

But anguish, yet unfelt, may rise
 To palsy both my heart and brain ;
 Then, the soul's darkness, which denies
 A tear, may let me smile again.

FANNY.

LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF GIOVANNI FINATI.*

It has ever been our opinion, that the philosophical style of writing history has received from critics, who are often rather arbitrary in their decisions, more than its due share of commendation. It is not certainly the style that is the most natural ; and to ordinary readers it is far from being the most interesting. Generally speaking, the object of the philosophical historian is not so much to give a simple detail of facts, as to suggest reflections upon selected and particular circumstances, in order to found upon them some peculiar theory, which he may be anxious to place before his readers. By this means, he acquires an almost unlimited power of exhibiting the particular history which he chooses for his subject, in whatever light may suit the prejudices of his mind ; and hence, his readers, instead of being left at liberty to form their own reflections on the events recorded, are compelled to view them through the discolouring and not unfrequently distorting medium of the opinions of another. The injurious tendency of such a method will at once appear, when we reflect how these opinions have become inseparably associated in our minds with the very facts of history. However Gothic, therefore, the sentiment may seem to some, to us it appears that the more of art and of philosophy there is observable in any historical production, the less of truth is likely to be found in it. Some of our most popular histories, on this very account, we cannot but regard as little better, in documentary authority, than epic poems or historical romances. Many of the disquisitions of Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson, which they have contrived so ingeniously to interweave with their historical details, we consider to be as unwarrantable as the more clumsy contrivance of speech-making, by which Livy, Sallust, and other historians of more ancient date, made the heroes of their narratives the instruments of setting forth their own peculiar sentiments. We are sometimes ready to imagine that the interests of real history would suffer as little from an abridgment of the former, as from the omission of the latter. Besides which, we are often really vexed at the unreasonable tax hereby levied on a reader's patience. There can be nothing more annoying than to be interrupted, as one is moving on to the grand crisis of some important train of events, by whole paragraphs and pages of dull philosophical reflections ; and we confess that we are too often put out of humour by their occurrence, to give them that calm consideration which such sage reflections might seem to demand.

But we have still less partiality for the philosophical style of travel-writing, though the prevailing and popular philosophy of books of travel widely differs from that of books of history. The philosophy of history

* Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Giovanni Finati, native of Ferrara ; who, under the assumed name of Mahomet, made the campaigns against the Wahabees, for the recovery of Mecca and Medina ; and since acted as interpreter to European travellers in some of the parts least visited of Asia and Africa. Edited by W. J. Bankes. London : Murray—1830.

is the philosophy of mind—that of modern travellers is the philosophy of stones and pebbles. We read books of this kind as much for amusement as for instruction; we are often too lazy in the mood of mind we bring to them, to think of rousing the intellect to any very great degree of exertion. To stumble in the very midst of an interesting narrative upon long columns of shapeless and almost unintelligible inscriptions; and then to be doomed to wade through pages of nearly as unintelligible discussions about these inscriptions, is intolerable. And as to the everlasting recurrence of such uncouth words as trap and basalt, gneiss and quartz, rocks of primary and tertiary formation, *et hoc genus omne*—it is past all endurance! The technical terms of zoology and botany have been by most travellers modestly printed in italics, and placed within brackets, so that the unlearned reader might take the country schoolmaster's advice—skip and go on. But the outlandish vocables of geology, grating on our English ears with more than German roughness, and standing out boldly in good Roman print upon the page, as if they had full right to its possession, is (especially in so young a science) an unwarrantable presumption. "Grant us patience!—of all the cants which are canted in this canting world, though the cant of hypocrites may be the worst, the cant of *geology* is the most tormenting!" Commend us to Messrs. Oliver and Boyd. In their Edinburgh Cabinet Library they have first let Mr. Murray tell his good round tale of travels, and then left Professor Jameson to bring up the rear with his chapters on geology, for the benefit of those who have patience or *philo-petrisism* enough to read them. In this they have done wisely.

We are sure those of our readers will agree with us, who have, at any time, taken the tour of the seven volumes of Dr. Clarke, that most engaging of modern travellers; when, after running with delightful rapidity through the whole extent of Russia, they have been stopped in the middle of the Troas by the unconscionable episode which he there introduces, for the special benefit of those concerned about the veracity of old Homer. We have sometimes felt impatient even when digging sands and decyphering hieroglyphics with Belzoni; and, in travelling the same route, have been still more tormented with the *sesquipedalia verba* of Richardson; not to mention other authors named or unnamed by Giovanni, who have published on the affairs and antiquities of Egypt. On this account, we have no objection to retrace the track in the company of a light-hearted guide, who despatches in two or three words the labour of days, and the lore of centuries; and who, after a peep at temples and pyramids, mummies and sarcophagi, can take his gun in hand, trip it along the banks of the Nile, and feel as happy when he has shot a handsome bird or a plump quadruped, as his masters do when they unearth a temple, or decypher an inscription. Indeed we have been almost tempted, while reading the adventures of Giovanni, to question whether, if the guides and servants of some of our travellers were to turn authors, they would not, in many instances, produce more *readable* volumes than their masters. And though there is something like bookmaking in the big print and wide margin, by which Giovanni's story has been extended to two volumes, we will even excuse this specimen of tradecraft, purely from the spirit of good humour with which the story itself has inspired us. Whether our hero has been indebted for all the wonderful events of his life to the actual vicissitudes of human affairs; or has for some of them to thank the inventive genius and ready pen of his master, Mr. Banks, we will not take upon us positively to determine. There is in his narrative so much of the air and simplicity of truth, that we will

even rest satisfied to take for granted all he is pleased to tell us. We perfectly agree with the editor that

“The work itself, from its very varied nature can hardly fail to prove entertaining, even to the general reader, but will have a yet higher value with those who are curious in oriental manners, and in modern oriental history, as containing some details nowhere else to be met with, at least in our language, and on the testimony of an eye-witness: as of the massacre of the Mamelukes by Mahomet Ali, and of his expedition against the fanatic puritans of Arabia, and into the upper country beyond Dongola. In geography not a little will be found that is new and interesting, for, though no scientific accounts must be expected, but only such as a plain man of sense and observation can give, yet when it is seen that he made the circuit of the Dead Sea; that he penetrated to the great Oasis; that he accompanied Monsieur Linant in his search for the ancient Meroë, and beyond Sennaar; that he has reached or passed the second cataract of the Nile seven several times; that he has visited both Mecca and Medina, and places lower down to the very borders of Yemen, and Jerusalem frequently; that Petra, and Palmyra, and all the country beyond Jordan, are among the scenes of his narrative—it will be admitted that he has been a traveller to no ordinary extent; and, possibly, that there is not any one living who has seen altogether so much. But it is at this peculiar time, when the attention and curiosity of all Europe is peculiarly directed towards the East, that the details of Mahomedan warfare, and the life of a soldier in the Mahomedan service, may seem to acquire a sort of political, as well as historical interest.”

Giovanni is an Italian. He was born of parents who lived in comfortable circumstances in the little territory of Ferrara, a part of the Pope's dominions; and was destined from an early age by his parents, though sorely against his own inclinations, for the priesthood. “His distaste,” he tells us, “was every day increased by the pains that his uncle bestowed to instruct him in all that course of frivolous and empty ceremonials and mysteries which form a principal feature in the training up of a priest for the Romish church.” From his dread of this line of life he was at last delivered, by being compelled to engage in another, for which he had at least equal disinclination. In this respect, poor Giovanni seems to have been born under no lucky planet. At the age of eighteen, his name appeared among the list of conscripts for the grand army of Napoleon. Every exertion was made by his horror-struck parents to procure his exemption, but the sceptre which Buonaparte swayed over the Italian states was of the same metal as his crown.* Once a name had been set down in the oppressive conscription list, there was no release, except on condition of providing and paying for a substitute, in case of whose desertion there would be no alternative, but for the original conscript to go forward in his stead.

With great exertion, and at some expense, a substitute was procured for Giovanni, but in five months he deserted; and Giovanni himself was immediately summoned to join the army. It was in vain that he absconded; unable to trace him to his lurking place, every art of oppression was tried against his unfortunate family, until, on his father and a younger brother being thrown into prison, after the confiscation of their property, he voluntarily went to the authorities, and resigned himself to his fate. Without being permitted even to take leave of his broken-hearted relatives, he was thus arbitrarily torn from the bosom of an affectionate family, and from the comforts of his home, to be exposed to all the severity of military discipline, and the dangers of war. Such

* He put the ancient iron crown of Italy on his own head at Milan, when he thought proper to usurp the title as well as the power of the king of the Romans.

were the blessings of the despotism of the great Napoleon ! The march to Milan, the place of rendezvous for the conscripts, was a dreary sample of what he might subsequently expect ; and though he subsequently became inured to these hardships, he yet conceived such a disgust against the service, that from the first he entertained the idea of desertion. In the Tyrol, in 1806, he found an opportunity of putting his project into execution, and this opportunity he was mad enough to embrace. After still greater fatigue and hardships than those from which he had sought to extricate himself by this desperate expedient, hiding all day and travelling all night, he at length arrived in safety within the boundaries of Ferrara. Here he was soon compelled to leave the parental abode, in which he had sought a refuge, in order to conceal himself in obscure and unfrequented parts of the neighbouring country, while his family were again exposed, on his account, to the most oppressive and ruinous persecutions. He was at length taken, torn again from the embraces of his friends, and marched back to Milan, whence he was ultimately sent to Venice, at that time the head quarters of his regiment. The arrival of Buonaparte at that fortunate crisis saved his life, his sentence being commuted, lest a public execution might seem to damp the festivity of such an occasion. And though his punishment was sufficiently severe and degrading, yet we find, at least in this instance, that the savage and disgraceful practice of flogging was not adopted, even in the army of so severe a disciplinarian, and so arbitrary a despot, as Napoleon.

Giovanni, along with the rest of the force at Venice, soon received orders to embark for Dalmatia, as a reinforcement to the army under the command of Marshal Marmont, who was at that time engaged in levying oppressive exactions from the little republic of Ragusa. In the voyage between Venice and Spalatro, the transport was overtaken by a terrific storm, an occurrence which may have given our hero that dislike to the sea which he has ever since retained. It was probably this "Bora of the Adriatic" that was encountered lower down in the Gulph by St. Paul, when he was cast upon the island of Malta. In the case of Giovanni, it continued two days and nights without intermission. When it ceased the vessel was little better than a wreck ; and on opening the hatches, thirty-one of the soldiers were found dead, and many of the remainder in a most miserable and dangerous condition. Nothing perhaps could have exceeded the horrors of such a passage, except some of the scenes that have been exhibited in slave-ships. Nor was it an exchange much for the better, to be transferred from the hold of such a transport to the ward of a French military hospital—for this was the next stage of Giovanni's sufferings. On his recovery, a recovery for which he was neither indebted to the comforts of the hospital, nor to the attention of the physicians, we find him engaged with his regiment in several skirmishes with the Montenegrini, a race of hardy mountaineers, who endeavoured to repel French encroachment and oppression with a desperate though not unprovoked ferocity. The hardships of the service, and still more, the feeling of disgust with which he had all along regarded it, led Giovanni now to entertain once more the project of desertion. In this he was associated with fourteen of his comrades, and the wife of one of their number. They at first thought of making their escape by sea ; but an Albanian merchant, to whom Giovanni had applied in the hope of obtaining his friendly assistance, convinced them of the impracticability of such a procedure, and suggested a plan by which they might more easily and securely accomplish their wishes.

In pursuance of this advice, after laying by with the utmost secrecy

what might be needful for their journey, the deserters met at noon, on a spot mutually fixed upon, carrying off their arms and accoutrements, and marched for Turkish Albania with all possible expedition. They had to cross a mountain that overlooked the town of Budoa, whence they had effected their escape. They reached the summit of this mountain before sunset, and bivouacked till dusk in a somewhat singular position—

“Peeping cautiously from thence upon the city, we so commanded it as to be able to discern almost every thing that was passing there. Amongst the rest, we could very plainly distinguish the muster and roll call of the troops, and even thought that we could perceive the bustle, and surprise, and inquiry that was occasioned in our own company by the circumstance of so many of us not appearing.”

At dusk they descended the other side of the mountain, and made their way with all speed out of that portion of the territory occupied by the French. Ere they could effect their escape, they were unfortunately challenged by a French sentinel, whom one of their party shot dead upon the spot. The report alarmed the sentinel's comrades, and a fierce rencontre ensued, in which five of the French picquet were left dead and others wounded, while the deserters escaped uninjured. At Antivari, the first Turkish town they came to, the appearance of such a body of armed men wearing the French uniform, excited considerable alarm, which was not at all allayed by the eagerness with which the deserters seemed disposed to fly to the embraces of their new friends. A few shots brought them to their senses, and prudently laying down their arms, they made various signals of their peaceful intentions. Some difficulty occurred in making themselves understood, and some time elapsed before an interpreter could be obtained. After making a hearty meal, which they much needed, they were marched in triumph through the town, as ‘soldiers who had deserted the infidel army in Dalmatia.’ They were then lodged in the principal mosque of Antivari, where they were visited by a person high in authority, and various inducements were held out to them, in order to obtain their consent to become Mahomedans. As they persisted in refusing these overtures, they soon began to experience a change of treatment, and were sent to work at the quarries. Here they were employed not only in cutting stone, but also in carrying it in large masses, on their shoulders, up to the castle. Their clothes wearing with the friction, and these rough burdens pressing on the naked skin rendered the latter part of this drudgery insupportably severe.

One of the party at last ventured to propose a change of religion, as their only hope of relief. This proposal was instantly embraced, and in a few hours they were all made Mahomedans, “though,” says Giovanni, “I believe most of us continued in our hearts as good Catholics as we had been before!” The severity of their servitude was now considerably relaxed. Our hero, in particular, became the favourite servant of a young Turkish officer, of whose humanity and good nature he makes honourable mention, and who certainly did not overburden him with employment, as almost his entire business was to present the pipe in due form to his master. That master, however, after all, was requited with an act of Italian perfidy, in the seduction of his favourite wife. The apprehended consequences of this licentious amour obliged Giovanni to leave Scutari. His escape was befriended by the Albanian merchant mentioned above. Egypt was the place of his destination. He reached it in safety, and it became the land of his future residence, and of so

decided a preference, that even the country of his birth, the dwelling-place of his parents, seems to have been ever afterwards forgotten.

Though we have sketched but the commencement of his adventurous career, it is not our intention to pursue the narrative with the same minuteness throughout. After this period, Giovanni's history becomes so mixed up with that of public and well-known characters, that to attempt following it in detail would be to go over ground which many of our readers have already traversed, in the narratives of Ali Bey, and of several of our late travellers in Egypt, and neighbouring countries. Not that they are to suppose that the remainder of his story becomes on this account uninteresting—the many personal anecdotes every where interspersed, render it lively throughout.

Immediately on arriving at Alexandria, he enters into the service of the celebrated Pasha of Egypt, Mahomet Ali. At Cairo, and in other parts of Egypt, he meets with a variety of adventures. The Arab thieves seem to have given him frequent annoyance; and, on one occasion, after having been much tormented by their nightly visits, he unfortunately shoots the serjeant of his company by mistake, the poor man having crept out softly, an hour before sunrise, for the purpose of saying his prayers—"a custom," says Giovanni, "so little general, and especially at that hour among soldiers, that I do not recollect to have seen it observed by any other either before or since." He accompanies the expedition against the Wahabees under Toosoon Pasha, Ali's favourite son; of whose generalship, by the way, we are not led to form any very exalted opinion. Into the particulars and the result of this expedition we need not enter—the details are already before the public. Nor does Giovanni give us much information respecting the Red Sea, or Mecca, and other towns of Arabia on its eastern shore, in addition to what we have already obtained through other channels. There is, however, in this part of the tale, a sufficiency of "hair-breadth escapes and moving accidents," to amuse any reasonable reader. There are also some characteristic sketches of Ali, and of other remarkable personages, which are not destitute of historical importance.

After serving in two hazardous campaigns, Giovanni, with considerable difficulty, obtains a release from the army; and returns a second time to Cairo, where he resided during that insurrection of the soldiery by which the Pasha's life was so much endangered, and which was occasioned by an attempt to introduce among his troops the European method of drilling. On this occasion, Giovanni's honesty, which seems sometimes to have sat almost as lightly on him as his religion, gave way to the temptation of sharing the spoil with his comrades. On entering a house for the purpose of plunder, a more dextrous thief contrives to carry off both his pistols, which were mounted in silver gilt, and had cost him a hundred scudi. Seeing a large heavy chest, he calls a friend to share with him his good luck, and they hire an Arab porter for two or three piastres to carry it away. On opening their prize, they find that they have been at all this trouble and expense for the sake of a case of common crockery ware, which was hardly worth as many piastres as they had paid for its removal; and Giovanni had lost his fine pistols into the bargain!

Shortly afterwards we find him engaged in the service of Mr. Bankes, whom he accompanies in his tour through Egypt and Syria, and lauds sufficiently for his generosity and so forth, though Mr. B. tells us in his preface that many things of this kind he has modestly foreborne to translate. He afterwards serves in a similar capacity with other travellers,

and his incidental hints of his opinion about some of the number are a part of the work which will be read with some degree of curiosity. It would however be with an ill grace that we should, in these pages, accompany Giovanni in his wanderings—at all events till we have paid our respects in this way to his masters—neither shall we say any thing of his voyage to England, to give evidence upon a law-suit, in which the editor of his story was a party concerned—nor of the information we have thus obtained about Earl Grosvenor's splendid palace, or the unfurnished state and uncozy appearance of Mr. Bankes' big drawing-rooms—nor of the rudeness of the natives of Chester—nor of the peculiar excellency of the amusements at Vauxhall. Indeed, we are led to suspect that the narrative is not yet completed. Giovanni's pilgrimage with Lord Prudhoe will certainly form another chapter of accidents, if it will not quite furnish an additional volume. Nor do we expect that so restless a personage will be content to stop long in his projected situation as hotel-keeper for European visitors at Cairo, even if the steam-boat navigation of the Red Sea should so far succeed as to warrant his embarking his little capital in such a speculation. Should we however find him fairly established, we shall certainly speak a good word for him to the readers of the NATIONAL; and as, unluckily, an Irish absentee is no *rara avis in terris*, we are much mistaken if our host of Cairo will not have some reason to thank us for our recommendation.

ODE TO AN ELEPHANT.

Lambert of quadrupeds! I'd fain inquire
 The source of thy primeval sire;
 But find all sages quarrel on the root
 Of thy ancestral tree, thou bulky brute!
 Saucisathou taught, that some old flood,
 Retiring, left a generative mud—
 Which sunshine ripen'd into flesh and blood:
 Hence sprung, like mushrooms, man and beast,
 And elephants among the rest.

Democritus assured us he could trace,
 The first ingredients of thy race;
 And shows how atoms in eternal dance,
 Led by their ballet-master, Chance,
 Tried many a form, till in a lucky minute,
 They hit on order, and continued in it.

Spinoza tells us that necessity,
 Was sire to nature, and begat her,
 Before organic life began to be,
 By acting on immortal matter;
 And elephants, of course, obeyed the laws
 Of this inevitable final cause.

But Buffon vows, that plastic wants,
 Contrived the forms of elephants:
 That distance from the soil produced the snout—
 By poking, gradually lengthened out;
 And tusks were added, when privation,
 Became sufficing cause for their creation:
 Tapirs, he swears, are but thy younger brothers—
 Born in a newer world—and then supposes
 That having felt, as long as others,
 The inconvenience of their losses,
 They'll be enabled to prolong their noses
 Into probosces!