

## Log Book.

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**“My Parentage and Early Career as a Slave.”**—The article in our last number with this heading, was entirely written by Selim Agha, formerly a slave, and is the record of his own adventures, which his subsequent education and his natural ability have enabled him to give in this interesting form. We mention this fact, as the *Queen*, in noticing the article, expressed an opinion that it was “manifestly the work of a cultivated European.”

### Recognition of Mr. Leigh Smith's Services.

—We rejoice to hear that this persevering Arctic voyager, who in his voyage of 1873 did such good service in furnishing succour to the Swedish expedition, has had the Order of the Pole Star conferred upon him by His Majesty King Oscar II.

### Count Wilczek's Approaching Arctic Trip.

—Count Wilczek, the Austrian traveller, is preparing for a second Arctic voyage during the season, to Novaya Zemlya. He is not without hope of discovering some traces of the Austro-Hungarian Expedition of 1872; and with the idea of replenishing their failing stock of provisions, he is having constructed a number of small balloons which will be launched in every likely direction which the good ship ‘Tegethoff’ may have taken.

**Exploration in Iceland.**—The exploration of the European Alps does not any longer content the more ambitious members of the Alpine Club, and they are directing their attention to “pastures new.” At the last meeting of the Club, which was held on the 5th of May, Mr. W. L. Watts explained his project of exploring the vast volcanic and glacier region of the Vatna Jökull, which occupies an area of 3800 square miles, and rises to a height of more than 6000 feet. Mr. Watts has already spent some time on this Jökull in 1871, when he was accompanied by his friend Mr. John Milne. He proposes now to start with a party of six or eight, and hopes to be able to accomplish his task in the course of three months, and at an expense not exceeding 50*l.* a head. There is no doubt that an expedition such as this would yield results interesting to geographers, and particularly to geologists, for although several attempts have been made to penetrate into this region, no one has succeeded hitherto in reaching the seat of present volcanic activity or of climbing the summit of any of the more prominent hills. Mr. Watts intends to start on the 31st of May, and we wish him success with all our heart.

**European Measurement of a Degree.**—The surveys in connection with the measurement of a degree have been resumed, in the beginning of May, under the direction of Colonel Ganhal of the Austrian, and General de Vecchi of the Italian Engineers, who are now measuring a base-line in the neighbourhood of Udine, as recommended at the meeting of the Permanent Commission held at Vienna in September last.

**Organization of Russian Turkistan.**—The administration, or rather mal-administration of Russian Turkistan has been the cause of much anxiety to the

Russian Government. The governor-general hitherto received a fixed sum annually from the Imperial treasury, which he expended according to his own discretion. He appointed and dismissed officials, and even enjoyed the right of decorating his subordinates. So great and unrestrained were his powers that the title of Polpadishah, conferred upon him by the inhabitants, would appear to be fully deserved. The district governors (Uyest Nachalniks) who served under him, were military men, unacquainted with the language and the customs of the people whom they were to govern, and more intent upon pleasure than duty. General Kaufmann, who is not personally charged with any arbitrary conduct, though he is certainly to blame for not having kept his subordinates under greater restraint, was the first to propose a reform. At his suggestion a commission, presided over by General A. Nenkoichitzky, met at St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1873 for the purpose of elaborating a project for the future government of the Central Asiatic provinces. The report of this commission has now been published. Turkistan will consist in future of the territories or governments of Semirechensk, Syr Daria, and Samarkand; the latter including the districts of Samarkand, Khojend, Kattykurgan, and Penjakend, and the district of Amu Daria, including the Kizil-Kum steppe. A governor-general will be placed at the head of the entire province; the territories will be under a military governor and a civilian vice-governor, and each district under a military district chief (Uyesti Nachalnik). On the staff of each vice-governor there will be a medical inspector, an engineer, an architect, a forester, a mining engineer, and a surveyor. Police boards will be instituted at Samarkand, Tashkend, and Vernoe, and commissioners of police appointed to the other towns. The organization is of a thoroughly military character, and the governor-general will in future be the subordinate of the Minister for War, who will likewise appoint all superior officers and officials. The powers of the governor-general have also been curtailed in some other respects, so as to render them somewhat analogous to those enjoyed by the same class of officials in other parts of the empire. He will, however, retain the privilege of conducting the diplomatic intercourse with the neighbouring states of Asia, of concluding postal contracts, &c. The entire expense of this administrative machinery is estimated at 28,000*l.* a year, exclusive of the cost of the police, the postal service, the collection of revenue, the making of roads, the administration of justice, and of other branches of administration. The governor-general is to enjoy an allowance of 1200*l.*, in addition to his salary; military governors are to have 600*l.* to 720*l.*, civilian vice-governors 180*l.*, and senior officials 100*l.* a year.

The project has been submitted to the Council of the Empire, but does not appear to have met with the favourable reception which its originator anticipated, for it has been referred, in the beginning of May, to the various ministers of State, and the governors of other outlying provinces, and it is anticipated that their reports upon it will turn out adversely. Under these circumstances, General Kaufmann is expected to resign the command which he has held for so many years. For the present, he has been granted three months' leave of absence.

We may mention in connection with this subject