

Other true sharks, as the porbeagle (*Lamna cornubia*), and the Greenland shark (*Scymnus borealis*), so well known to the Greenland fishers as the deadly foe of the whale, are sometimes also to be seen. The latter species is extremely tenacious of life, and its ferocity is dreadful; it attacks the whale, rending out with every snap large masses of the whale's flesh, while the latter lashes the water with agony in vain efforts to drive away his foe.

We may here observe a singular circumstance, connected with the sharks of the temperate and warmer latitudes, as the white shark and the blue shark, that they are often seen attended by two or

more small fishes, called pilot-fishes (*Naucrates ductor*), between which and themselves a singular friendship subsists; they have been known to interpose between their friend and the baited hook, and running against his muzzle, turn him from it. On the other hand, perhaps, where they see no danger, they will direct him to the bait, and even cling to him as he is hoisted up on deck. This singular fish will also attend upon vessels during their course, and that for months together, a circumstance known to the ancients, who regarded it as a pilot to the doubtful navigator, and held it sacred. The pilot-fish is transversely banded, and belongs to the mackerel family.

## THE CIRCASSIANS.



CIRCASSIA is a border-land between Europe and Asia, bounded by the Black and Caspian Seas. It is a region of mountains, many of them snow-capped nearly all the year round; and in many districts it is wholly destitute of trees. The valleys between the mountains are fruitful. There are no cities or towns; the people dwell in villages or encampments, which are often broken up and moved from place to place. A village consists of a number of huts, formed of canvas and plaited osiers, covered with straw at the top.

The Circassians are of Tartar origin, and retain the wandering, warlike, robber-like character of their forefathers. Indeed, the original meaning of their name is "brigands," or "highwaymen," but they proudly call themselves Adighé, or "the noble."

They are divided and subdivided into tribes, clans, and families. They have fine features, and in their habits are lively, active, and bold. The dress of

the humbler classes is simply a goat-skin cloak, with the hair outside; and their weapon is a short iron-pointed staff, which they throw with great skill. The chiefs present a most martial appearance on horseback, when coated with mail, with helmet on head, and armed with muskets, bows and arrows, and short swords.

The women have bright, delicate complexions, and sweet expression of countenance. They are regarded as among the most beautiful specimens of the human race; but their very beauty leads to their being sold into slavery to the Turks. Even parents sell their young daughters. The female dress is a cap drawn up at top into a sort of crown, under which their hair is turned into a bunch. In person and in domestic habits they are very cleanly.

The Circassians are bad husbandmen; they grow chiefly millet, of which they make their bread. Their principal care is the rearing of horses, in which they take much pride.

They have several customs which re-





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mind us of Bible times. Old men sit at the entrances of their villages as judges, to settle disputes; and their decision is heard without a murmur.

Hospitality to strangers is held as a strict duty. Whatever be the rank in life of the stranger, all the members of the family rise to receive him, and con-



duct him into the house, and so long as he remains their guest they will defend him at all cost and danger from those who seek to injure him. Such is their respect for age, that the younger brother rises from his seat when his elder brother enters a room, and is silent when he speaks. To the old their respect is most devoted and humble. Any one who slays a person, whether by accident or design, is at once pursued by the members of the family of the dead. But there are places of refuge into which the slayer may flee and be safe. A man closely followed by his enemies, if he can reach a dwelling where there is a woman, and touch her hand, is protected as long as he remains under that roof; but if he leave it he is exposed to the wrath of his pursuers.

They have also a strange practice for a man to buy a wife with the price of a number of sheep or oxen, and then for him to go, with his friends, to the bride's home and carry her off by force.

There are other rough usages, which show that as a people they cannot take rank among the more advanced nations of the earth. The tribes are often at war with each other; they are the enemies of travellers, whom they often plunder; prisoners are made slaves; and their hatred to the Russians, who are their neighbours, is of the fiercest kind. Russian officers of rank have been seized, and not allowed their liberty without a heavy ransom. These latter have for ages sought to become entire masters of Circassia, and with increasing success.

The Circassians have no books—in fact, no written language; their only way of preserving the knowledge of past

events is by poetry, which is repeated from father to son. Hunting, riding, fencing, and other bodily exercises, are the only education of the young. The greater part of these people are the followers of Mohammed; and some are pagans, who worship the gods of war, thunder, fire, and the winds. A few are professing Christians.

Their morality is of a very low order. They do not consider it wrong to thief; the only disgrace is for the thief to allow himself to be caught, in which case he has to stand up before the whole of the tribe, and restore the stolen goods, amidst the jeers and mockery of all the people, because he was so clumsy as to permit himself to be found out. What with migration, guerilla warfare, and contagious diseases, as small-pox—Circassia is becoming rapidly depopulated. In affinity with the Circassians are the *Abases*, who speak a dialect akin to Circassian. They are semi-barbarous, and live on the produce of their herds and from the spoil of their brigandage. Their features show no sign of Circassian grace. They have a narrow head, a prominent nose, and the lower half of the face is extremely short.

Among the Circassians who profess the Mohammedan faith, it is a point of great importance to bury the dead with the face towards their sacred city, Mecca, in Arabia Felix. The moolah, or priest, reads sentences from the Koran over the body, and his fee for the service is the best horse of the deceased. They believe that the spirits of those who die in battle are immediately received into Paradise, especially if they have fallen in conflict with the Russians.

