

H. Woolley, Phot. 1889. Annan & Swan, Photogravure.

DYCH-TAU from above KARAUL.

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The Ascent of Dych-tau.

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THE traveller by railway, journeying northward from Vladikavkaz on a clear day, has a rare treat provided for him in the delightful panoramic view of the mountain chain of the Central Caucasus, which gradually unfolds itself before his eyes. On starting, the rounded dome of Kazbek is seen in the S. towering above all other summits; while more to the W. rise the snowy ridges of the hitherto unscaled Gumara Khoch.

As the train proceeds the clustered mountains of the Adai group open out; and then a sharp Weisshorn-shaped peak still further W. becomes conspicuous, and, surpassing its neighbours in majesty and apparent height, continues for more than an hour to be the most striking object in view. Although 50 miles distant, the rocks and even the schrunds below the eastern ridge are in fine weather distinctly seen with a field-glass, and passengers may be noticed pointing the mountain out to each other as that on which the Englishmen lost their lives in 1888.

In writing of this peak an embarrassment occurs at the very outset with regard to its name. By a singular mischance it is styled Dych-tau in the Russian 5-verst-to-the-inch map, and consequently has become known by that name to most travellers; but the Tatars living at its base in the Tcherek valley, and the Russians who see it from Vladikavkaz, more than 70 miles away, call it Koshtan-tau, which name seems to have been adopted in the new survey.

As, however, the latter has not yet been published, I will

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adhere in this paper to the name Dych-tau, which has hitherto been used in the 'Alpine Journal' to designate the mountain.

Readers of the 'Journal' will remember that Dych-tau is a peak about 16,900 feet high, standing 44 miles S.E. (or more nearly E.S.E.) of Elbruz, not on the watershed, but forming one of the Koshtan-tau group. This lies to the N. of the main chain, and is connected therewith by the ridge separating the sources of the Bezingi and Dych-su Glaciers, of which ridge the Shkara Pass is the lowest point. Dych-tau has four principal ridges radiating approximately N., S., E., and W., and of these the northern and eastern are seen from the railway.

Up to the present time two high passes have been discovered over the main ridges—the Mishirgi Pass across the northern, and the Ullu-auz Pass across the eastern—both being made by Messrs. Donkin and Fox in 1888. Some day the Khrumkoll Pass at the foot of the short western arête may be added to these, and may prove a useful route for mountaineers wishing to cross from the Mishirgi Glacier to the Dych-su basin. Possibly a way across the southern ridge—completing the circuit—may also be found; but the precipices on the western side of this spur do not look promising, and such a pass would probably be more laborious than useful.

The glaciers which have their sources in the hollows formed by the four main ridges are:—

1. The Kundium Mishirgi, or eastern branch of the Mishirgi Glacier, between the western and northern;
2. The Ullu-auz, or Dumala Glacier, between the northern and eastern;
3. The Tutuin Glacier, between the eastern and southern; and
4. The Eastern Khrumkoll Glacier, between the southern and western spurs.

The first and second of these ice-streams drain into the Bezingi valley, the third into the Tcherek, while the fourth is a tributary of the Dych-su Glacier.

During the visit of Mr. Holder's party to the Bezingi valley in August, 1888, longing eyes had often been cast—from a distance—at Dych-tau; but various causes had prevented any attack from being made on the mountain, and I well remember the regret felt by Holder and myself as we drove away from Naltchik one September morning (still in ignorance of the catastrophe which had just occurred),

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obliged, as we were, to leave the noble peak behind us without even attempting its ascent.

Accordingly, finding myself last July at Karaul on the conclusion of the labours of the search expedition with a tent, sleeping-bags, and plenty of provisions, and with two guides (Christian Jossi and Johann Kaufmann, both of Grindelwald), I determined to take advantage of the opportunity, and not to leave the district without making an attempt, or if necessary a series of attempts, to attain the summit.

The other members of the search party left for Bezingi on August 1; but, before departing, each one had afforded me most welcome and valuable assistance. Captain Powell had obtained for me, through the mediation of Anzor Aidebuloff, Starshina of Balkar, a most suitable native chamois-hunter as porter; Mr. Freshfield had given me copious information about the neighbouring mountains, and had explained what was known of the topography of the Dych-su basin; while Mr. Dent had steered Kaufmann through an attack of dysentery, and had left instructions for his further treatment. This timely service from the ex-President was perhaps the saving of my expedition, for without his advice and aid my anxiety at Kaufmann's condition would not improbably have prompted me to take the latter straightway back to Switzerland.

At the outset I had by no means decided what route to choose in attacking Dych-tau. In 1888 our party had seen the northern ridge from the shoulder of the Bezingi Koshtan-tau, and it had then appeared to offer a promising line of ascent from the Mishirgi Glacier. But it was a far cry to the latter place from Karaul, and before moving round to that side of the mountain, I was disposed to try to gain the northern ridge by crossing Donkin and Fox's Ullu-auz Pass on the eastern arête, and traversing the highest plateau of the Ullu-auz névé; for this had seemed feasible to Freshfield, Jossi, and myself the day we were on the col in question. There was, however, another course open. As we were returning down the Tutuin Glacier after the discovery of Donkin and Fox's last bivouac, Dent drew my attention to the slopes at the head of the ice-basin, and suggested that a route might be found in that direction.

Before acting on this suggestion I decided to reconnoitre the mountain from the S.W. in order to ascertain if there were any chance of attacking it from that side, either by the

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southern ridge or in any other way. This plan had also the advantage of giving Kaufmann an extra day or two to recover strength, as he was not yet fit for hard work.

Accordingly, on August 4, accompanied by Jossi and the native porter, and taking three days' provisions, I started on a voyage of discovery up the Dych-su Glacier. The whole of the first day's walk was one of unceasing interest, as, with the exception of M. Bogdanoff, of the Russian Survey, probably no stranger had as yet passed up the great ice-stream, and every mile we advanced revealed hitherto unknown and unsuspected splendours. At 11 A.M. we arrived at a hunter's kosh on the left bank of the glacier, directly opposite to the singularly beautiful peak previously pointed out by Mr. Freshfield as Koruldu, or Koruldash,* which so fascinated Jossi that he offered to start for its ascent there and then.

It was at this point that we discovered that the camera had been left behind; so the native was sent back to Karaul for it, while my companion and I continued our route. Directly after leaving the kosh we passed the mouth of a side-glen, down which a tributary glacier poured from the north, and, looking up this valley, we beheld at its head, a little E. of N., a great peak, which could be none other than Dych-tau. By a curious coincidence it appears that on the same day, and about the same time, Mr. Freshfield and Fischer were examining the N.W. face of the mountain from the Mishirgi Glacier.

Resisting the temptation to explore this new ice-stream, which, as I afterwards learnt from M. Bogdanoff, was called the Khrumkoll Glacier, we passed onward towards the head of the Dych-su Glacier, and early in the afternoon reached a point on the left moraine commanding views of Shkara to to the W. and of Mishirgi-tau to the N.W. Jossi at once shifted his affections to Shkara; but, mindful of Mr. Mummery's experience with only one guide on a mountain requiring endless step-cutting, I decided to undertake in preference the rock climb up the southern face of Mishirgi-tau, hoping to obtain from that peak a near and instructive view of the west side of Dych-tau.

Crossing a depression in the ridge which separates the upper reaches of the Dych-su from the western branch of the Khrumkoll Glacier, we passed the night on the right bank of the latter amidst snow scenery of imposing grandeur, and next day, in spite of a late start, were successfu in reaching

* M. Bogdanoff gives to this mountain the Turkish name 'Aïlama.'

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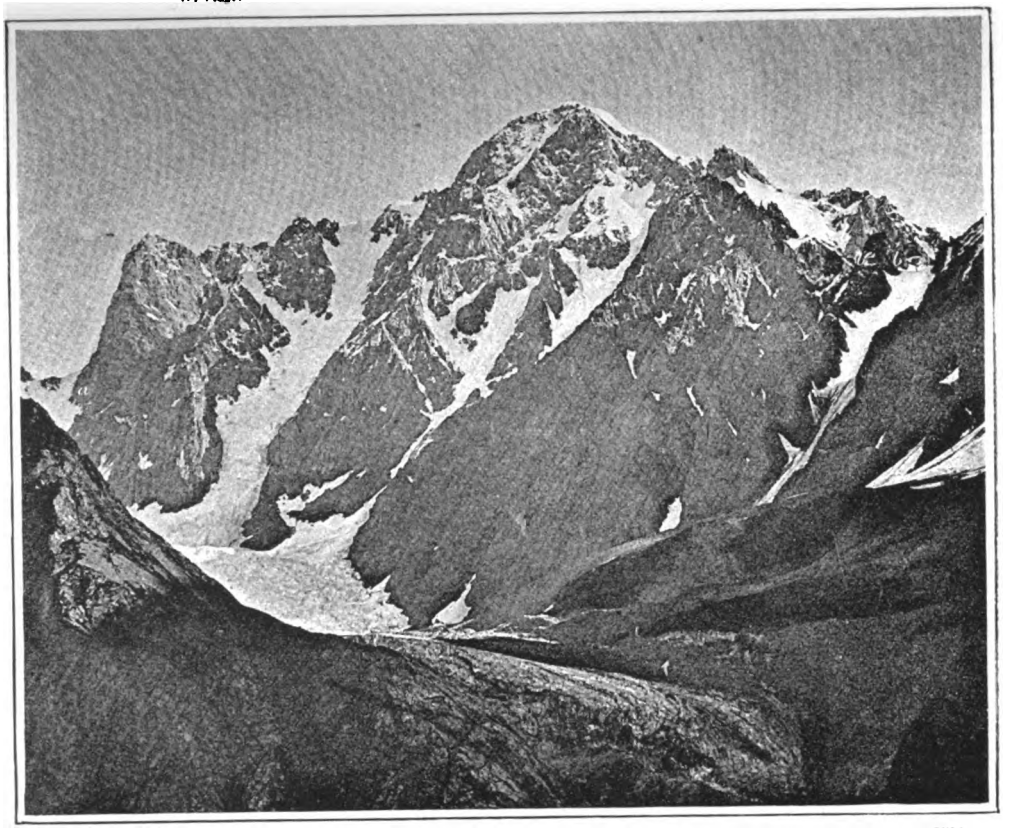
W. ridge.

E. ridge over S. ridge.



H. WOOLLEY PHOT.

DYCHTAU and the KHRUMKOLL GLACIER

From the Dychsu Glacier.

a. Gap leading to Mishirgi Glacier. — *b*. Gap leading to Tutuin Glacier with E. ridge beyond it.

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the point of Mishirgi-tau at which we aimed (about 16,400 feet), only to find that it was not the highest peak of the mountain.

During this expedition we saw enough of the southern ridge of Dych-tau to be able to conclude that once upon it we should have a good chance of success; but the formidable appearance of the precipices which fall on the western side of the arête to the Khrumkoll Glacier deterred us from attempting the ascent from this side. Nor were we favourably impressed by our inspection of the western ridge, which in several places seemed excessively steep. Consequently on August 6 we returned to Karaul, with the intention of carrying out Mr. Dent's suggestion—namely, to make for the head of the Tutuin Glacier. Here I hoped to find a couloir leading to the final peak, or at any rate to the upper portion of the southern ridge of Dych-tau, and so to avoid altogether the ill-omened eastern ridge.

On arriving at Karaul we found Kaufmann much better, and, on hearing our plans, he asked to be included in the party. The Balkar hunter was also to accompany us as far as he could, to help to carry the sleeping-bags and other impedimenta.

Kutché Djanibergoff, for this was his name, merits a few words of description. He was 30 to 35 years of age, rather short for a Tatar, but wiry and enduring as they all are. His countenance, more of the Teutonic than of the Tatar type, wore an unvarying expression of kindly good-humour, and was a good face for a low comedian, for he always looked as if about to say something facetious. He never did, however; and if he had done so, the best of jokes expressed in Turkish would have been quite wasted on us. Dressed in the usual lambswool cap and a long tcherkeska, or outer coat of grey homespun, he never went abroad without his flint gun in its sheepskin case ('Lumpenbüchse' Jossi contemptuously called it) and his bâton, the latter a ponderous implement, which began like an alpenstock and ended like a fire-poker, being shod with an iron bar about a foot long. It was a durable-looking staff, and will probably serve the Djanibergoff family for several generations before being worn out.

In disposition Kutché was gentle, patient, and obliging, and would carry any burden we gave him without grumbling; and although not such a good climber as the Bezingi hunter Byaslán, he was a much more satisfactory man to employ. The only occasion on which he showed signs of discontent

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was when the professional agitator appeared in the shape of M. Bogdanoff's Tatar interpreter, who was introduced to the search party as a prince or son of a prince of Balkar. This worthy represented to me that Kutché was being underfed, and demanded more food on his behalf. There did not appear to be much justice in the complaint, but in order to restore satisfactory relations I told the guides to serve him out a good meal on the spot. Kutché did not, however, reap all the benefit, for the reputed prince immediately invited himself to dine with his client, and the two Tatars, squatting by the camp fire, shared the feast. Still everyone seemed to be satisfied, the strike was averted, and we had no further trouble with our man.

The next day, like most 'off-days' at Karaul, was spent in bathing and washing clothes in the Tcherek, putting fresh nails in our boots, cooking meat and toasting bread for the next expedition. This last operation, a practice introduced by Freshfield, was performed on a gridiron, and had become a regular custom with us, as the bread of the country was not half baked, and generally disagreed with us unless well toasted.

On these off-days my afternoons would, as a rule, pass in writing up notes and lounging on the green sward, few places in the Caucasus having such soft velvety turf as the little delta formed by the junction of the Dych-su and Tcherek torrents; and when the epoch foreshadowed by Mr. Dent, of Caucasian cricket and lawn tennis, arrives, there will be no difficulty in finding a suitable wicket on which the local team may meet the eleven who will no doubt cross the Shkara Pass to uphold the credit of Bezingi.

Towards evening, when the shadows of the lofty crags which guard the entrance to the Dych-su gorge began to creep across the valley, M. Bogdanoff with his cossacks would gallop home over the Tcherek bridge, and after supper a pleasant hour would be spent in inspecting the day's work on the plane table, comparing sketches, and discussing, so far as my very slender Russian vocabulary permitted, the names of the various peaks and glaciers.

Sometimes the cossacks, who came from the neighbourhood of Ekaterinodar in the Kuban district, would sit up singing in chorus round the camp fire; but generally by eight or half-past we had retired to our tents, and all sounds were hushed except the occasional booming of some great boulder pounding its way down the rocky bed of the Dych-su torrent.

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On Thursday, August 8, having put all our heavy baggage inside the tent and tied up the door, our party left Karaul at 5.30 A.M., crossed the bridge over the Dych-su, and set out down the valley by the rough bridle-path which leads on the left bank of the Tcherek to Balkar. A leisurely walk of an hour and a quarter brought us to the mouth of the Tutuin Glen, where we deposited our egg-box in the bushes, making signs to Kutché to take it to Balkar, on his descent, to be refilled.

Toiling up the close oven-like side-glen by the indistinct path worn by shepherds and hunters on the right bank of the Tutuin-su, we passed through the delightful wooded ravine in which the stream lingers before beginning its last headlong descent to join the Tcherek, and entered the more open valley beyond. At this point the track, such as it was, ceased, and, walking westward up the rough floor of the valley, stumbling incessantly over the stones which lay concealed in the rich long grass, we came about half-past nine to the highest cluster of trees, not far from the end of the Tutuin Glacier. This could now be seen descending from the N.W., between precipitous rocks, in one great ice-fall of over 2,000 feet; while peeping over a jagged ridge in the background appeared the snowy summit of Dych-tau.

After halting here for our second breakfast the guides collected a plentiful supply of firewood—Jossi's sheet-anchor on glacier expeditions—and when we started again at 11 o'clock each man carried a large bundle of it on his pack. Crossing the lower end of the long moraine, we ascended the valley as far as the kosh, near which the search party had passed two nights about ten days before. The kosh was now occupied by two young goat-herds, who had secured the fine collection of empty soup-tins which had been left behind at the sleeping-place. Their amazement at our arrival was increased when we declined the sour goat's-milk they offered to us, for to a Tatar sour milk seems to be the sum of everything man can desire in the shape of refreshment. Leaving the kosh, we mounted the rocky buttress on the right bank of the ice-fall, in order to gain the level at which the search party had crossed to the left bank; and then it became necessary to relieve the native of his load and to send him back, for we dared not take him further.

When Kutché saw us preparing to cross the ice-fall he was obviously much impressed by the gravity of our undertaking, and showed his solicitude in various ways. First he

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asked me to give him a portion of his pay; then he produced his untouched breakfast (rye-bread and cold mutton), and pressed us to take it, plainly giving us to understand by signs that in a few hours he would be in the lap of plenty at Balkar, while we up in the regions of snow and ice would require all we had with us, and more besides; finally, he shook us each by the hand, making, for him, a long speech in the Tatar dialect, which we took to be a parting benediction; and after our departure he sat for a long time on a hillock watching our progress with evident misgiving and disapproval.

Kutché's behaviour on this and other occasions fully confirmed all that has been written as to the inability of the natives to reach the place where Donkin and Fox bivouacked. Though the Tatar chamois-hunters climb splendidly on rocks, whether firm or loose, they have as yet, as far as my experience goes, made very little progress in what has been called ice-craft.

On attaining the point where the search party had begun the passage through the séracs great changes were found to have taken place during the nine days which had passed since the last visit. A collapse of considerable extent had occurred in the glacier, and we were completely cut off from the route which had then been taken. Before we could gain a footing on the ice, it was necessary to climb along the rocks flanking the glacier to a much higher level, and in so doing to ascend under an overhanging mass of sérac. This looked so unstable that during the passage Jossi, who was last man, displayed unwonted intolerance of delay, and urged us on both by word and deed. If there was any place on the mountain at which we were obliged to 'give a chance,' as the cricket reports have it, this was the one, and the only one; but even in this instance, as was subsequently proved, the risk was by no means so real as it appeared to be.

Once on the ice, we found a sort of terrace, and passed along it unchecked till more than half-way across the glacier; then trouble began. The men, heavily laden as they were, could only move slowly, and the rücksacks had repeatedly to be taken off and to be lowered into crevasses or hauled up chimneys in the ice. At one time it looked as if we were pounded, but at last a way was found, and at 5 o'clock we were safely across.

The passage of the Tutuin ice-fall had occupied 3 hours (an hour longer than on the previous occasion), and when there was time to look around it was seen that masses of

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clouds had followed us up the valley and were quickly overtaking us. We therefore hurried onward up the left margin of the glacier, and in another hour had gained the plateau, where the main ice-stream receives a smaller tributary from the N.E. before plunging down the gigantic staircase into the Tutuin valley.

By this time the view of Ghiuliuchi, Fastach Khoch, and the other eastern peaks was blotted out, and as we advanced westward up the great rock-bound trough the clouds closed in and completely filled it, hiding from us the crags on either hand. On our right were now the precipices descending from the eastern ridge of Dych-tau, and as spurs or gullies occurred in them we kept gaining or losing sight of the steep and rugged cliffs, which presented through the mist an exceedingly weird and evil aspect. We were beginning to lose faith in the weather; our cheerless surroundings and the sad associations of the place were not calculated to enliven us; and we were but a melancholy band as we plodded on through the dreary waste, with nothing visible but occasional glimpses of the rocks on our right, and no sound breaking the mournful stillness save the monotonous hissing of the rope as it trailed through the wet snow.

As darkness fell, an argument arose as to whether or not we had passed the snow gully below the Ullu-auz Pass. Everything looked so changed in the mist that it was difficult to recognise the landmarks, and the question remained still unsettled, when, at half-past seven, a halt was made at a projecting buttress which seemed to promise shelter. Climbing a little way up the rocks, we soon found a ledge large enough to accommodate the whole party, but with no protection from rain or snow, and very little from wind.

The height of this bivouac was a little less than 13,000 feet above sea-level.

While the guides were struggling with the damp firewood and melting snow for the soup, I kept up my circulation by building a shelter-wall, levelling the floor, and laying down a sort of mattress of loose stones to sleep on; but the supply of material ran short, and at this moment I can distinctly remember the shape and position of one angular outcrop of granite, which, protruding through the superposed stratum, effectually 'spoilt the average.'

The reflection of the warm glow of the fire soon made our surroundings look more cheerful; supper placed us on better terms with ourselves, and as the moonlight began to break occasionally through the clouds, we became more hopeful as

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to the morrow. Our quarters were so conveniently arranged that after supper I was able to deliver from the depths of my sleeping-bag, in the 'dormitory,' a short address to the guides, who were smoking in the 'kitchen,' on the importance of making an early start, instead of oversleeping ourselves as we had done under Mishirgi-tau; then, having fixed 1.30 as the hour of rising, I proceeded to spend the greater part of the night in executing a series of contortions in the but partially successful endeavour to adapt my bodily attitude to the inequalities of my resting-place.

Next morning we were up to time, and at 2.40 all was ready for starting; but Jossi being unwilling to cross the schrunds which lay in our course till the light became better, it was not till 3.50 that we descended from our rocks on to the glacier. The morning was starlight and frosty; still a hazy, watery look in the sky caused us some uneasiness as we passed at a quick pace up the frozen snow towards the head of the great corridor. Before going very far a tempting-looking snow couloir in the rocks on our right was passed, and Jossi seemed inclined to try it; but being determined to have nothing to do with the eastern ridge, to which it led, until all other routes had been tried, I discouraged the proposal, and we continued in the original direction.

As all prospect of success depended on what would be found at the head of the glacier, we looked eagerly out as one buttress after another was passed; and I was pleased to notice that the guides were as excited as myself. At length we rounded the furthest rock promontory (where, by the bye, a sleeping-place would easily have been found the evening before had the light allowed us to advance so far), and on taking in the view of the cirque or basin forming the head of the great trough in all its details, we were at once relieved and delighted to find just what we wanted.

To the W., directly in front, rose the southern arête of Dych-tau, presenting steep ice-slopes below and steeper rocks above; on our right were the equally abrupt precipices of the eastern arête; but running up into the angle between these two ridges, at not too great an inclination, was a slope of snow or ice—we did not yet know which—leading apparently, and as we then believed, to the very foot of the final snow-cone of the mountain. Moreover, jutting out through this slope, and extending in the right direction for us, were two ribs of rock which would save much step-cutting in case we encountered ice.

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There was no cause now for hesitation; Jossi crossed the accumulation of avalanche ice at the foot of the incline, and led up to the first rocks. These presented no difficulty, and at half-past five we were at the top of the lower rib, at a height of rather over 14,000 feet. Then came a check. The slope above was of hard ice, and although another chain of rocks lay at some distance on our left, the guides considered that these would lead us too far out of our course; we therefore went straight upward, and for the next hour and a half were all hard at work, Jossi cutting small steps, which were enlarged by Kaufmann and myself in order to provide for the descent. Progress was painfully slow, and when at last the next group of rocks was gained, there was further delay, as one of my feet was slightly frost-bitten, and the usual remedy—rubbing with snow—had to be employed. During our halt for this purpose we noticed that although not yet half-past seven, clouds were steadily rising in the Tutuin valley, and the eastern peaks were already partly obscured. Consequently, fearing to be fogbound before getting high enough to select the best route to the summit, we lost no time in scaling the scattered rocks, and soon came to the next slope.

Matters now assumed quite a different complexion, for, to our great delight, the snow proved to be deep and in good condition, and we began to gain height with such rapidity that our confidence soon returned. Steadily the great ridge on our left sank lower and lower; soon glimpses of Shkara began to appear between the rock teeth with which it was fringed, and shortly after half-past eight we were close below its crest.

As the result proved, our best course would now have been to scale the ridge at once; but Jossi, suspecting—if I remember rightly—a snow cornice, preferred to traverse the rocks just below it. This was a mistake. Before proceeding very far we came to the head of a very steep couloir with about a foot of snow in it. I must confess that it did not appear very formidable to my unpractised eye, but the guides seemed to be certain that the snow rested insecurely on ice, and regarded the combination with profound distrust. Access to the ridge above was now barred by a huge cornice, so, being unwilling to retrace our steps, it was decided to cross the gully.

We had with us 90 feet of light cord; doubling this and knotting it to our rope we were able to pay out 100 feet of line to Jossi, who carefully made steps across the couloir,

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and was followed by myself and then by Kaufmann. This manœuvre, which consumed more than half an hour, brought us to the foot of an upright rock chimney, and as the leader was clearing a way up it through the frozen snow there was ample time to reflect that one or two more such obstacles would be quite enough to ensure our defeat, for it was already nearly ten o'clock.

We seemed to be an age in this chimney, but at last Jossi moved up on to the ridge, and immediately exclaimed something about 'eine schöne Spitze.' What particular peak excited his admiration I forgot to inquire, for on scrambling after him, a view which struck me as the most magnificent I had ever seen suddenly burst on me. The aspect of the slopes from below had somewhat deceived us, and instead of finding ourselves, as we expected, below the final peak, we had hit the southern arête of Dych-tau, just at the foot of a great comb of rocks, which breaks the continuity of the snow ridge.

To the E. and S.E. the view was limited by haze, but elsewhere everything was clear and bathed in sunshine. Southward, beyond the Dych-su Glacier, were seen the snowy cap and dazzling ice-cliffs of the graceful Koruldash. N.W. of the latter stood that parent of mighty glaciers, Shkara, a noble peak, presenting on this side a far more picturesque appearance than when seen from the W., and fully justifying Mr. Freshfield's description of it as a 'triumph of mountain architecture.' Over Shkara's northern flanks appeared the crest of Djanga, and further W. the 'Saddle Peak,' which I suppose we may now call Katuin-tau. Turning more to the N., the eye rested on the steep black crags of Mishirgi-tau, whose two peaks still seemed to be of equal height; and, lastly, close above us to the N. were the final snow-slopes on the east side of Dych-tau, to which the way was not yet visible, being hidden by the rocky ridge along which we had still to climb.

While I was admiring this splendid panorama, Jossi pointed out to Kaufmann our route on Mishirgi-tau and the rocks on which we had slept by the Khrumkoll Glacier, now far below us, as we had reached a height of 15,000 feet.

When challenged both men had to admit that they knew no view, even in their beloved Oberland, equal in grandeur to that before us.

Long before there had been time to do justice to the scene we began to climb northward up the rocks which crowned the arête. It was perhaps the most anxious time

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of the whole ascent, for we knew that at any moment we might be stopped by some rock-tower or deep cleft in the ridge; but after clambering over several projecting teeth a position was gained, from which we observed with satisfaction that, for some distance at least, no formidable obstacle lay in our course.

The next 45 mins. were spent in the most delightful rock-climbing one could desire. The ridge rose steeply, and was piled with granite blocks, towers, and slabs of every imaginable form; but however extraordinary the combination, there was always some crevice to squeeze through, some chimney to creep up, or some slab with a neat hand-hold just in the right place. The work was so enjoyable that doubts and fears were forgotten, and we went scrambling along in high spirits, looking keenly ahead each time a commanding point was reached, and taking advantage of every pause to snatch another glance at the glorious view on our left.

Shortly before eleven o'clock, after surmounting an unusually long ridge of rock, Jossi turned to me with a knowing look on his broad good-humoured face, and said, 'Wir haben gewonnen.' This announcement came so unexpectedly that for a moment I could find no words to reply; but my thoughts, like those of the historical parrot, were none the less significant. On joining Jossi, however, I certainly did not at first fully share his hopefulness.

It was true that the rocky crest along which we had been climbing now gave place to a snow-ridge extending up to the eastern arête, and quite free from difficulty; but just at the point of junction of the two ridges stood a great rock tower with precipitous sides, and against this the snow-ridge abutted. To reach the final peak it was plain that we should have to climb round to the left of the tower. Could we do so? The rocks looked unpromising, and the steep slopes below them were certain to be cased in hard ice, as they faced the afternoon sun.

To the west of the tower was an excessively steep ice-gully, and beyond this the S.W. face of the mountain, consisting of a series of precipices descending about 4,000 feet to the eastern Khrumkoll Glacier. But with these we should have nothing to do. Once round the tower and past the head of the gully, our account would be with the easy-looking snow-slopes on the east side of the peak.

Jossi was confident of success, and we advanced along the broad snow-ridge, which was corniced on our right but fell away in steep cliffs on the left. Before going very far, how-

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ever, Kaufmann, whose strength had been overtasked by the climb up the rocks, was obliged to give in. I was extremely sorry to leave him behind. Having worked hard on the previous day, carried a heavy load across the ice-fall, and overcome with us the chief difficulties of the ascent, he fully deserved to share our success; but there was no alternative; so dividing the food, and leaving him in a perfectly safe position within easy reach of sheltering rocks, Jossi and I continued our route.

For some distance we were favoured by soft snow, but as the ridge became steeper this gradually gave place to ice, and steps had to be cut all the way to the tower, where we turned to the left, and began to climb round its base. At this stage of the ascent one might be seriously delayed if there were much ice; but, fortunately for us, the rocks, though not as firm as those below, were quite free from ice, and at a quarter-past one we had passed round to the west side of the tower, and were standing on a short narrow neck or ridge of snow-laden rocks connecting the tower with the foot of the final snow-slopes already mentioned.

Here, for the first time, we were able to look down on the north side of the mountain; indeed, the neck is so narrow that a person sitting on it could send a stone either on to the Khrumkoll Glacier on the S., or down precipices of ice and rock on to the névé which feeds the Ullu-auz Glacier on the N. But this is possible only for a length of a few yards, beyond which the neck becomes merged into a broad snow-ridge, which in turn soon expands and unites with the northern arête to form the conical summit of the mountain.

Ascending the snow-ridge in a north-westerly direction, we were soon high enough to turn and look back over the tower on to the eastern ridge. This no longer appeared so formidable as it had when seen from the Ullu-auz Pass; still it looked difficult enough. Prophecy in such matters is, of course, imprudent; but apart from the dangerous character of the arête, of which there is, unhappily, ample proof, its great length, considering the arduous nature of the climbing involved, seemed to Jossi and myself sufficient to defeat any attempt on the peak by this route.

There is little to describe in the rest of our ascent; all the excitement had gone out of it, for the result was no longer uncertain. The mist which had now closed round us hid the view, and the monotony of the way was increased by the necessity for step-cutting. It was clearly a case for crampons,

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and no doubt a Tiroler in his steigeisen would have walked up the cone in less than half the time consumed by us, as there was a thin layer of frozen snow on the ice-slope.

In using the term cone, I should explain that it is only from the E. and N. that the summit of Dych-tau appears perfectly conical; on the S. and S.W. it is escarped, and falls away in rocky precipices; and in order to avoid the exertion of making steps, we now betook ourselves to the loose and treacherous rocks which fringed the edge of this escarpment, and, following its irregular outline as far as possible, picked our way slowly upwards. At 20 min. past 3 we arrived at the foot of the snow-mound, which for the last hour had been tantalisingly in view, and, exchanging congratulations on the termination of our labours, we put on a spurt and quickly gained its top.

I cannot easily forget the pained and injured look which chastened my companion's countenance as he turned to me at this point. Above us rose yet another cone, very similar in appearance to the one just surmounted. We had, in fact, arrived at that peculiar fold or crease in the névé which, lying below the summit of the peak, and being plainly seen from the E., gave rise to Dent's remark that the apex of the mountain appeared to have been cut off and carelessly replaced.

Realising for the first time how exhausted Josi was with the labour of step-cutting—he had been leading ever since we left our bivouac—I took his place for the comparatively short remaining portion of the ascent. The usual exasperating experience was repeated—a few yards of snow, then hard ice—and with many a vicious hack at our stubborn adversary, we slowly won our way upward, till at length the slope become more and more gradual, and at 47 min. past 3 we walked on to the summit.

Whatever may have been the custom elsewhere with regard to first ascents, there is, I believe, no precedent for singing patriotic songs on Caucasian summits, and certainly we were in no mood to introduce innovations; for nothing takes the swagger out of a man much more effectually than a long ice-slope. Therefore, waiving all pomp and ceremony, we seated ourselves on the snow and opened the provision bag. We were in the middle of an almost level snow-ridge, about 20 yards long and a yard or two broad, running nearly E. and W., and during our repast there was plenty of time to examine what little view remained, as it was more or less cloudy in every direction. Shkara, looming through the

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haze, looked more colossal than ever; the three peaks of Djanga were also visible; but the only summits quite free from mist were those of Mishirgi-tau and the Bezingi Koshtan-tau. The view of the vast snow-clad precipices, which we could now see on the northern faces of these mountains, must be striking under any circumstances; but on this occasion the gloomy, threatening sky and driving masses of cloud gave to the scene a peculiarly impressive character of wildness and desolation.

Our meal being ended, we walked to that side of the summit from which we could look down the northern arête. This was for the most part a snow-ridge, and our impression was that it might be ascended without great difficulty from the Kundium Mishirgi Glacier on its western side. The upper portion of the arête would be easily passed; such obstacles as may exist would be found in the slopes between the glacier and the lower part of the ridge.

As there was no stone on the summit with which to make a cairn, we now descended on the eastern side to the nearest rocks. No doubt this was the spot where, weather and time permitting, Messrs. Donkin and Fox would have left a stone-man, had they gained the summit on their second attempt. But we were unable to discover anything of the kind, so collecting the fragments of pale granite which lay near, we hurriedly built a small cairn, placed in it our sardine-box containing a card with our names, and at once began the descent; it was already half-past 4, and we were anxious to rejoin Kaufmann. Making our way carefully down the border of loose rocks, we soon caught sight of him, through a break in the mist, sitting contentedly far below on the southern ridge, from which the steep ice-gully separated us. Having passed the neck, we were able to improve our pace in circumventing the tower; but the time thus gained by no means compensated me for the woful havoc inflicted by the sharp splinters of granite on my only jacket, which from that time lost what little show of seemliness it had hitherto retained.

Below the tower caution was still needful, and, hurrying down the snow-ridge, we joined Kaufmann at a quarter to 6, finding him fairly comfortable, but considerably perturbed by the avalanches of stones which, he told us, had been descending the couloir during our absence. Indeed, he hinted, the disturbance had been so great, that he had begun to wonder not only *what*, but *who* was coming next.

As we had really not dislodged much stone from the edge

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of the precipice, Kaufmann's statement, taken together with the fact that the Khrumkoll Glacier carries down an extraordinary quantity of débris, strengthens my impression that the rocks of Dych-tau and of its southern ridge are loose and unsafe on the Khrumkoll side, and that in the afternoon the lower slopes are probably swept by falling stones.

By the time our reunited party were again moving the clouds had once more surrounded us, and the wind became so cold that we were glad to scramble as quickly as possible down the rocky comb in order to get under the shelter of the ridge. To do this, after leaving the rocks, we continued for a short distance along the snow-arête without meeting the slightest difficulty, and so avoided the tedious passage of the couloir, which had delayed us so long on the ascent.

Below the ridge our traces in the soft snow were soon found, and we began to descend rapidly into the Tutuin basin, now a gloomy cauldron of surging mists. The rocks gave more trouble than before, much of the débris which had been firmly frozen in the morning being now loosened; but on coming to the long ice-ladder the darkness proved a serious hindrance, as the steps, so laboriously made, were now difficult to distinguish, and often nearly effaced. Fortunately, just when most needed, the moon began to shine through the mist, and lighted us down the rest of the ice-slope, and by the time the glacier below was gained one of those atmospheric surprises peculiar to the Caucasus had occurred; every cloud had vanished as if by magic, the dreary hollow had become a beautiful fairy scene, and the jagged ridge on the south side of the glacier showed clear and sharp against the sky, with every snowy ledge and furrow gleaming in the moonlight.

At 20 mins. past 10 we regained our sleeping-place, and as plenty of wood was left, a cheerful fire was soon blazing under our kettle. The soup was a brilliant success, and before long we were wrapped in sleep, sound enough in my case to defy even the sharp ridges of the miniature Schreckhorn, which formed such a prominent feature of my couch.

The next morning was beautifully fine, but the night had been very cold, and there was some trouble with our frozen boots before starting. Shortly before seven o'clock we quitted our ledge, and immediately discovered that it was situated at the very foot of the snow-gully descending from the Ullu-auz Pass. We had, therefore, slept about 1,000 feet below Donkin and Fox's last bivouac, which was almost directly above us. There was some excuse for not

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recognising the place before, as so much snow had disappeared from the couloir since July 29 that its appearance was much altered; moreover, this was the first time during our second visit that we saw the spot by daylight. Of the articles which had fallen from the bivouac on the day of its discovery not a trace now remained; even the sleeping-bag, which had been left lying on the steep snow-slope below the rocks, had vanished, probably by sliding with the melting snow into the bergschrund below.

Leisurely descending the glacier, we had by 10 o'clock crossed to the right bank of the ice-fall. To our surprise, the greater portion of the leaning ice-tower was still standing; but it was so evidently in the last stage of decrepitude that we were glad to leave it behind and to begin the descent of the rocky buttress overlooking the valley. Here we were welcomed by the warm breeze from the pastures below, laden with the perfume of flowers, which smelt doubly sweet to us after our two days' exile from the regions of vegetation.

Regaining the kosh, we found that the goatherds had moved their quarters to a spot farther down the valley, on reaching which we threw ourselves on the grass, and took our second breakfast. As there was no more climbing to do, we ventured to wash down our meal with draughts of sour milk, and then lay till noon in the rich herbage smoking, and absorbed in admiration of the wonderful ice-fall above us.

It is entirely beyond my power to describe the fascinating beauty of the scene; but the view of that great frozen cataract hemmed in between mighty walls of granite, its thousands of fantastic séracs continually assuming fresh shapes as the light clouds floated above them, will not soon be forgotten.

When at length we resumed our journey it became evident that sour goat's milk was to us as a snare and a stumbling-block. Whether the innocent-looking goatherds possessed the secret of brewing something richer in alcohol than the ordinary fermented milk, or whether the luxuriant herbage of the valley imparted narcotic properties to the beverage, I cannot say. The fact remained that our legs almost refused to carry us down the valley, and Kaufmann there and then swore off the insidious fluid, and, moreover, kept his pledge till he left the country.

By the time the end of the open valley was gained we had walked off the effects of our libations, and, taking a farewell look at the snowy summit of our peak, we descended the hot Tutuin glen for the third and last time. The walk up the

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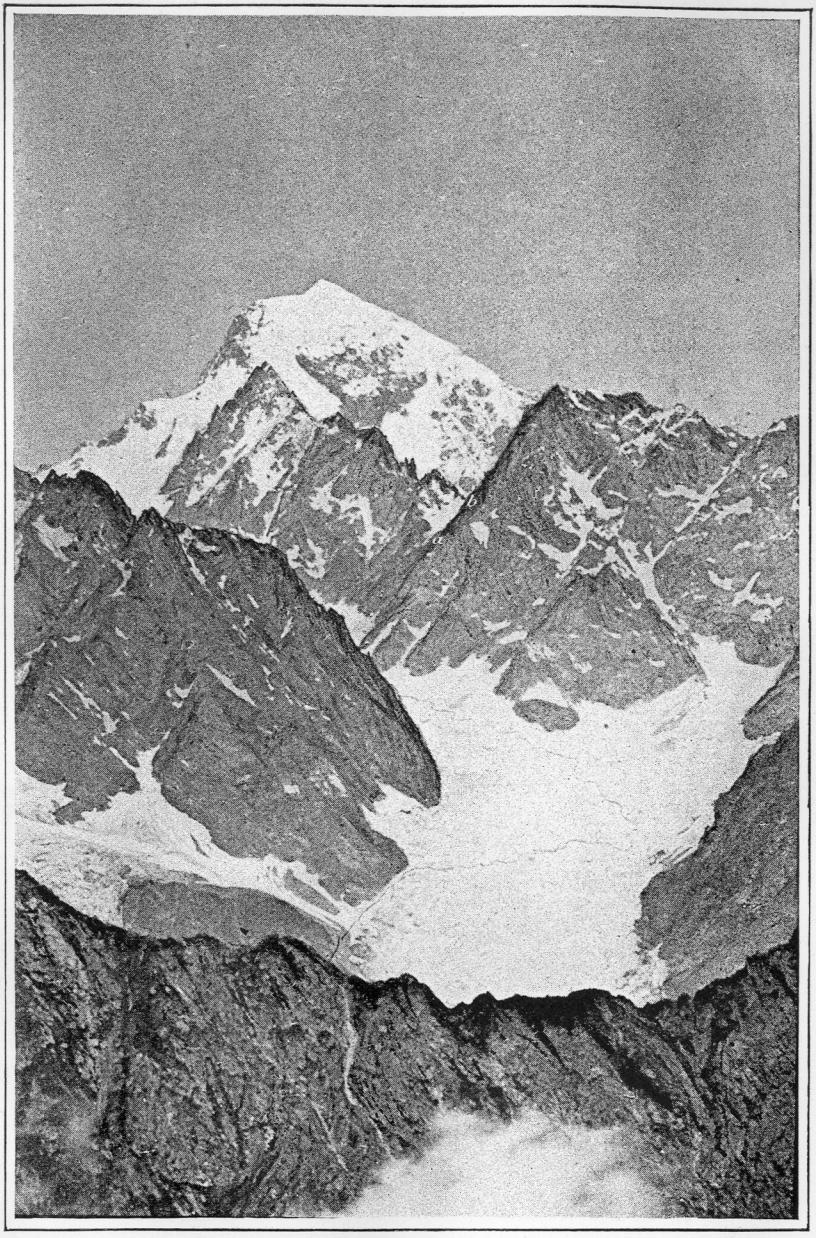

H. WOOLLEY PHOT.

DYCHTAU from above KARAOUL

a. Bivouac. — *b*. Ullnauz Pass.

The N.-E. buttress is seen over the E. ridge. Mr. H. Woolley's route leads up the snowslope between the E. and S. ridges.

The faint line shows the route through the icefall of the Tutuin Glacier.

Tcherek valley seemed as endless and wearisome as ever; but at last M. Bogdanoff's white tents came in view, and at 4 o'clock we threw down our rücksacks on the green terrace at Karaul, and so ended one of the finest and most exciting expeditions I had ever enjoyed.

We had found the ascent laborious, but, after crossing the ice-fall, free from special difficulty and danger. The rocks encountered had been easily climbed, and not a single falling stone had crossed our track. The discovery of the route taken by us was in a great measure the result of the operations carried out by the search party, as the expedition to Donkin and Fox's bivouac suggested the possibility of gaining the southern ridge from the head of the Tutuin Glacier. But for that expedition I might not have found this approach to the peak without considerable waste of time. Success was ultimately won, mainly by Jossi's patience and endurance; but Kaufmann, though he did not gain the summit, rendered me invaluable service by helping to carry wood and provisions across the ice-fall, where no native could be taken.

The exciting feature of the ascent was the long-continued uncertainty of success; for from the moment of leaving the sleeping-place till the tower was turned and the final slopes were won, we were never able to foresee the issue, and during the greater part of the climb our fortunes seemed to be continually hanging in the balance.

Being all in indifferent condition, our pace was slow; from sleeping-place to summit we occupied 12 hrs., one hour of this time being needlessly wasted, chiefly by an injudicious choice of route. Had the upper portion of the slope under the southern ridge been also of ice, 12 hrs. would not have been excessive; but with all the snow on the mountain in good condition, it would be quite possible to reach the summit in 8 or 9 hrs.

The disadvantage of our line of ascent lies in the necessity for bivouacking above the ice-fall, and in the consequent labour of conveying wood and sleeping-bags so far without porters. Those, however, who follow the route I have described may be assured that they will be amply rewarded for the trouble of ascending the Tutuin Glacier by the grandeur of its scenery, and that if the summit, or even the southern ridge of Dych-tau, be gained early in the day, in anything like good weather, a view will be enjoyed of such splendour as few peaks can command.

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