

FREE RUSSIA: By William Hepworth Dixon; Author of "Free America," "Her Majesty's Tower," &c. New York: Harper Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

Mr. Dixon has recently travelled from the Polar Sea to the Ural Mountains, and from the mouth of the Vistula to the Straits of Yenikale, visiting the four holy shrines of Solovetsk, Pechersk, St. George and Troitsa. His object in writing is to depict the actual state of the country, and the condition of the people. Having visited Russia in previous years, he considers himself in a position to judge of the reforms effected by the present Emperor. His book has been severely criticised in England; but, nevertheless, it has passed through three editions there. It is said that it was hastily written to anticipate another work on the same subject, which was in press. A Russian professor, writing to a St. Petersburg paper to disclaim all responsibility for the book, is reported to have said: "My respect for the author made me endeavor to induce him to abandon all idea of writing about a country perfectly unknown to him, or at least to postpone doing so." In the States, criticism has been even more severe. The *Tribune* says: "Finding the amusing fictions which he published upon this country successful as a speculation, he has lately made a journey, *a la* Munchausen, over Russia." Whether Mr. Dixon's information is correct or not, we cannot say; but the book is undoubtedly a very readable one.

THE ROB ROY ON THE JORDAN, NILE, Red Sea, and Gennesareth; a Canoe Cruise in Palestine and Egypt, and the Waters of Damascus. By J. Macgregor, M.A. With maps and illustrations. New York: Harper Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

Mr. Macgregor has, by means of his canoe, been able to visit, in past years, territories inaccessible to those travelling in the ordinary way; and, consequently, until then unknown. Some parts of the Danube and large portions of the rivers in Norway, which the Rob Roy descended, were previously entirely unknown; and, in his last journey, which forms the subject of this volume, he was able to study portions of the Jordan, which had been correctly delineated in no map, for the reason that no observer had been privileged to behold them. The account of his adventures is given in most graphic style, and every description is made clear by means of maps and illustrations. It would be incorrect, however, to consider the book as a mere record of adventure. The author carefully aims at the elucidation of Scripture narrative, giving, in many cases, the passage in full to which he refers; and, as a guide in studying the geography of the Bible, we would prefer this book, as far as it goes, to any other which we have seen.

As a specimen of Mr. Macgregor's style, we give one of his adventures on the upper part of the Jordan:—

We joined the Banias River where it runs between the houses of Aksees, or Absees, or Abseyieh, as it was called by each of my instructors yesterday.

The stream was about one hundred feet wide for a little, but narrowing and expanding at every turn. The water was turbid and in flood, whirling with eddies, the banks of reddish clay, and thick reeds nestled in the bights. Nobody was aroused in the village when we noiselessly launched the Rob Roy to float on the third stream of Jordan, as it had already floated on the other two.

Slowly we numbered each article that had to be stowed away, so as to see that nothing was taken that could possibly be left behind (for lightness), and nothing left that ought to be taken for safety. Hany was now to return towards Dan, whence the mules and baggage had already gone away, and he was to press on to Mellaha, near the end of Hooleh Lake, where he was to wait for me, and by relays to watch night and day until I might arrive, "any time during the next forty-eight hours."

It was bright sunshine above us and the river-stream looked hearty and strong below, but there was more than usual pressure between our hands as the Rob Roy glided off with my dragoman's earnest "God bless you!"

Once more alone, the interest and excitement were strung up to the highest pitch. It was not like the Ateibeh morass, where my tent was on shore, and I had only to get back to it. Here, on the Jordan, the stream was far too powerful to think of returning against it; and where, indeed, could I come back to?

The interest arose from the hope of discovering the real course of the Jordan.

Suppose we had ten miles of the Thames still uncertain in our maps, would it not be a reproach to English boatmen? But Jordan was an old river before the Thames was heard of, and the Thames will be forgotten when Jordan will be remembered for ever. What an honor, then, for the Rob Roy to trace even one new bend of this ancient river!

As the Hooleh Arabs seemed to be an ill-looking set, and had but a poor certificate of character from the tales of travellers, I tried to slip by them unperceived under the high banks, and this was the first place in my voyages where the natives were to be eluded.

On the Abana the difficult parts for the canoe were in deep rocky defiles, where no man, friend or foe, could come along the banks; but here, on Jordan, the banks were level and open to the prowling robbers. Moreover, I was to meet them, if at all, without the constraining pomp and presence of a retinue, and once captured, I would be lawful prize for a ransom.

No one caught sight of the canoe as she stole past the mat houses of Absees under a few palm-trees. Then the river wound very crookedly, but with steep banks and jungle concealing me. The bends were so angular and the current so swift that in the turns it was utterly impossible not to run into the thick overhanging canes. Then it was I invented a new way of getting round sharp serpentine corners, and which I beg to commend very warmly to canoeists.

This new *pas* in the canoe I called "waltzing," the Rob Roy being my fair partner; and as we were whirling about in this dance without music, I saw a head gazing over the reeds in amazement. His eyes opened large, up went his hands, and he disappeared with a yell. Soon I heard others shouting, and soon—too soon—they all ran near to see. In a moment I noticed how very different they were in manner from any other spectators that so often had run alongside me in Europe and America. They were dancing in frantic excitement and shouting ferociously. The bounding current bore me along too fast for their running, but while I had to go round the long bends, they crossed by shorter routes, and saluted my approach with a volley of clods. All these fell harmless, and at the next bend the Hasbany River ran into the Banias; so the men were left at the point of junction, high on the steep bank, screaming until I disappeared.

The Hasbany joins the Banias in a proper orthodox way, each river yielding its tribute quietly to the united whole, and now for the first time is formed the veritable Jordan. Vandevelde marks this spot near Tell Sheikh Yusuf, "the Mount of the lord Joseph;" and he is quite right, for there was the green hill close by the shore, the junction of the geographical and the historic streams of Jordan, the wedding of the