and surely there could be no objection to that course.

The motion was seconded by Mr. T. LYNCH, and supported by Mr. T. SMALLEY, and, on being put to the meeting, was carried unanimously.

Amidst great applause, the CHAIRMAN, in submitting the motion, stated that whilst Mr. Rolland was reading the Memorial, he (the Chairman) had been engaged making an estimate of the numbers present at the meeting, and he found them amount to 1428.

Mr. ROLLAND moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman, and the motion having been seconded and adopted, the meeting separated, and the Committee retired to prepare the address to the Queen.

The following letter, received by Mr. Singleton, of the Preston Foreign Affairs Committee, was not read at the meeting:—

London, Sept. 30, 1862.

SIR,—It being impossible for me to attend your proposed meeting on Circassia, I write merely to inform you of the pretext assigned in diplomatic circles for the rejection by the English Government of this appeal of the Circassians, an event of itself so startling in character as to superinduce at least a momentary curiosity.

Propositions having been made for throwing Garibaldi and his followers beyond the Adriatic, with a view to revolutionise Turkey, the English Minister has written a threatening letter to Louis Napoleon, in which he announces that he would employ the English naval force to search or sink any vessel employed for that purpose. That in consequence of this coercion applied to Louis Napoleon he had in turn coerced Victor Emmanuel, the result of which has been the capture of Garibaldi; the deduction from which is, that Lord Palmerston having taken a course of direct opposition to the policy of Russia, in regard to Italy and Turkey, is constrained to yield to her on other points—such, for instance, as Circassia.

You will not fail to observe that if the opposition of the English Minister to Russia had been sincere, it must have been demonstrated in regard to every point in which Russia is concerned; in which case it must have begun with Circassia even more than Poland herself, since Circassia still stands by herself, and, standing, is the immediate bulwark of Turkey and Persia, and the ultimate protector alike of India and Europe. You would further observe that it is not in the power of the English Minister to search or sink the vessels which would have transported the expedition of Garibaldi, since, even if there had been war, the Right of Search has been abandoned by the Treaty of Paris.

Again, when the expedition of Garibaldi was sailing from the ports of Victor Emmanuel, the French Government proposed to employ the same means to prevent his troops from reaching the coast of Naples, and was prevented by England.

From these statements you will draw your own conclusion, nor can the result of such investigation before rational men be any other than this: that the power of England, resulting from the contribution in taxes from the sweat of her people, must become the means of the destruction of the independence of every other nation, and finally your own, if that people does not in time exert itself to control the action of its executive.

Your obedient Servant,

DAVID URQUHART.

Mr. William Singleton,
Secretary of the Preston Foreign Affairs Committee.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

MR. URQUHART TO THE CHIEFS AND CLANS OF CIRCASSIA.

London, May 8, 1854.

YOU may have been surprised at not having received a letter from me in reference to the great events now pending. I have been daily for a year intending to write to you, but I have been restrained by the impossibility of putting in a few words what I have to say. I can now delay no longer; it is necessary that I should warn you at least against the new danger with which you are threatened.

In the letter which I wrote to you some years ago, I explained my reason for not being amongst you thus: I told you that the enemy whom you oppose by arms, held in his hands the counsels of England, and that, therefore, my first duty was to strive to open the eyes of the English nation to the treachery of its Government. It is for this reason that at the present hour I am writing to you a letter, not addressing you by word of mouth.

What I have to tell you is this: there is no war between Russia and England. The pretence of a war is got up to deceive the English nation and the Ottoman Empire, in order that a treacherous Government may use the forces of England to coerce the Turks whilst the Turks are induced to admit them under the belief that they come as Allies. This diabolical scheme has been successful as regards Turkey—it will be tried with you.

You have before pledged yourselves to me, to admit no Europeans into your country, and you well know yourselves what have been the consequences in all the countries around you, of ad-

mitting the Franks. You are no longer exposed to the chance introduction of a few adventurers, troops and men of authority will be offered and sent to you. If *once* you admit them you are lost.

What has happened in these days and before your own eyes to Turkey? She admits the Anglo-French squadron through the Dardanelles. Seven months have since elapsed—the Russians are still in the Principalities, and the Sultan is a prisoner in the Seraglio.

The squadron that was admitted was not *intended* for acting against Russia; it was far too powerful: it was *intended* to coerce Turkey. The English and French have now got Constantinople in their hands; they cannot expect to keep it themselves. Their ministers have it to dispose of. The only purchaser is Russia, and she will buy it without money, after leaving it for a while to prompt the rapacity of the two courts, to envenom them against each other, and thereby to involve all Europe in bloodshed.

Russia is holding out to the Governments of Europe a partition of Turkey, and having engaged them in this plot, they become hired assassins against the master of the house, whose inheritance they hope to divide; but they are not to get the share that has been promised, for the people of Europe are no less stupid than covetous, and Russia knows how to make use alike of their baseness and their imbecility. You alone of all the people on the earth have hitherto understood Russia, and therefore you alone have stood against her. It requires now that you should understand Europe. Your safety against Russia has been your knowledge of her weakness; your safety against Europe will consist in your knowledge of its perfidy.

A new era has opened for the world. In the course of our lives four great contests have taken place almost within our hearing: that between Russia and Persia in 1826-27—between Russia and Turkey in 1828-29—between Russia and Poland in 1830-31—between Russia and Hungary in 1848-49. In all these the Powers of Europe either abandoned the State which Russia attacked, or helped Russia to attack it, while at the same time their Governments were telling their people that they were doing everything to oppose Russia; but the people of Europe are kept in the dark respecting everything that concerns their real interests. This was the era of acquiescence with Russia and of secret aid. We are now advanced a step farther. We now support her by Armies and by Fleets, which Armies and Fleets are used for her advantage, just as heretofore agents and ambassadors were used—*then* it was ink; *now* it is gunpowder. This is the state of

the world, the like of which has never been known before, and it arises out of this—that in Russia there are men, in Europe there are only legs and arms—in Russia there is a system, in Europe there is only chaos—in Russia the Government and the people are one, in Europe the Governments and the people are different orders of animals. So that a contest between Europe and Russia is like a contest between a man and a necromancer.

But the plan of serving Russia by sending armies to fight her, did not commence with Turkey. The experiment was made sixteen years ago in Afghanistan, and I call your attention to this fact, as being all-sufficient for your present guidance, if indeed you have eyes that can see, and ears that can hear.

Dost Mahomed of Cabul, whom you know to be a true Musulman and a resolute enemy of Russia, knowing nothing of Europe and its Governments, and alarmed at the designs of Russia in his country, invited an English agent to Cabul, and offered to place Afghanistan under British protection. The consequence was, that fifteen thousand British soldiers were marched from India to dethrone him, and he was carried away a prisoner into the British territory. The Afghans, after they had been subdued, rose upon their perfidious invaders and destroyed them all, and then England sent another expedition to punish the Afghans for their rebellion. The English Government attacked Dost Mahomed and the Afghans, because it knew they were enemies to Russia, but the English nation furnished them with the means for doing so, and sacrificed their treasure and their blood, because they believed they were attacking friends of Russia. They believed this because the Government forged letters from their own Ambassador, in which forged letters they made him say the reverse of what he had said, and whilst the British troops were slaughtering the Afghans, because they were said to be friendly to Russia, there was a Russian Ambassador at London, and a British Ambassador at St. Petersburg. See here the fate that is prepared for you. It is not only the same Russia and the same England as in 1838, but it is the very same man who planned the Afghan war, who is now the real Minister of England. What I have told you is true and certain, and what has happened then, will happen now, unless you, enlightened by the experience of Dost Mahomed, refuse to admit agents, and so afford a pretext to the English Government to misrepresent you to its own people. For whatever at any moment the English Government is doing in the East, it would be impossible for it to do, if its own people knew it at the time.

The alarm of the English people in reference to Dost Mahomed was connected with India—they feared the Russians would get at

India. But if Afghanistan was a barrier for India, how much more Persia, which covers Afghanistan? If the English Government had been acting honestly, though even mistakenly, in Afghanistan, must it not have supported Persia, when positively assailed by the arms of Russia, and when bound to do so by a defensive Treaty?

But if Persia is a barrier for India, how much more Circassia, which protects Persia as Persia does Afghanistan, and which protects Turkey as well as Persia. You were not beyond Russia's reach like the Afghans. You had not, like the Persians, been broken by her arms and bound by Treaty. You were, during the whole of this period, at war with her, and on the maintenance of that struggle depended the security of all Asia and the peace of Europe. How was it then that England could send into Central Asia her armies from India, and yet afford you no support? How was it that at the very moment that she was making war upon Russia in the persons of the Afghans her foes, she submitted to and sanctioned the capture and confiscation by Russia of one of her own vessels in your harbour of Soujouk-Kaleh?

Ponder upon these things—your liberty and your lives depend upon the reflections they suggest. Your heroic deeds have been a crown of stars around your country's brow. The eyes of the world are fixed upon it, on Circassia now rests the safety of that world. You must be above what you undertake to protect. It is a duel now between you and Russia. You have fought her single-handed whilst she had no other foes. If you, like Europe or like Turkey, fancy you need aid or protection, then indeed it is all lost. Trust to yourselves, preserve yourselves, as you have done; then even let the Ottoman Empire go, and, please God, we shall yet restore the combat which is in our day to decide whether the world is to be Muscovite or not.

DAVID URQUHART.

No. II.

October 15, 1862.

STATEMENT RESPECTING KARS.

Hassan Effendi (one of the Deputies) has just told us that he was sent as an Envoy from the Circassians to the Turkish army at Kars to arrange a joint operation against Tiflis. Whilst he was there he saw Selim Pacha, the Turkish Commander, receive a despatch from Constantinople, forbidding him to advance beyond Kars. Selim Pacha burst into tears and cried like a child, exclaiming that they were sacrificed. They would be all taken in Kars. At that time the Turks had 50,000 men, Mouravieff only 25,000; in five months the Turkish army dwindled away to 35,000, and the Russian army increased to 50,000. Prince Alexander, of one of the districts of the Caucasus, and Sheick Schamyl, waited all the war for orders from Constantinople. The only order they ever got was to wait. They were told, this is not a war that concerns you; it is carried on for objects with which you have nothing to do.

G. C.

No. III.

EARL RUSSELL ON THE NEUTRALISATION OF THE BLACK SEA.

Since the meeting at Preston, Earl Russell has written a letter about Circassia. It is here subjoined, together with that to which it is a reply.

To EARL RUSSELL.

*Purlwell, Batley, near Dewsbury,
Oct. 4, 1862.*

MY LORD,—I beg to ask your Lordship whether British merchants can and do freely trade with the people of Circassia along the coast of the Black Sea, according to the 11th, 12th, and 13th articles contained in the Treaty of Paris of April 27, 1856, without stoppage, annoyance, or hindrance from Russian vessels of war.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

THOS. WRIGHT FENTON.

To the Right Honourable
Earl Russell.

FROM EARL RUSSELL.

Foreign Office, Oct. 16, 1862.

SIR,—I am directed by Earl Russell to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th instant, inquiring whether British merchants can trade freely with the people of Circassia along the coast of the Black Sea, and I

C

am to state to you in reply, that, on referring to the Russian Government in the year 1858, Her Majesty's Government were informed that every commercial undertaking which was not destined for one of the five ports of Anapa, Soukoum and Redout Kalé, Poti and St. Nicholas, which were legally open to foreign commerce on the Asiatic seaboard, would be contrary to the regulations of health, customs, and police which the Imperial Government observed and enforced, and that every merchant ship or steam-vessel making for any point of the Eastern coast, where the customs and sanitary services were not duly organised, and had not been officially notified, would act in contravention of the established laws, and consequently the Russian cruisers charged to watch the coasts would prevent such vessels from transgressing the regulations of customs, health, and police to which commerce in the Black Sea is legally subjected.

Such being the case, Lord Russell is of opinion that British vessels would not be secure from interference on the part of Russian cruisers if they made for any point of the *eastern coast of Circassia (sic)* between the ports which have been opened by Russia to foreign commerce, and that consequently any attempt to open a communication with any port would only bring about complications with the Russian Government, and result in losses to the persons engaged in such an enterprise.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient, humble servant,
E. HAMMOND.