

truth, that to take a long voyage on board a great ocean steamer is a very fairly economical way of passing a holiday. World travel, in fact, is no longer reserved for a few rich and adventurous men, but has become a recognised pursuit. Not long ago I met abroad an American lady who had herself been to most places, and asked me if I was fond of travel? I answered, that in a humble way I was. Europe or globe-trotting? she simply inquired. Well, now that globe-trotting has become so common, is the Alpine Club to ignore it and lag behind? We must not look upon the St. Gotthard, the Chemin de Fer de l'Est, and the Paris-Genève or Paris-Lausanne, as the sole roads to happiness. There are other routes leading to ranges higher than the Alps, and it is now comparatively easy and not enormously expensive to traverse them; and along these lines our younger and more daring members must thread their way. Your president, gentlemen, and Mr. Donkin, both very busy men, have, as I have pointed out, shown you what can be done, and I trust that their example will be followed and enlarged upon, and that other members, with more time at their disposal, will not only seek the snows of the Caucasus, but will make more degrees longitude, east or west, as the case may be. The time has now arrived when it is absolutely necessary to break fresh ground; and unless this is done we shall cease to be the leading body of mountaineers; and have to be content with an honoured but effete old age, leading to extinction. As the youthful fox learns from the thoughtful and benevolent cub-hunter—we must go far afield or perish.

THE ASCENT OF TETNULD TAU.*

BY CLINTON DENT (*President*).

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 1, 1887.)

A STRONG inclination to follow good advice has ever actuated me, and it has been matter for constant regret that opportunities for so doing seldom if ever occurred. No great while ago I put myself in a literary position to receive much wise counsel; and I got it. Being desirous, when engaged on this paper, to profit by lessons inculcated, and anxious to frame something that might be worthy of perusal, I

* I preserve the title under which the paper was read before the Club for the reasons mentioned below (p. 232, footnote).

studied what the critics had been pleased to say. Such perplexity was the result, that the idea of describing the present expedition at all was well-nigh abandoned. Had I, for example, been too serious, or too prone to levity? One estimable counsellor said plainly that I had been guilty of attempting to make too many jokes. That was in a paper of ecclesiastical tendencies. Another hinted that he was unable to see any. That was in a journal published north of the Tweed. Evidently the wished-for opportunity had not arrived. There was no alternative, then, when advisers differed so materially, but to disregard them altogether, and to set forth a plain tale—a small chapter of our experiences in the Caucasus—in such language as naturally occurred, trusting to the indulgence and long-suffering of my readers.

As a dry biscuit is considered a proper prelude to the discussion of wine, so may I, perhaps, be pardoned if I make mention of one or two dry facts before discussing the main fare of this paper. It would seem presumptive to suppose that the members of the Alpine Club can have anything to learn about one of the finest mountain chains in the world, and I only desire to refresh the memories of my readers. The chain of the Caucasus, extending roughly from the Black Sea on the west to the Caspian on the east in one long spine, may be considered from the high mountaineering point of view to be limited by Mount Elbruz* at one end, and Kasbek at the other. This division is known as the Central Caucasus. Kasbek lies close to the great Dariel Pass, which is crossed by a military road connecting Vladikafkaz on the north with Tiflis on the south. The principal peaks are situated in the middle of the Central Caucasus, culminating in the great mass of Koschtan Tau (17,096 feet), which is second only to Elbruz in point of height. So far as I know, three peaks only of the entire chain, above fifteen thousand feet, had previously been ascended: viz., Elbruz by Mr. Grove's party,† Mr. Freshfield and others; Kasbek possibly by Prometheus, certainly by Mr. Freshfield‡ and other climbers; and Adai-khokh by M. de Déchy.§ In future years, when Europe has been rearranged, and wars and rumours of wars have ceased to be, M. de Déchy's rather sanguine expectations may be

* Known locally by the name of Minghi Tau. See Freshfield's *Central Caucasus*, p. 352.

† *Alpine Journal*, vol. vii. p. 113.

‡ *Central Caucasus*, p. 179.

§ *Alpine Journal*, vol. xii. pp. 91, 209.

realised, and the Caucasian snow-fields may become the regular haunt of the mountaineer. Then may the village of Bezingi, situated on the north side of the chain at the foot of these mighty giants, develop into a Grindelwald or Zermatt, and assume an importance which up to the present seems rather wanting. Giant hotels may rise, crowds of knickerbockered climbers may throng what represents its streets, and—last stage of development—cricket matches may be played on its central platz, the natives assembling to watch the local eleven contending against the champion team of all Urusbieh; this may happen, but there are few signs of it as yet.

On the evening of August 21 we picked our way along the Western Terek valley *en route* for Bezingi, a little anxious as to the possibility of discovering the hamlet before night-fall. No lights are ever to be seen in the villages, but certain signs raised our hopes and led us to believe that we were nearing civilisation, for the amount of garbage in the path increased at each step. Presently we stopped and were told that we had arrived. No village could be seen, however, but the path lay high, and the difficulty was easily explained. Bezingi is beautifully situated on a brown and barren slope, and is unpretending, even modest, in its nature. When the natives wanted in the old days to construct a house (there are no modern buildings) they cut out a large wedge-shaped piece of the side of the hill to save trouble, so that one wall consisted of the vertically cut soil. As the roofs were covered with turf, and their inclination was nearly uniform with the slope of the hill, the village was almost invisible from above.

The caravan consisted of Mr. Donkin and myself, the guides, Alexander Burgener, Basil Andenmatten, and an imbecile interpreter whose name ought scarcely to be mentioned in the same breath with those just given. A tattered boy, whose company we eschewed, as he was a perfect menagerie, and two other natives, completed the party. This boy, we trusted, was not such a fool as he looked, but Providence had not so ordained it. He was said to be possessed of great topographical acumen, but did not fulfil expectations. He certainly chose the right path once, while it was light, but guided us systematically wrong after sunset. Familiar now with the manners and customs of the country, we reined in at a promising-looking outhouse, and entering boldly, demanded, like the Knight of Snowdown,—

Rest and a guide, and food and fire.

Another stage had been reached, and at last we were within touch of the great snow mountains. The wearisome journeys across the steppe in the crawling trains were things of the past; our tossing on the Black Sea was forgotten; the toilsome ride in a baking sun, perched on the exquisite instruments of torture called saddles, were done with for the time. They are terrible things, those native saddles; but they are easy to ride on in the sense that it is difficult to fall off. The rider retains his position on the same principle that a clothes-peg sticks on an airing line. The horses are weedy, melancholy animals, afflicted with chronic thirst. They have little energy save when they shake themselves. This they do with astounding and distressing vigour. We were among a new, and to us a strange people: the motley crowds that we used to see at the railway stations, the Jews, Turks, Circassians, Mongrel—I mean Mingrelians, and others, were replaced by a purer race, that is, in point of descent only. One Caucasian village is very like another, and the manners and customs and characteristics of the natives in all the parts we visited were much the same. The general design of the house in which we were lodged was severe in its simplicity—*simplex munditiis*, unless the latter word implies cleanliness, as I have an inkling it does. It comprised one room, which was situated, rather literally, on the ground-floor. The front wall was of stone plastered over with mud, the chinks stopped up with anything that came handy. The floor was such as nature provided. The roof, constructed by the art of man, was of wood, decorated with prodigious festoons of cobwebs, and covered externally with turf. The single apartment in the town that boasted a glass window was reserved for the use—this I knew only by hearsay—of the ladies holding official positions in the prince's household, but ours was the next best. A hole, some three feet square, boarded up at night, admitted at once into our apartment air, light, and the perfume of an adjoining stable yard. The room was furnished with an uncompromising seat, an uncertain table, and the framework of a suspicious bed. We were hospitably received, and invited to seat ourselves. Mindful of our lengthy ride, we were impelled only by the strongest sense of the proffered courtesy to do so. We were given to understand that refreshments were being prepared, and while waiting composed ourselves in preparation for the ordeal which invariably awaits the traveller during his sojourn at a Caucasian village. There was no delay. Almost immediately on our arrival we held

the customary levée, a function for which there was no need to issue any invitations. In an astonishingly short period of time, considering the lateness of the hour, many natives straggled in and occupied standing positions near the door. Distinctions as to morning or evening dress were superfluous, for it is not customary, so far as I know, for the Caucasian to vary his apparel during the summer in any manner at any period of the twenty-four hours. For what conceivable purpose, indeed, should a Caucasian take off his clothes at any time. To wash? Bezingi has not been washed since the Deluge.

After a while our guests fell to talking, but not apparently, as a rule, about us. Presently some member of the party who was of an observant turn of mind caught sight of the nails in the guides' boots; thereupon he seized the foot and examined the phenomenon closely. This always led to infinite talk. One of us, perhaps, drew out a pocket knife, in order to prepare a toothpick from the back of the bed, or for some such purpose; and straightway a native would approach and gently take away the article for examination. They were judges of cutlery, and prone to try the edge of the blade on their beards. As these were sometimes our eating knives, this experimental practice gave us anxiety and subsequent trouble in stropping. Then entered five or six boys, who proceeded to places in the front row. They did not repay our observant study, as their sole occupation consisted in occasionally scratching themselves. Presently an under-strapper brought us freshly soured milk in a rather dirty wooden bowl, but the milk was excellent, and all our guests seemed pleased when we drank of it. Then an interval of silence. After this the heir presumptive to the principality entered, carrying a little table, the centre occupied by a flat dish containing a mixture of butter, cheese, meal, and sundries. This comprehensive dish was surrounded by triangular lumps of hot unleavened bread, set out as a house-maid arranges books on a drawing-room table. We did justice to the repast and inferred that we were expected to remain, for it is not easy to get up and walk immediately after eating hot unleavened bread. We, too, for a while were silent, and felt even as the young 'ooman on the next form but two, at the Brick Lane Branch of the United Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Association, appeared to the eyes of Mr. Weller the elder. The table was set aside, and the natives filtered out for a time. A remarkable visitor next called, without being announced. An unkempt man, so dirty

that he even surprised us by his state, entered and took up a good position. We made no sign, and he made no sign. For some ten minutes he stared at us in silence; then he examined an ice-axe closely. Whether he was pleased or not we were unable to tell. His features, from various causes, did not allow of mobility or expression. He put the axe back, and then fell to staring at us again. This time he took a twenty minutes' spell at it. Not a sound was heard to proceed from his lips. He spake no word. He spat once on the floor, but not in a manner calculated to give offence. Then he went away. The interview was over. Then the first set of guests came in again, but we felt that we had done our duty socially, and made ostentatious preparations for going to bed. This interested them. We took out certain paper packets and sprinkled the contents over the mattress. It was a pure formality, but we thought we would observe it. The natives became absorbed. 'Behold!' they seemed to say, 'these men scatter rare and costly powders on their couches before they go to rest. This is without doubt their barbaric method of offering up prayer.' A few minutes' talk and a little pushing on the part of the interpreter persuaded the guests to disperse; the door was bolted, the blinds drawn by the simple process of wedging a board into the window, and we were left to ourselves.

Of the natives that we met on this north side of the chain I may say at once that we found them simple, curious, dirty, and lazy. Their favourite and most habitual exercise is talking. They have no taste or aptitude for thieving. Like most other people, they are born liars. They have an undeniable talent for petty swindling. We were told afterwards that they have the character in the parts of being treacherous. This, I think, is far from the case. They are said not to value human life. So much the better for the traveller; people are not likely to take what they do not value.

Our business lay in other and higher regions, and we were not desirous of staying a moment longer than was necessary in the village. But, as in other parts of this strange country, the difficulty of getting into a given place is only equalled by that experienced in getting away from it again. In Russia there is usually difficulty in getting passports back from the police offices. In the Caucasus the delay is occasioned by the almost equally important article of food. The natives do not understand provisioning a party, and their views as to what are proper charges are unduly elastic, or rather extensile. The traveller, it is true, pays

nothing for the rest and refreshment which the native creed enjoins shall be supplied to him. There is something fine, dignified, and touching in such chivalrous hospitality; but the Caucasians, while preserving the traditional spirit, are a practical people, and of course a good deal of swindling has to be done in order to make a profit. We longed, too, for the solitude of the mountains, and for purer air than the village afforded. Let me do justice, however. In one respect Bezingi might teach a lesson to more civilised towns: its drains are never out of order. The natives get over the difficulty which so perplexes sanitary engineers in a manner masterly in its simplicity. There are no drains.

The whole of the next morning was spent in a prolonged wrangle with the horsemen, who wanted to be paid three days' return journey. This we held to be exorbitant, and signified the same in the usual manner. Thereupon the villagers refused us any assistance in carrying our tent and provisions up to our proposed camping-place. Our side was getting rather the worst of it, when two allies came to our aid—one, the prince, a fine old man of great stature, who wore habitually the air of mild melancholy commonly observed in those who consider themselves superior to the rest of their fellow-creatures; the other, a sturdy, good-tempered native, whom we conceived to be head of the village police. Unhappily they introduced new arguments, which required full discussion. Towards the afternoon the conversation, which had at times become very animated, slackened somewhat. A compromise had been effected. Our interpreter made us understand with a good deal of difficulty that we might have three horses and a donkey as beasts of transport. Such a cavalcade was utterly unnecessary, but there appeared to be no help for it, so we concluded the arrangement. Our interpreter generally mismanaged everything for us, and this transaction was but a type of many others conducted through his agency. Nearly all our troubles were either due to or aggravated by this imbecile, and in a strange country the importance of an interpreter can hardly be over-estimated. The creature could only communicate with such of the natives as were able to speak Russian, which few of them were able to do. He could speak a few words of French, which was the language in which we addressed our remarks at him, but when he consented to listen was almost incapable of understanding. He was not a good cook; indeed, his sole performance in this direction consisted in once boiling an egg wrong. There were moments when we were so

aggravated that we could have brained him, and were restrained only by the reflection that it was too complimentary a form of homicide. Let me dismiss him at once. When we parted from him at the end of our tour, he asked about five times more than he was entitled to. I feel bound, in justice to him, to add that he did not get it. He desired that his name should be mentioned to any of our friends who might be travelling in the Caucasus. Very well. His name was Constantine Tsoulai.

Having with much difficulty persuaded the natives to furnish us with a supply of bread, we started forth rather late in the afternoon, prepared to camp at nightfall wherever we might find ourselves. Going up the valley leading to the great Bezingi or Urban Glacier the natives selected the path on the true right of the river; it is infinitely better and easier, as we found in descending, to follow the route on the other side of the stream—that is, the true left. Progress was very slow. Although there were three horses, the natives insisted on piling all the luggage on the little donkey, an exceedingly intelligent, active, and vicious animal, with a preternaturally thin set of legs. In addition to the customary halts—about every quarter of an hour—for conversation, innumerable other delays were occasioned. Three or four times the small donkey was flattened down by his burden, and his little legs spread out sideways, so that he looked like a tortoise. This disaster, as might be supposed, set up much chatter; as if they thought that because they could talk the hind legs off a jackass, they could talk them on again. Then, all assisting, we propped the donkey up. The beast shook himself, one bit of string broke, and the whole of his bundles came off. We insisted, and the horses took each a small share of the baggage. Once or twice the natives all sat down, twisted up long wisps of grass, and stuffed them into their hide shoes. This is their way of putting on clean stockings. At sunset they all stopped once more and fell to praying; we were in a hurry, and did not precisely follow their example.

Between the Bezingi and Mishirgi Glaciers are some grass slopes, but to reach these we had to ford the torrent descending from the Mishirgi glacier. Here, for the first time, the horses were of use; the little donkey, which was christened 'Garlic,' on the ground that it was very strong, and that a very little of it went a very long way, carried very nearly the whole of the luggage, together with a native weighing about twelve stone who jumped on his back at the last moment,

across the river in the most extraordinary way. If the little animal had once lost its footing on the round loose boulders it must infallibly have been swept away, and there would have been an end of our mountaineering. We could have spared the native driver without regret, but we could not have spared our tent and provisions. It was almost dark by the time we reached the slopes. Having repelled, without much formality, a wild onslaught made by three dogs, the tent was hurriedly pitched and the blankets spread. Now the natives were quick enough; in a very few minutes a fire was lighted, and a sheep, for which we afterwards paid three shillings, was brought in, killed, and cut up with a rapidity and dexterity for which the Caucasians are famous. The prospects for the morrow seemed gloomy, for the clouds were low down on the mountains around. Still we were near them, and that was something. After a while the meat was pronounced to be ready. Our enjoyment of the repast was somewhat modified by the fact that the whole of the cooked meat had to be spread out inside the tent to cool, partly because the natives would have eaten it all if we had not kept it under observation, and partly because the threatening rain would have spoilt it. As an anatomical study the arrangement was interesting; but the presence of numerous steaming lumps of meat in the somewhat limited space afforded was not exactly appetising.

The morning gave little promise of improvement in the weather. The mists filled up the glacier valleys and cut off all view; the guides, therefore, were sent on to reconnoitre, and we decided to collect firewood and get everything in order for pushing further up later in the day; but about noon the rain began to fall so heavily that we decided to remain where we were, a plan of inaction which the natives seemed to appreciate and approve of at once. We had some opportunity during the day of noting that both the Mishirgi and the great Bezingi glaciers had shrunk considerably, but in this climate marks on the rocks from glacier action or from fracture preserve their fresh appearance for such an indefinite period that we could form no idea whether the retreat was recent or not. We were still in great doubt as to the exact situation of Koschtan Tau and Dych Tau, which peaks we judged would be our principal guides to the topography of the district. We had been told that the Russian official map was hopelessly misleading in all the region above the snow-line, and we certainly found it so; nor could we derive much information from the natives, not that they were unwilling

to impart what they knew, but a simple question as to the name of a given point would start the whole lot talking at once for an hour or more. We gathered, however, that they called the mountain which we hoped to recognise as Dych Tau by the name of Koschtan Tau, while to the peak marked Koschtan Tau in our map, and in nearly all other maps,* some of them gave the name of Dych Tau. As to the whereabouts of Tetnuld their ideas were vague, but all agreed as to the situation of Djanga.

To cut a long story short, it was not until August 24 that the weather cleared sufficiently to enable us to make out the geography. Burgener and I on that day went right up the Koschtan Tau glacier and identified points, but recognised, to our great disappointment, that the condition of the snow would render an attempt on the great peak of Koschtan Tau hopeless. Under better conditions there seemed two routes possible from this side, one from the little col north of the peak, following the northern arête the whole way. The amount of step-cutting that would have been necessary rendered this hopeless, and we estimated that, in the then condition of the mountain, twelve hours would have been the very least time required for the ascent alone from the col. The other route was more direct, and lay up a buttress of rock descending precipitously into the glacier at our feet; but the lower rocks were all covered with snow in the worst possible condition; while above, the huge glistening ice-slopes foretold interminable step-cutting. In such a season as that of last year Koschtan Tau would be impossible from this side. Burgener, indeed, was anxious to try the mountain, and we should doubtless have acceded to his wish had there been any chance of persuading the natives we had with us to carry up provisions and firewood to the foot of the col. There or thereabouts is the place for a bivouac. The cold at night was far too great to admit of our sleeping out without the tent.

As usual, the weather turned bad again after mid-day, and it was not till August 26 that we had fought our way up to the camping-place which we ought to have made days before, a little desperate, and determined to start for Tetnuld the next morning whatever the weather might be. The prospects were rather gloomy. We had, indeed, our tent;

* There is an obvious mistake in the map illustrating Mr. Freshfield's *Central Caucasus*. The peak there marked Koschtan Tau is probably Guluku.

without it we could not have remained up at this height—about 10,000 feet; the natives had refused to carry it, and Burgener had done so himself, in addition to the greater part of our other necessities. The hunter alone had consented to come as far as the camp, but all the other natives had become mutinous. Our stock of provisions was low, and our mutton was nearly exhausted; we had persuaded, however, the head policeman to go back to Bezingi for further supplies, but we doubted exceedingly whether he would bring any up. The hunter had, however, killed a prodigious steinbock a day or two previously, and Burgener had been sent up with him to fetch the meat. The way up led over sharp loose stones, and it was curious to notice that the Swiss guide was completely outpaced. The hunter in his thin hide shoes stalked up silently and swiftly. The Caucasians can do almost anything in these shoes except go up steep snow-slopes or kick. Towards evening Burgener was seen returning, bearing the hinder limb of the defunct animal—an addition to our stores which was welcomed with enthusiasm. Now the steinbock is a very active beast, and this was a particularly fine and old specimen, its toughness was surprising. If the eater has patience and muscular power enough to chew down to the flavour, he will find it rather strong and rank: it makes good soup. Still we had nothing else in the shape of meat, and we went, so to speak, for two days on the hind leg of that steinbock. The natives will not eat the flesh of any animal unless the head has been cut off, and this is always done at the earliest opportunity. I noticed also that they always cut the tail off before skinning, possibly in deference to the Mahomedan injunctions, for, as may be learned from the Korân, much superstition attaches to the tail-bones. It is consequently difficult to get perfect skins in this country.

The morning of August 27 was dull and threatening when we got up at 3 A.M. for our long-deferred expedition. We made a hurried toilet after the native fashion, which consists, as is well known, in a shake and a scratch of the head. Reminiscences of civilisation deterred us from coming up to the scratch, but we did get ready in a brace of shakes. I doubt if in the Alps we should have started at all under such unfavourable conditions. The way led up by the moraine on the left bank of the Tetnuld glacier, and across some loose rocks, which, without a lantern, were rather troublesome; our lanterns had been broken some time previously. We crossed a small glacier which takes its origin in a snow

basin lying north of our camp, and runs downward in a W.S.W. direction, terminating in the crevassed ice-fall of the Tetruld glacier. The crevasses were large and troublesome, and occasioned much delay. A wide sweep across a loose small-stoned slope brought us back to the *névé*. This would be the right route for the Adine Col, leading down to *Mujal*, perfectly simple in both sides. Bearing to the left across the upper snow-fields below the Adine Col, we made straight for the great snow wall lying right in front of us, the N.W. termination of the huge Koschtan Tau ridge. This gigantic wall extends continuously from the Adine Col to the east side of Koschtan Tau. Tetruld towers up from this wall, but Djanga and Koschtan Tau rise from it in more massive proportions. The height of the latter peak can best be appreciated from the Stuleveesk Pass lying S.E. of the range, about twenty-five miles distant. At the point we made for, the wall, measuring from the glacier, is perhaps a thousand feet in height. The snow was in fair order, and but few steps had to be made as we ascended, but here and there the crust of snow was plastered but thinly on the hard blue ice beneath. Above, an enormous cornice hung over on our side. By making a wide sweep to the right we were able to attack the cornice at a favourable spot, and about nine o'clock burst through the snow crust and felt the keener air on the top of the ridge. It was like an introduction to celebrities of whom we had heard much, but whose acquaintance we had never made. Close by, on the S., Tetruld towered above us. 'There is Elbruz,' said Burgener, pointing to the distant mass as excitedly as if it were a royal stag. The double-peaked *Uschba* nearer at hand was unmistakable. Far away over the green valleys of *Suanetia* rose the range of the *Tau Leila* group, and as we faced eastwards the great mass of *Guluku* reared up before us, while beyond again could be perceived the form of perhaps the finest mountain we had ever seen, the mighty *Dych Tau*. We turned southwards, and a startling vision met our gaze. A stately snow peak, half concealed and half revealed by wreaths of clouds, seemed to overtower. An immense ravine of snow and glacier intervened, but the northern *arête* of the newly seen peak could be just made out through the mist abutting on the great *Djanga* ridge. Was it Tetruld? Burgener would not have it. *Tau Totonal* it might be called, but in his opinion the peak we were making for was not only higher, but, further, was known as Tetruld wherever he had been on the south side of the chain. We were at the time

under the impression that Tetnuld was visible from the north side of the chain, and it was evident that the mountain which had so suddenly started into prominence could not possibly be seen from this side without ascending to a height sufficient to see over the Djanga ridge.* Even had time allowed, we should not have changed our plan of ascent. The peak in question should of course be attacked from the south side. It appeared accessible enough.†

* We saw the mountain subsequently in our attempted ascent of Guluku (p. 248, *infra*).

† It is well-nigh impossible to understand the topography from the Russian five-verst map. Tetnuld, indeed, is marked, and as far as can be judged the point corresponds with the peak we ascended, though the snow mountains are so indefinitely laid down that it is obviously wrong to draw any positive conclusion. The five-verst map is not easily obtainable, and I may note, therefore, that the map in Mr. Grove's book, *The Frosty Caucasus*, is founded on this official survey. As will be seen, Tetnuld (as we mark it provisionally) is a point on the same ridge as Djanga and Koschtan Tau. Only one peak is marked in the five-verst map (it is true that the name 'Mt. Gestola'—identical (?) with 'Geschola' referred to below—is marked, but no peak is indicated to correspond with the name), and only one in M. de Déchy's pamphlet, *La Svanétie Libre* (Budapest, 1886. Extrait du Bulletin de la Société de Géographie Hongroise).

The ten-verst Russian map, however, though utterly wrong in its delineation of the Koschtan Tau group generally, clearly marks two mountains close together. The northern point of the two is named Geschola Tau; the other, lying about 20° E. of S., is called Tetnuld Tau. Now, as will be seen from our map, Totonal is nearly S.W. of Tetnuld, being a little more W. than S. Still, the peaks indicated in the ten-verst map may correspond with our Tetnuld and Totonal. Our point, then, should—subject to this important correction in position—be known as Geschola Tau, and the western peak as Tetnuld Tau. But I cannot satisfy myself at all that these are really the mountains shown in our map. The fact is that the official surveys taken from the north side of the chain do not agree with those taken from the south side. Hence much of the confusion. Unquestionably there are two points lying close to each other. Mr. Freshfield marks, in the map illustrating his *Central Caucasus*, Totonal Tau only, but this peak is—quite correctly, as I think—shown as lying directly over the Adisch glacier and not on the main Djanga ridge. But Mr. Freshfield is strongly of opinion that Tetnuld Tau and Totonal Tau ought to be considered one and the same mountain. I fully admit that his views ought to carry much weight, but he has seen this district only from the south, while we explored it only on the north side. Herr G. Radde (*Berichte über die Biologisch-Geographischen Untersuchungen in den Kaukasusländern*, Tiflis, 1866) holds that Tetnuld and Totonal are identical. The peak is known also, he says, as Tötönar and

Woven in between all these peaks lay a wilderness of crevassed slopes, jagged rock ridges, and stretching glaciers, bewildering in their beauty and complexity. To see the wondrous sights that were crowded into those few minutes while we remained on the ridge, we would willingly have gone five times further and fared ten times worse. In high spirits we turned to the left (S.S.E.), and began our journey along the ridge which was to lead us to Tetnuld, ever keeping an eye on the snowy form of Totonal, and marvelling whether it would over top our peak or not. For a few steps, and for a few only, all went well. The snow was in good order on the ridge, but we had to leave this almost immediately and make S.W. in order to skirt the heights which still intervened between us and our peak. The ice began to change its character; two or three steps were cut with a few strokes of the axe, and then all went well again for a time. Then more steps, and a more ringing sound as the axe fell. We seemed, too, however we might press on, to make no impression on this first slope. Our doubt returned; the leader paused, drew up the rope, and bit at a fragment of ice as he gazed anxiously upwards over the face. No! we were on the right track and must stick to it if we would succeed. For an hour and a quarter we kept at it in silence, save for the constant ringing blows of the axe. Our courage gradually oozed out,

Tötöñald (p. 105). He mentions (pp. 102, 103) a 'fine snow mountain' situated east (p. 105) of Totonal by the name of Gatün-tau. Can this be the same as Geschola Tau? In some respects the description agrees. Both peaks are, apparently, seen from the south side of the chain plainly enough. I say 'apparently' because the statement is made chiefly on the authority of a photograph taken by M. de Déchy from above Mulakh, in Suanetia, and it is not certain that the two points seen in the view are those named Tetnuld and Totonal in our map. M. de Déchy has seen this part of the chain from both sides (though his explorations from Bezingi were chiefly confined to the Mishirgi glacier), and it will be interesting to hear if he confirms Burgener's views with regard to the nomenclature. Meanwhile, as there is conflict of opinion, I prefer to leave for the present the title of this paper as it originally stood, but shall be perfectly ready to adopt hereafter any nomenclature that may tend to simplify the rather puzzling topography. As will be seen further on, there is probably little difference between the heights of the two peaks. I cannot say which of the two is actually the higher. The map accompanying this paper will, I hope, make perfectly clear what peak we did actually ascend, and this after all is the most essential point. The difficulty will not be satisfactorily cleared up until some one has thoroughly explored the upper snow basins on the S. side of the Djanga ridge.

for when we got back to the ridge again at the Tetnuld Col,* we seemed to have made no progress at all. The top of the mountain far above was already swathed in cloud, and a distant storm on the south side was only too obvious. Another little peak was won before we looked about again, but the summit seemed no nearer. The exertion had begun to tell and the pace became slower. Some one remarked that he felt hungry, and we all thereupon realised our empty state, so we fortified ourselves for further efforts on an Ant-Alpine repast of steinbock, black bread a week old, and water—invigorating victuals and exhilarating drink rather appropriate to the treadmill kind of exercise demanded. It is under conditions such as these that strange diet tells on the climber; but even more trying and more weakening than the poor quality of the food was the want of sleep from which we had suffered for a good many nights. In the language of science, our vital force and nervous energy was becoming rather rapidly exhausted, or, to put it more colloquially and briefly, we were awfully done. Three hours more at least was the estimate, and meanwhile the weather was growing worse and worse. Reflecting that all points fall to him who knows how to wait and stick to it, we pressed on harder to escape from the dispiriting thoughts that suggested themselves, and almost of a sudden recognised that the last of the deceptive little tops had been left behind us, and that we were fighting our way up the final peak. Better still, Totonal, which for so long had seemed to tower above us, was fast sinking in importance, and there really seemed now, as we measured the peak with the clinometer between the intervals of step-cutting, to be little difference between the two points. The air was so warm and oppressive that we were able to dispense with gloves. One of the guides suffered from intense headache, but the rest of us, I fancy, felt only in much the same condition as a man does at the finish of a hard-run mile race. The clouds parted above us for a while, mysteriously, as it seemed, for there was no wind to move them; but we could only see the slope stretching upwards, and still upwards. Yet we could not be far off now. Again we halted for a few seconds, and as we glanced above we mentally took stock of our strength, for there was no question the pleasure had been laborious. Some one moved and we were all ready on the instant. To it once more, and to the very last victory was doubtful. True, the summit had seemed

* Marked by an × in the map.

close enough when the last break in the swirling clouds had enabled us to catch a glimpse of what still towered above ; but our experience of Swiss snow mountains was long enough to make us sceptical as to apparent tops, and possibly the Caucasian giants were as prone to deceive as the human pigmies that crawled and burrowed at their bases.

Still anxious, still questioning success, we stepped on, and the pace increased as the doubt persisted. It is often said to be impossible, by those who don't try, to explain why the second ascent of a mountain always appears so much easier than the first ; some explanation may be found in the fact that on a virgin peak the uncertainty is really increasing during the whole time, and the climax comes in the last few seconds. Every step upward makes success more probable, and at the same time would make failure more disappointing. In fact, the only periods when we are morally certain of success on a new expedition are before the start and when victory is actually won. Still we could hardly believe that any insuperable obstacle would now turn us back ; yet all was new and uncertain, and the conditions of weather intensified the anxiety. The heavy stillness of the air seemed unnatural, and made the mind work quicker. The sensibility became so acute that if we ceased working and moving for a moment the silence around was unendurable and seemed to seize hold of us. A distant roll of thunder came almost as a relief. A step or two had to be cut, and the delay appeared interminable. Suddenly, a glimpse of a dark patch of rocks appeared above looming through the mist. The slope of the ridge became more gentle for a few yards. Our attention was all fixed above, and we ascended some distance without noticing the change. Another short rise, and we were walking quickly along the ridge. We stopped suddenly ; the rocks we had seen so recently had sunk below us on our left, while in front the arête could be followed with the eye, sloping away gradually for a few yards and then plunging sharply down to a great depth. It was all over ; through fair weather and through foul we had succeeded ; and there was yet another peak to the credit of the Alpine Club.

It was not a time for words. Burgener turned to us and touched the snow with his hand, and we sat down in silence. Almost on the instant as we took our places a great burst of thunder rolled and echoed around—a grim salvo of Nature's artillery. The sudden sense of rest heightened the effect of the oppressive stillness that followed. Never have I felt the sense of isolation so complete. Gazing in front into the

thin mists, the very presence of my companions seemed an unreality. The veil of wreathing vapour screened the huge panorama of the ice-world from our sight. The black thunder-clouds drifting sullenly shut out the world below. No man knew where we were; we had reached our furthest point in a strange land. We were alone with Nature, far from home, and far from all that we were familiar with. Strange emotions thrilled the frame and quickened the pulse. Weird thoughts crowded through the mind—it was not a time for words. Believe me, under such conditions a man will see further across the threshold of the unknown than all the book-reading or psychological speculation in the world will ever reveal to him.

Coming back to considerations more prosaic and practical, we found that it was 1.15 P.M. We realised, too, that the ascent had been very laborious and exhausting, while there was no doubt that evil times were in store for us. There were no rocks at hand to build a cairn, but we reflected that the snow was soft and that our footsteps would easily be seen on the morrow. The aneroid marked the height we had attained as 16,550 feet.* A momentary break in the mist gave us a view of Koschtan Tau, and we had just time to get a compass observation. After a stay of fifteen minutes we rose and girded ourselves for the descent. I think we all felt that the chief difficulty was yet to come, but we had little idea of what was actually to follow. Directly after we had left the summit a few puffs of wind began to play around and some light snow fell. Still, it was not very cold, and if the storm would only keep its distance all might be well. Down the first slope we made our way rapidly enough, and could have gone faster had we not deemed it wise to husband our strength as much as possible. In an hour and twenty minutes we reached the place where we had left the provisions and the camera. The feast was spread, but did not find favour. Never did food look so revolting. The bread seemed to have turned absolutely black, while the steinbock meat looked unfit to keep company with garbage in a gutter; so we packed it up again at once, more from a desire to hide it from our eyes than from any idea that it might look more appetising later on. Andenmatten's headache had become much worse, and he could scarcely at starting stand steady in his steps. Possibly his suffering was due to an hour or two

* This estimate agrees pretty closely with the height given by Mr. Freshfield for Totonal Tau, viz. 16,500 feet. Cf. footnote to p. 232, *supra*.

of intensely hot sun, which had struck straight down on us during the ascent. I could not at the moment awaken much professional interest in his case, but the symptoms so far as I could judge were more like those experienced by people in diving-bells—were pressure effects in short—for the pain was chiefly in the skull cavities. I may not here enter into technical details, and can only remark now that though Andenmatten suffered the most it by no means followed on that account that his head was emptier than anybody else's. In due course we came to the ice slope up and across which we had cut our way so laboriously in the morning; here, at least, we thought we should make good progress with little trouble; but the sun had struck full on this part of the mountain, and all the steps were flattened out and useless. Every single step ought to have been worked at with as much labour as in the morning, but it was impossible to do more than just scratch out a slight foothold, as we made our way round again to the ridge. Below on the west side the slope plunged down into the Ewigkeit, and our very best attention had to be given in order to avoid doing the same. It was one of the worst snow faces I ever found myself on, perhaps under the conditions the worst. The direction in which we were travelling and the angle of the slope made the rope utterly useless. Close attention is very exhausting: much more exertion is required to walk ten steps, bestowing the utmost possible care on each movement, than to walk a hundred up or down a much steeper incline when the angle demands a more accustomed balance. Not for an instant might we relax our vigilance till, at 5.30 p.m., we reached once more the ridge close to the place where we had forced our way through the cornice in the morning.

We had little time to spare, and hurrying up to the point looked anxiously down the snow wall. A glance was sufficient to show that the whole aspect of the snow had entirely altered since the morning. Burgener's expression changed suddenly, and a startled exclamation, which I trust was allowed to pass unrecorded, escaped from him. Andenmatten brought up some stones and rolled them down over the edge; each missile carried down a broad hissing band of the encrusting snow which had given us foothold in the morning and swept the ice-slope beneath as black and bare as a frozen pond; here and there near rocks the stones stopped and sank deeply and gently into the soft, treacherous compound. The light had begun to fail and snow was falling more heavily as we pressed on to try for some other line of descent. A hundred

yards further along the ridge we looked over again: the condition of the snow was almost the same, but the wall was steeper and looked at its very worst as seen through the mist. Some one now suggested that we might work to the north-west end of the ridge and make our way down to the pass by the ice-fall. We tramped on as hard as possible, only to find at the end of our journey that the whole mass seemed abruptly cut away far above the Adine Col, and no line of descent whatever was visible. We doubled back on our tracks till we came within a few yards of the summit of a small peak on the ridge, the height of which was probably not less than 15,000 feet. Already the cold was numbing and our wet clothes began to stiffen; again we peered over the wall, but the rocks were glazed, snow-covered, and impossible. The leader stopped, looked right and left along the ridge, and said, 'I don't know what to do!' For the moment we seemed hopelessly entrapped; the only conceivable place of shelter for the night was a patch of rocks close to the summit of the peak near at hand, and for these we made. It was an utter waste of time. Apart from sleeping, we could not have remained there an hour, for we met the full force of the wind, which by this time had risen considerably, and was whirling the driving snow into every crack and cranny. What might have begun as a temporary rest would infallibly have ended in a permanent occupation. Indeed, the cold would have been far too intense that night for us to have lived on any part of the bleak ridge. The situation was becoming desperate. 'We must get down off the ridge and out of the wind.' 'Ay,' said Burgener, 'we must, I know; but where?' The circumstances did not call for reasonable answers, and so we said, 'Anywhere! To stay up here now means that we shall never get down at all.' Burgener looked up quickly as if to say no, but hesitated and then muttered, 'That is true. Then what will you do? There is no way down anywhere along the wall with the snow as it is now. There are great ice-slopes a little way down.' As he spoke he leant over and looked along the wall for confirmation of his opinions. A little way off a rib of rock, blacker than the rest, showed through the mist. We both saw it at the same time; Burgener hesitated, looked at it again, and then facing round glanced at the prospect above. The wind was stronger and colder and the snow was driving more heavily. There was no room for doubt. We must put it to the touch, and take the risk. We turned again, in a few minutes had squeezed ourselves through the cornice and were fairly launched on the descent.

We were now on a much higher level on the ridge than at the point we had struck in ascending. It was only possible to see a few yards down; the rocks looked appallingly steep, glazed, and grizzly, and we knew not what we were coming to. But at any rate we were moving, and in a stiller atmosphere soon forgot the cold. We went fast, but only by means of doing all we knew, for the climbing was really difficult. It was a case of every man for himself, and every man for the rest of the party. Now was the time to utilise all that we had ever learned of mountain craft. Never before, speaking for myself only, have I felt so keenly the pleasure of being united to thoroughly trustworthy and good mountaineers; it was like the rush of an eight-oar, where the sense of motion and the swish through the water alone are sufficient to make every member of the crew put all his strength into each stroke. The mind was too active to appreciate the pain of fatigue, and so we seemed strong again. Now on the rocks, which were loose and crumbly in parts, elsewhere big and glazed, now in deep snow, now on hard crusts, we fought our way down. So rapid was the descent that when the opportunity offered we looked anxiously through the mist in the hope of seeing the glacier beneath. We must have hit on a possible line of descent to the very bottom. But there was not a moment for the grateful repose so often engendered by inquiring minds on the mountains. We were racing against time, or at least against the malevolent powers of darkness. Down a narrow flat couloir of rock of no slight difficulty we seemed to go with perfect ease, but the rocks suddenly ceased and gave way to an ill-favoured snow slope. The leader stopped abruptly and turned sharp to the right. A smooth ice-gully some thirty feet wide separated us from the next ridge of rock. The reason for the change of direction was evident enough when Burgener pointed it out. As long as the line of descent kept to the side that was more sheltered during the day from the sun, so long was the snow fairly good. Our leader judged quickly, and with the soundest reasoning, as it proved directly afterwards, that the line we had been following would infallibly lead, if pursued further, to snow as treacherous as that with which we were now so familiar. Across the ice-slope then we must cut, perhaps, a dozen or fifteen steps. The first two or three Burgener made vigorously enough, but when within ten or fifteen feet of the rocks the extra effort told. He faltered suddenly: his blow fell listlessly, and he leant against the slope, resting hands and head on his axe. 'I am almost exhausted,' he said

faintly, as he turned round to us, while his quivering hands and white lips bore evidence to the severity of the exertion. So for a minute or two we stood in our tracks. A word of encouragement called up what seemed almost a last effort : some little notches were cut, and we gained the rocks again. A trickling stream of water was coursing down a slab of rock, and at this we gulped as eagerly as a fevered patient. Standing on the projecting buttress, we looked anxiously down and caught sight at last of the glacier. It seemed close to us : the first few steps showed that Burgener's judgment was right ; he had changed the line of descent at exactly the right moment and at the best possible place. Down the last few hundred feet we were able to go as fast as before. The level glacier beneath seemed in the darkness to rise up suddenly and meet us. We tumbled over the bergschrund, ran down a short slope on the farther side of it and stood in safety on the glacier, saved by as fine a piece of guiding as I have ever seen in the mountains. We looked up at the slope. To our astonishment all was clear, and I dare say had been so for long. Above, in a blue black frosty sky, the stars were winking merrily ; the mists had all vanished as by magic. No doubt the cold, which would have settled us had we stayed on the ridge, assisted us materially in the descent by improving the snow.

There seemed still just light enough to search for our tracks of the morning across the glacier, and we bore well to the right in the hope of crossing them. I fancy that the marks would have been really of little use ; but anyhow, we could not find them, and so made a wide sweep across the upper part of the snow basin. As a result we were soon in difficulty with the crevasses, and often enough it seemed probable that we should spend the rest of the night in wandering up and down searching for snow bridges. But we made at last a patch of shale and rock, which we took to be the right bank of the little glacier we had crossed in the morning. Our clothes were wet, and the cold was becoming so sharp that it was wisely decided, against my advice, to push on if possible to the tent at once. For some three or four hours did we blunder and stumble over the moraine, experiencing not a few tolerably severe falls as we did so. Andenmatten selected his own line of descent, and in a few minutes we had entirely lost sight of him. It was too dark to find our way across the glacier, and we could only hope by following the loose stone ridge to make our way to the right place. So we stuck to the rocks, occasionally falling and nearly

sticking on their detestably sharp points. Even a Caucasian moraine leads somewhere if you keep to it long enough, and as we turned a corner the huge glimmering mass of Guluku towering up in front showed that the end of our journey was not far off. Presently the little white outline of the tent appeared, but we regarded it with apathy and made no effort to quicken our movements, although the goal was in sight; it seemed to require, in our semi-comatose condition, almost an effort to stop. As we threw open the door of the tent the welcome sight of divers packets neatly arranged in a corner met our gaze. The head policeman had proved himself an honour to his sex, an exception to his compatriots and a credit to the force. There was bread, sugar, rice, meat, and firewood—yet we neither spoke nor were moved. Andenmatten spurned the parcels with his foot and revealed the lowermost. A scream of delight went up, for they had found a packet of tobacco. The spell was broken, and once more all were radiant. Such is man. A strange compound—I refer to the tobacco—it proved to be, that would neither light nor smoke, and possessed as its sole property the power of violently disagreeing with the men. It was past midnight before the expedition was over. There were few preliminaries observed before going to bed. I don't think that even Donkin took more than a quarter of an hour in arranging a couch to his satisfaction, and placing a very diminutive air-cushion on anatomical principles in exactly the right place; while Andenmatten was fast asleep in two minutes, his head pillowed gently on some cold mutton, and his boots reposing under the small of his back. Something weighed on our minds as we too lay down and tried to sleep. The towering cone of Tetnuld, the distant view of Uschba, Elbruz, and the giant Dych Tau, the rock and snow-slopes pictured themselves one after another as dissolving views on the white walls of the tent. The expedition was over, but the pleasure and the impressions it had evoked were not. Faster and faster followed the visions as in delirium. I sat up, and in the excitement of the moment dealt a great blow at the nearest object, which, as it chanced, was Andenmatten's ribs. I shouted out to my companion. A muffled 'hulloa' was the response, and he too rose up. 'What is it?' 'By Heavens! it is the finest climb we have ever made.' And so it was. Then we fell flat back and went to sleep.

My readers, I fear, have long since been tempted to do the same, and the account of this single expedition must have seemed interminable. My tale has no moral, and I

scarcely dare hope that it has been in my power to give even a glimpse of the fascination of these scenes. Would that I were able to tempt some to visit them! Others have endeavoured to lure climbers to these wondrous mountains with but little practical result. Why should I succeed?

To those who have the health, strength, experience and energy, I can but say—**THERE**, in that strange country, those giant peaks wait for you—silent, majestic, unvisited. Would you revive in all their freshness the pleasures which the founders of our Club discovered thirty years ago? If the old feeling still is as strong as I think, as I know it to be, go there. If you love the mountains for their own sakes; if you like to stand face to face with Nature where she mixes sublimity of grandeur and delicacy of beauty in perfect harmony; if these sights fill and satisfy you of themselves—go there! If you prefer the grandeur, with some of the rough edges knocked off (and carried away in tourists' pockets); if you choose rather to play at travelling and roughing it, you will stay at home in the Alps. You will have missed much, and your mountain education will have been imperfect. If you think your temper is perfectly equable—go there; you will be undeceived, and your family circle may derive benefit therefrom. If you wish to be far from the madding crowd, far from the noise, bustle, and vulgarity of the buzzing, clustering swarms of tourists—go there. Nature will, as it were, take you gently by the hand and seem to say, 'I am glad to welcome you; come, and you shall look upon sights that I don't choose to show to everybody. Yet more, I will make a present of them to you; and in after times you shall call up in memory recollections of me, as I can be when in the mood, and you shall hug these memories with delight and even dream on them with enthusiasm.' If you wish for this—go there. To the end of your days you will remember it with pleasure. Go there!

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE CAUCASUS.

By W. F. DONKIN.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 3, 1887.)

NEARLY twenty years have passed since Mr. Freshfield revealed to us the magnificence of the Central Caucasus, and did all he could to induce others to follow in the new tracks which he and his party were the first to open



KOSCHTAN TAU.

DJANGA TAU.

PANORAMA FROM BELOW GULUKU.