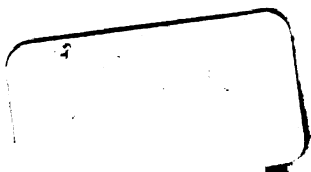

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THE PORTFOLIO;

OR A

Collection

OF

STATE PAPERS,

ETC. ETC.

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

HISTORY OF OUR TIMES.

ΔΕΞΑΙ.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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1836.

DECLARATION OF CIRCASSIAN INDEPENDENCE,
ADDRESSED TO THE COURTS OF EUROPE.

THE inhabitants of the Caucasus, instead of being subject to Russia, are not even at peace with her, but have for many years been engaged in continual war. This war they have maintained single-handed. They have received at no period encouragement or assistance from any Power. While the Porte held the supremacy of these Provinces they were left for their means of defence to themselves, but lately the Porte has in every way betrayed and abandoned them. One Pasha opened the gates of Anapa to Muscovite gold, telling the Circassians that the Russians marched as friends to support the Sultan against the Rebel Chiefs of Arminestan. Another Pasha again betrayed them, and left their country by night. Since then the Circassians have sent repeated deputations to the Sultan, to offer their devotion, to request assistance: they have, however, been

treated with coldness. They have also applied to Persia with no better success, and finally to Mehemet Ali, who, although appreciating their devotion, was too far off then to support them.

In all these cases the deputies of Circassia had been instructed to tell to those who, being at a distance, did not know, how intolerable was the oppression of Russia, how hostile she was to the customs, the faith and happiness of all men (or why should the Circassians have fought so long against her), how treacherous were her generals, and how savage her soldiers, — that therefore it was the interest of no one that the Circassians should be destroyed. On the contrary, that it was the interest of all the Circassians should be supported. A hundred thousand Muscovite troops occupied now in fighting with us, or in watching and blockading us, will then be fighting with you. A hundred thousand men now scattered over our barren and steep rocks, and struggling with our hardy mountaineers, will then be overrunning your rich plains, and enslaving your Rayas and yourselves. Our mountains have been the ramparts of Persia and Turkey, they will become, unless supported, the gate to both—they

are now the only shelter for both. They are the doors of the house, by closing which alone the hearth can be defended. But, moreover, our blood, Circassian blood, fills the veins of the Sultan. His mother, his harem, is Circassian. His slaves are Circassians. His ministers and his generals are Circassian. He is the chief of our faith, and also of our race; he possesses our hearts, and we offer him our allegiance;—by all these ties we claim from him countenance and support, and if he will not, or cannot defend his children and his subjects, let him think of the Khans of the Crimea, whose descendant is among us.

Such were the words our deputies were instructed to pronounce, but they were unheeded. They would not have been so, if the Sultan knew how many hearts and swords he can command, when he ceases to be the friend of the Muscovite.

We know that Russia is not the only power in the world. We know that there are other powers greater than Russia, who, though powerful are benevolent, who instruct the ignorant, who protect the weak, who are not friends to the Russians, but rather their enemies, and who are not enemies of the Sultan, but his friends. We know that

England and France are the first among the nations of the globe, and were great and powerful when the Russians came in little boats, and got from us permission to catch fish in the sea of Azof.

We thought that England and France would take no interest in a simple and poor people like us, but we did not doubt that such wise nations knew that we were not Russians, and though we know little, and have no artillery, generals, discipline, ships, or riches — that we are an honest people, and peaceable when let alone, but that we hate the Russians with good cause, and almost always beat them. It is, therefore, with the profoundest humiliation that we have learnt that our country is marked, on all the maps printed in Europe, as a portion of Russia; that Treaties, of which we know nothing, should have been signed between Russia and Turkey, pretending to hand over to the Russians these warriors that make Russia tremble, and these mountains where her footsteps have never come; that Russia tells in the West that the Circassians are her slaves, or wild bandits and savages whom no kindness can soften, and no laws can restrain.

We most solemnly protest in the face of heaven against such womanish arts and falsehood. We answer words with words, but it is truth against falsehood: for forty years we have protested triumphantly against accusations with our arms; this ink, as the blood we have spilt, declares our independence; and these are the seals of men who have known no superior save the decision of their country—men who understand no subtle arguments—but who know how to use their weapons when the Russians come within their reach.

Who has power to give us away? Our allegiance is offered to the Sultan, but if he is at peace with Russia he cannot accept it, for Circassia is at war. Our allegiance is a free offering, he cannot sell it, because he has not bought it.

Let not a great nation, like England, to whom our eyes are turned, and our hands are raised, think of us at all if it be to do us injustice. Let her not open her ear to the wiles of the Russian, while she closes it to the prayer of the Circassian. Let her judge by facts between the people that is called savage and barbarous, and its calumniator.

We are Four Millions, but we have unfortunately

been divided into many tribes, languages, and creeds ; we have various customs, traditions, interests, alliances, and feuds. We have hitherto never had one purpose, but we have modes of government, and habits of submission and command. The chief chosen by each body during war is implicitly obeyed, and our princes and our elders govern according to the custom of each place with greater authority than in the great states around us ; but from our wanting a common chief amongst ourselves, we who have ruled throughout the east have chosen always a foreign leader. We have thus voluntarily submitted to the dominion of the Khans of the Crimea, and afterwards to the Sultans of Constantinople.

Russia has attempted, whenever she had overpowered any portion of our territory, and in some she has succeeded, to reduce us to the condition of serfs, to enrol us in her armies, to make us spend our sweat and our blood to enrich her ; to fight her battles, and to enslave to her others, even our own countrymen and co-religionaries. Hatred has, therefore, grown up between us, and bloodshed is unceasing, otherwise we might long ago have submitted to a Muscovite chief.

It would be a long and sad story to relate the acts of her cruelty, her faith violated, her promises broken; how she has encircled our country on every side; cut us off from the necessaries of life; how she has intercepted our commerce; how she has caused to fall under the knife of the hired assassin the last remnants of our ancient houses, and left us without chiefs to obey; how she has exterminated whole tribes and villages; how she has bought the treacherous agents of the Porte; how she has reduced us to poverty, and driven us into hatred and exasperation against all the world, by the horrors she committed—while by her falsehoods she degraded us in the eyes of the Christian nations of Europe.

We have lost the stocks that formerly could have collected hundreds of thousands of men under their banners—but we are now at last united all as one man in hatred to Russia—200,000 alone of our people have been subjected by her during this long contest, of the remainder not one has voluntarily served Russia. Many children have been stolen, and sons of nobles taken as hostages; but such as could recollect a country, have made their escape.

We have amongst us men who have been favoured and flattered and honoured by the Emperor, and who have preferred to that favour the dangers of their country. We have amongst us thousands of Russians, who prefer our barbarism to the civilization of their country. Russia has built forts on points of our territory, but they dare not venture beyond the reach of their guns—50,000 Russians have lately made an inroad, and they have been beaten.

It is by arms, not by words, that a country can be conquered. If Russia conquers us, it will not be by arms, but by cutting off our communications, and making use of Turkey and Persia as if they were already hers; by rendering the sea impassable, as if it were her own; by blockading our coast; by destroying not only our vessels, but those of other states which approach us; by depriving us of a market for our produce; by preventing us from obtaining salt, gunpowder, and other necessaries of war, which to us are necessaries of life—by depriving us of hope.

But we are independent—we are at war—we are victors. The representative of the Emperor, who

numbers us in Europe as his slaves, who marks this country as his on the map, has lately opened communications with the Circassians—not to offer pardon for rebellion, but to bargain for the retreat of 20,000 men enveloped by our people, and to make arrangements for exchange of prisoners.

(In our next number, which will not appear till Saturday, the 2d of January, 1836, we will present to our readers a sketch of the state of Circassia, and of recent events in that country; without which they will be unable to appreciate the effect of this first indication of union among these people—of reliance on Europe; nor less important will be the effect which the sympathy of Europe will produce on them, and the encouragement they will receive from the indignation which cannot fail to be raised against *their* enemy, in consequence of her having to such a degree made dupes of us.)

