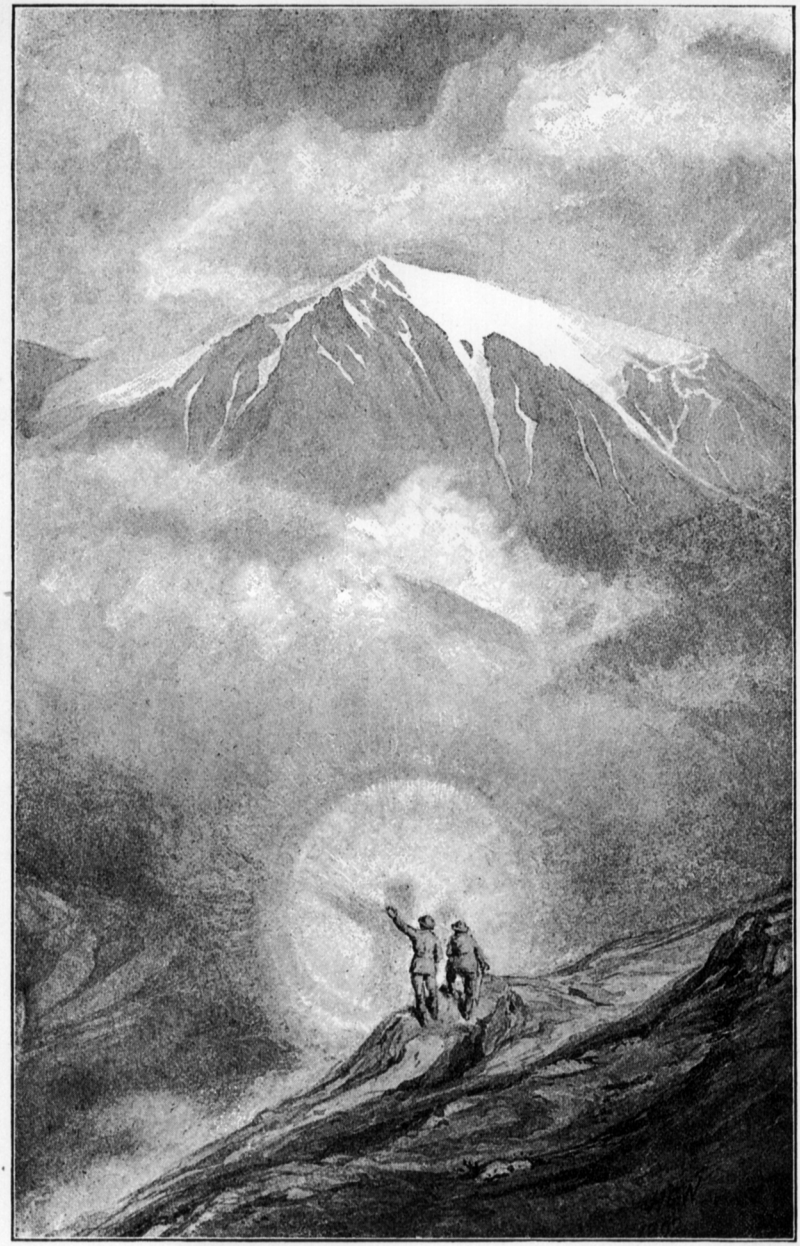

H. G. W., from photo by G. P. B.

BASARDJUSI.

From the North-West with Foyhow. (See p. 13.)

THE

ALPINE JOURNAL.

MAY 1892.

(No. 116.)

DAGHESTAN AND THE ASCENT OF BASARDJUSI.

BY GEORGE YELD.

(Read, in part, before the Alpine Club, March 3, 1891.)

II.

THE next day was ushered in by a glorious sunrise. Such purples, oranges, and golds defy description. We agreed that we had never seen the sun rise in such glorious apparel before. It was decided that while Gérôme and the rest went to Kurush to get provisions and firewood, Baker, Cassim and I should wander where we pleased for flowers and photography, and rejoin the others on the way to a new camp under Shah Dagh. There was great wealth of herbaceous plants on the slopes between our Shalbruz camp and Kurush—delphiniums, vetches, a fine blue one amongst others, centaureas, scabious, as well as gentians, parnassias, and the most richly-coloured dwarf pink I ever saw, of a brilliant crimson red.

As we went down to cross the torrent we saw many maidens toiling up the steep slope to Kurush with pitchers of water. In Daghestan, indeed, most of the work falls to the women—honest labour bears no lovely face for the men; they scorn it. On our rejoining the caravan, Gérôme told us that the Yushbashi of Kurush, with whom was the Secretary of the Chief of the Achti District, did not wish him to leave Kurush till we had returned. Gérôme explained that the gentlemen were in the mountains; he added that we had with us a commendatory letter from the Chief of the Nucha District. On his promising to send this down, the Yushbashi seemed satisfied. Mourad, our Kurush hunter, was then sent back with the letter, and on returning in the

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evening said that the Secretary had told him that the letter was addressed to the authorities at Kutkashin, not Achti, which was perfectly true, and that he wished to see the gentlemen themselves on the morrow. By way of emphasis, I suppose, he had taken Mourad's gun from him, and given him strict orders not to stay with us after the next day. I may conclude this episode by saying that we did not take any more notice, except to send a polite message by Mourad that we were compelled by the shortness of our time to continue at once our journey to Kutkashin.

On the way we were twice attacked by huge dogs, like polar bears, but well-directed stones kept them at bay till the shepherds beat them off. The white head of Basardjusi, with his cliffs and icefalls, filled us with admiration, and the black ridges of Messent and Charrou, with their towering crests, exhibited noble mountain forms. We eventually camped in a little valley under Shah Dagh's outer barrier, at a height of 9,800 feet.

Before we turned into this glen the views were glorious. The red mass of Shalbruz in the evening lights was most beautiful; the distant mountains to the west were a lovely purple blue; straight in front of us was Kurush; on our right the many-towered bastions of Shah Dagh, on our left the ice-clad majesty of Basardjusi. We had some difficulty in finding a site for our camp, as the ground sloped too much to be comfortable, and the only really level bit, though bright green and enticing to the eyes, let me in over my boots when I went to examine it.

The next day—it was very cold during the night—we had a good look at the north face of Basardjusi. Roughly speaking, the great mountain trends E. and W. with three peaks. The eastern, of snow and rock, sends down a massive ridge to the pass from Kurush to Kuba and Kutkashin; that is to say, towards Shah Dagh. On this ridge were several summits of large proportions; one, next Basardjusi, which our hunter named Chelogle, probably nearly 13,000 feet high, has a little glacier of its own; another, called by the same authority Kishin Dagh, we ascended.

The central peak of Basardjusi, if I may call that a peak which looks little more than a mound in a ridge, is wholly of snow and ice. Then comes the western peak, the highest, afterwards ascended by us from the south, which towers up immediately above Kurush. The whole summit ridge from E. to W. is of snow and ice, and the whole northern face of

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the mountain streams with glaciers. Under the central and between it and the western peak are some tremendous cornices and séracs. The ends of the glaciers towards the west are unusually steep; one exactly resembles a ram's head. This shows well in Baker's fine photograph of this face of the peak.

I have said that we ascended the point called Kishin Dagh (*circa* 12,500). From it we saw enough to let us infer that the chances would be against us, constituted as our party was, in an attempt on the eastern peak of Basardjusi from this side, the last part of the arête which joins the eastern peak to Chelogle being, so far as we could see, narrow and steep. The ascent of Kishin Dagh presented no difficulty, though on the way back we turned off the ridge too soon—it was my fault, I believe—and had to cross a detestable rock face. The views taught us some topography, but the map was hard to understand. On the summit ridge (*circa* 12,000 feet), we found some interesting geological specimens. The vast size of Shah Dagh astonished us.

We were pleased with our hunter, Mourad Agha, and parted from him with mutual good wishes. He had made himself generally useful, and walked well. We struck camp the same afternoon, and crossed the pass (*circa* 10,000) which leads to Kuba and Kutkashin. At Kurush we had bought some kerosine, as candles threatened to run short. Mehemet, who was made beast of burden to this jar, was not long before he broke it and saturated himself with kerosine. As a punishment he had to continue to bear the leaking vessel; yet we were not altogether sorry, for, on the whole, we preferred him kerosined to *au naturel*. We passed several parties of men on the track. After we had crossed the water-shed there was a fine view of a red rock-peak in the Shah Dagh style towering over the way to Kuba. There were large flocks of sheep, numbers of horses, some goats, but not many cattle in sight. Many of the sheep were black. At the angle between the Kuba and Kutkashin tracks there was a considerable plain divided by streams. On the comparatively level ground before we got to our camping-place there were many horses, watched, as usual, by big and fierce dogs.

At about 6.30 P.M. we pitched camp opposite to the point where the direct Kutkashin route diverged from the path which leads round Basardjusi (not shown on the Russian map) at a height of 8,940 feet.

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Here Gérôme entered into negotiations for a cheese with some shepherds, but could not agree about the price. If it is true that 'the noisy man is always in the right,' these shepherds must have had an overwhelming case. There was, in fact, so much uproar and apparent anger that we prepared for a night alarm, but nothing came of it. The men had been obliged to collect dry dung for fuel. Water froze during the night, and this was, I think, decidedly our chilliest camp, as a cutting wind came down the torrent gorge between Basardjusi and Dr. Radde's Basar Jort.

The sunrise was fine, the deep red rocks of Shah Dagh's outlying towers being very striking. At 8 A.M. Baker and I, with Ali, started to explore the gorge above mentioned. It looked as if the track was coming to an end in a ravine tenanted by the torrent, but though there was no indication of a track on the map, there turned out to be quite a feasible path. It crossed the torrent three times, if I remember rightly, twice on old avalanche snow.

On our right we had the great mass of Basardjusi, on our left Dr. Radde's Basar Jort, a big peak with a long rock ridge, which, as we advanced, became glacier-clad. We at first intended to climb this peak to get a view of Basardjusi, but at 10,000 feet we came to a sort of oasis, a considerable patch of turfy ground, thick with what I took to be *Primula farinosa*, and well provided with water.

When we had crossed this, we saw a comparatively speaking broad glen running up into Basardjusi, and were debating what to do when, behold, a horseman descended from a great slope to our right front! Now if this man could ride down it was obviously possible for our horses to go up, and on the principle of the more done to-day the less to do to-morrow, we followed this track upwards to a height of 11,600 feet, where there was a little platform, big enough for the tent, and a clear spring of water bubbling out of the mountain side a few feet below. This was our obvious camping-ground.

On Gérôme's arrival with the men it was evident that something was wrong. He explained that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he had got them up. They were themselves worn out. Their horses were exhausted. Where was there food or fodder? They never expected such work as this. They would—yes, they would—like the majority of wrathful men, they here took refuge in aposiopesis. The position was not a pleasant one, but presently, on the promise of a sheep, the outburst promptly died away, and we

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were once more a peaceful party. After all we must own that their complaints were not altogether unfounded. We were very keen, and had worked them hard. The last bit, from the track to the tent-platform, was very steep, and the slope below the track by no means tempting. Ali, who looked knocked up, was presented on the spot with a shoulder of mutton, and it was agreed that he should remain with us, while Gérôme and the others returned to the oasis, and either Cassim or Mehemet was to come up by 2 o'clock on the afternoon of the next day to help to carry down the tent.

In the afternoon I went off to reconnoitre across the slope to the N.W. of us, which was of loose stones, and most exasperating to walk on in a hot sun. I reached the edge of the cliffs between us and the next great and very deep ravine to the N.W., and discovered that the ridge I was on was not, as I hoped, that which we had seen from Kurush descending from Basardjusi to Messent, but that there was yet another escarped ridge between me and that. This much at any rate was clear, that we must, when we started in the morning, mount the slope behind our camp. From my perch here the Georgian steppe was a sea of clouds of extraordinary beauty, while the mountains on the other side of it, near Lake Gotcha, about eighty miles away, rose perfectly clear like the fingers of a hand. On my return I amused Baker by saying: 'Italy is a sea of clouds.'

The evening gave us the most beautiful sights of our tour. At 5.45 the clouds over the steppe ceased to move. Their great billows lay softly against the mountain promontories, though tiny streamers of pale golden pink floated here and there on high. And when the sun set over Charrou's shapely pyramid, the snows glistened like a shining altar. Just as the sun went down a tender glory as of a rainbow, green, gold, and red, poured itself all round the horizon, and long after the sun was gone a living golden flame seethed up from behind the snows of Charrou. The stillness was unbroken. Nature worshipped in silence.

This westwards; behind us on the white crest of Basar Jort we watched the sunset-glow change like an opal. Then came 'the modest moon and the severer stars.'

On the following morning, after breakfasting on a tin of Silver's soup, we started at 5.30, Baker with the provisions in a fishing-basket and the field-glass, I with the water-bottle and rope. Guided by my reconnaissance on the previous

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day, we at once breasted the slope immediately behind the tent, Baker leading, and in about half an hour reached the crest of the ridge.

We had now to decide on our line of attack. Beneath us to the N.E. lay a large glacier which might probably have been reached from the oasis at 10,000 feet. It filled the head of the glen, the mouth of which opened on the oasis. This glacier was supplied with the usual bergschrund, the angle of which we did not altogether like the look of. From this glacier there was an obvious route by a snow-couloir to the eastern slope of the great dome, which appeared from where we were, but was not in reality, the top of our peak. On the other hand, it was obviously easy to keep along the ridge on which we were, till we reached the junction with another ridge full of rock towers, which led, so far as we could see, to the western slope of the great dome. On this route there was one great tower which we feared would take us a long time to circumvent; this line of attack offered apparently the better views and the greater interest, while the other involved a considerable descent, which neither of us liked, and the passage of the berg-schrund, which, as I have said, did not look altogether to our taste. It did not take us long to make us decide for what I may call the rock-tower route.

At the angle where the ridge we were on joined that which abutted on the snow-dome we found a cairn which, after our experiences on Shalbruz, caused us some qualms. After this we continued to work steadily upwards, meeting with no difficulty, though the work was rather laborious. Much to our satisfaction the big tower turned out nothing like as bad as we had expected. Our spirits then rose and, the sun beginning to exert his strength, water was called for. When the cup was poured out a terrible discovery ensued. The fault, I am afraid, was mine. I took the bottle—one of Silver's ebonite gourds—from Ali, who I made sure had filled it, according to orders, at the spring just below the tent-platform; but, alas! it only contained what had been left in it the previous day. Moral: Always fill the water-bottle yourself. This was a sad blow, but we continued on our way, and at my companion's suggestion took off our warmer garments and laid them as carefully out of sight as if ours had been one of the most vulgarised of Swiss summits. I made the rest of the ascent in an ancient boating-sweater of Baker's, and Baker himself in a light jacket. Soon after this we came to the foot of the great

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slope of the first massive snow-dome, the side of which on subsequent measurement by aneroid we ascertained to be about 700 feet in length. We now put on the rope, and Baker proceeded to cut steps up some steep snow and ice. This work, which though not prolonged was onerous, set us upon the great slope, up which we now made our way. I should have mentioned that at 13,200 feet we discovered quite a little garden of the white flowers of *Cerastium alpinum*, the greatest height at which we came upon flowers in Daghestan, while at somewhere about the same height, I think a little higher, we found a cairn.

My recollections of the snow ridge are that I frequently called to my companion for a few minutes' halt, to which he submitted with remarkable equanimity. Eventually, by steady plodding, we reached the first great snow-dome, and after that a similar but much smaller dome, which obviously constituted the summit of Basardjusi, 14,722 feet (five-verst map), 14,620 aneroid.

Now we had ostensibly come out to photograph and collect flowers—with some climbing thrown in—but I am afraid that we were like the poet who said of himself—

> Euphelia serves to grace my measure,
> But Chloe is my real flame;

for while these pursuits served to adorn our programme, yet Basardjusi had our hearts. 'Twas so indeed. Although our eyes had done homage otherwhere to forest, and ravine, and blossoms exquisite in form and fragrance, yet both of us cared more for Basardjusi than for everything else put together, and failure would have been very bitter.

At 10.15 we shook hands at the summit, and without delay, except to let Baker examine a huge hole which looked like the beginning of the vast cornice which had awed us so much in the view of the north face of our peak from our camp under Shah Dagh, we turned westward, and in a very brief space reached the black rocks so conspicuous from Kurush. I think both of us were afraid lest a well-built cairn, such as that which we found on Shalbruz, should confront us, and we were delighted to find on examination no trace of previous visitors.

Neither of us felt inclined to say much, though, as we tasted once more

> The joy of life in steepness overcome,
> And victories of ascent, and looking down
> On all that had looked down on us,

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our satisfaction was indeed unbounded at having completed the ascent—a satisfaction in itself worth the journey to Daghestan.

In a few minutes the fishing-basket was opened, and such provisions as we had laid out on the rocks. Then, too, the water in the bottle was measured out, and about a third of a wineglass discovered to be each man's share. This, to increase its volume, we mixed with snow, and Baker added a suspicion of cognac. The mixture was divided between us, and no beaker

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

could have been more grateful to our throats.

At first, let me frankly say, to be where we were was everything. We caught sight of the pass to Echir, and remembered a certain ominous saying: 'That peak is not for us.' We eyed Kurush and its deeply-cut torrents, and recollected how we had almost despairingly admired the great ridge that now lay below instead of above us. We recalled the many times on which '*if* we get to the top of Basardjusi' had come as a finish to a rose-coloured summing-up of our campaign, and then we turned to the view.

The day was supremely glorious. Basardjusi was without a cloud. Shalbruz showed all the massive strength of his red cliffs. We gazed on the vast bulk of the many-bastioned Shah Dagh. The Samur flowed before us.

And though we could see the forests on the sides of the gorges which open out on the Georgian steppe, the steppe itself was hidden by the sea of cloud—snow-pure, soft-shining—with here and there above it a fairylike scarf of vapour floating in the serenest blue. It was as though Nature deigned to reward the mountaineer who penetrates the secret places of her reign by hiding the dreary flats and monotonous plateaux of the steppes which lead on to her mountain home.

The mountains beyond Shalbruz seemed to trend from east to west, while west of Basardjusi they ran, roughly speaking, from north to south. Far away to the E.S.E. we saw a double-headed peak, which looked very high, behind the massive glacier-clad mountain which seemed to be the Tfan of the five-verst map. I took with a compass the bearings of the principal peaks.

We pocketed specimens of the highest rocks, built a small cairn, left our names (with the wrong date, by the way, August 23 instead of 22) under it in a little metal lozenge

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box, and, after a final look all round the horizon, set off at 11.10, Baker first. By this time the air was much colder, and before long my one hand grew benumbed with holding the rope tight. We made no change in our route till we got to the steps which Baker had cut on the ascent. These we now avoided by taking to the rocks on our right (west). From the snow-dome we seemed to step on to the cloud-sea over the steppes. We went at a good pace, and were so eager that we forgot our coats, with the result that I had a short journey back to fetch them. When we were at about 13,000 feet we noticed that clouds were beginning to gather towards the summit of the mountain. Finally, we raced into camp, Baker unfortunately spraining his ankle.

We were warmly welcomed by Ali, the good fellow shaking hands with us in evident satisfaction at our safe return. We were pleased to find that Mehemet had come up with a horse to carry down the tent and other baggage. A meal was soon ready and devoured, and we were on our way to rejoin Gérôme and Cassim. Baker very pluckily made light of his sprained ankle, and got down with the help of the two ice axes, but not without a good deal of pain, I am afraid. The cloud-sea still covered the steppe, but the edges of it now broke with flying spray against the mountains. The Spirit of the Storm, which afterwards broke upon us, was already at his work.

The oasis reached, it was not long before our whole train was on the march, Gérôme meantime enlarging on the events of the previous night. It appears that towards dawn they heard footsteps and dimly discerned two men armed with guns. Cassim declared that had he had the revolver in his hand he should have fired at them. The two men, however, departed without having done any mischief, and soon afterwards Mehemet, who was out to watch the horses, saw a herd of ibex. He made so much noise that the herd rushed off, but not before Gérôme had seen them. He estimated their number at twenty-five. The apparent explanation of this story was that the two men were hunters who were out after ibex, the oasis being a favourite feeding-ground of these splendid creatures. We were much disappointed not to have seen them ourselves.

Soon after leaving the oasis we met the chief of the village of Bum, and Baker took a photograph of Basardjusi, with the chief on horseback in the foreground. By-and-by we reached the pass to Bum, 11,300, and turned westwards. A brilliant golden ranunculus was here conspicuous. We

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then descended monotonous stony slopes to the bottom of the valley, or rather ravine, with huge rock-walls and a torrent, the head of which ran up to the cliffs under our Basardjusi camp. When we were two-thirds of the way down, Cassim set off to recover Mehemet's cap, which had been blown away from somewhere near our camp into the head of the ravine, and, climbing like a cat, returned with it when we were putting up the tent.

The next morning, at nine o'clock, Baker and I left the camp, at about 8,800 feet, the others following half an hour later. The ravine now rapidly contracted till there was barely room for the rough path and the torrent. The shepherds, of whom there were several with large flocks near our camping-place, told Gérôme that we should have to cross the torrent twenty-eight times, so that when the gorge narrowed so much that the torrent became the path we did not feel much surprise. Before we reached this point we were several times attacked by dogs; one beast with teeth unsheathed was belaboured at least three times by the shepherds before consenting to give up the attack, for it is but justice to say that the owners of these big dogs invariably did their best to keep them in when we got to close quarters. Just as torrent-jumping became the order of the day I heard a noise, and looking back saw Mehemet dripping from a recent immersion in the rushing stream, and Baker, so to speak, tenderly disembowelling the camera which had gone with Mehemet into the water. But, notwithstanding all his care, it never recovered from this hydropathic treatment.

The torrent being now the track, I attached myself to Cassim and his horse, while Baker joined himself to Ali. Trees began at about 7,000 feet, and ere long the forest scenery became interesting. We found a few raspberries, and the only two strawberries we came across in our travels. There was one pretty little cascade on the right bank of the stream.

At 6,300 feet, about one o'clock, we halted for lunch in a beautiful spot where there was a little lawn by the torrent-side, fringed in part with lady-ferns, some of whose fronds were over 5 feet 6 inches long. Luckily, as it turned out, we all made a good meal, the cutlets being excellent.

Soon after we re-started rain began to fall, and, increasing continually in violence, finally became phenomenal, but not before we had escaped from the torrent-bed and begun to go up and down over beautifully wooded ridges. The thunder,

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which had been muttering for some time, now became loud, and the lightning vivid, as drenched, deafened, and dazzled, we plodded on.

On these steep paths the horses performed great feats; indeed, more willing and plucky creatures could not be found. They had carried us across torrents without a stumble; they had waited patiently, held by bridle and tail, while Baker cut a way for them with his ice-axe; they had struggled with their loads up the loose rubbish, no mild acclivity, to our highest camp; and now they scrambled up these slippery inclines with scarce a slip. Such services soon made us forget their one little escapade in the alien barley.

The beech-trees were here magnificent, and frequently excited our admiration. I noticed, notwithstanding the rain, holly and hart's-tongue ferns, a large milky-white campanula, and some huge valerians. We found one lily in seed, but it was impossible to dig the bulbs up out of their thicket-home; in such a downpour I could not venture to say from the seed pod that it was, though it may well have been, *Lilium colchicum*. The rank vegetation gave forth a heavy smell, and everything was steaming with moisture. There were some luxuriant hazels here and there.

The rain seemed to increase in fury, as if to let us know what a Caucasian downpour really meant. After crossing a side torrent, already in process of flooding—here the horses again distinguished themselves—we emerged from the forest, still at a high level. Here we found shepherds with many dogs, which they kept well in hand. On our right, across the main torrent, considerably below us, were some hot springs with rude sheds, apparently for the accommodation of visitors. The track, now fairly broad, and running like a small river, led across uplands with a few pear and other trees. We had by this time ceased to take notice of the amount of water that flowed off our hats in at the back of our necks, and so into our boots; but the wind was keen, and it was cold work waiting, as we had to do ever and again, for the men to come up with us.

As we reached Kamaroffka the rain moderated a little, and Gérôme got a man, who, with other natives, was loafing in the road, to lead us to the Yushbashi's. Many wishes were expressed that a new-looking house, the only good one apparently in the village, might turn out to be that worthy's abode; and great was our satisfaction when that proved to be the case. The Yushbashi received us with great

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hospitality, and it was not long before we were undressing in the best room in the house. We had some difficulty in getting the crowd of men out of the room. Gérôme said that they had never seen men with such white skins as ours, and as they certainly were not rude we did not hurry them. The saddle-bags (of Willesden canvas) had proved good and true, and we were soon in dry clothes. I may say that some of our wet things never got really dried till we had left the Caucasus, so thorough was the soaking they had received. At least half a pint of water was poured out of each of our boots, the result of the cataracts from our hats, as the boots were perfectly watertight.

After Ali, who was much exhausted, had been dosed with cognac, and all the men had been very kindly supplied with dry coats by the Yushbashi, a fire was lighted and a very fair dinner served up. Then Gérôme told us stories of his many adventures, and we spent a very merry evening.

There was one gentleman about the premises who, according to his own story to Gérôme, had been sent to Kamaroffka into banishment for having killed two men. We thought it possible that this caitiff might visit our room in the night, and accordingly we prepared a trap at either door—an effective precaution, as it turned out, for in the dim light of early morning we were all roused by the noise of overturned tins and platters, and distinguished the homicidal varlet, who made some excuse and hastily withdrew.

In the morning there was much crowing of cocks and lowing of calves, and everybody seemed astir by 5.30. We saw one big-dog fight, and a plucky hen in safeguard of her brood flew at a big puppy and sent him off dismayed. We examined the view, nearly due north, of Basardjusi from the balcony of the house with much interest. At the head of the valley, the sides of which were clothed with forest, at a great height above the cliffs of a green mountain, rose the colossal form of Basardjusi in spotless white, every rock being deeply hidden by the snow of yesterday's storm. The view, we both agreed, much resembled that of the Jungfrau from Interlaken.

The houses in this village, with the exception of the Yushbashi's, were small, one-storied, and miserably poor in appearance. One of the most striking features of the place was the haystacks, which were raised high on a kind of tall, rough rick-stool.

There were some patches of corn opposite the Yushbashi's house, which faced west. The hillsides were well wooded,

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though the trees—all deciduous—were of no great size, nothing like the great beeches of yesterday's forest. Kamaroffka, it will be inferred from my previous remarks, is on the left bank of the torrent, which here covers a large breadth of ground, being divided into several channels. As we left, about 9 A.M., the valley-mouth in the struggling sunbeams was extremely beautiful. And when we saw the snow-covered rocks of our peak, and reflected on the good fortune which had enabled us to make the ascent and to get clear of the torrent before the rain-flood, we all felt very grateful. Had we been two or three hours later in reaching the forest ridges from the torrent-road, we should probably have been prisoners for many hours, and have had a very miserable experience. The Kamaroffka people told Gérôme that anyone left in the mountains on the previous night must have been lost—a statement I hesitate to believe. At any rate, I hope it was exaggerated, as we met a boy with a horse in the forest, who must have passed a wretched night, even if he did not venture to essay the torrent track.

We had hired three horses for riding, so that with our three men and their three horses and a man and boy from Kamaroffka we made an imposing procession. There were some fruit-trees at Kamaroffka, and the road soon brought us to a paradise of blackberries, and then to the village of Bum. Here the vegetation was very rich, in fact, almost tropical. All sorts of fruits flourished; many vines streamed out over the topmost boughs of good-sized trees. In fact,

> The vast vinebowers
> Ran to the summit of the trees, and dropt
> Their streamers earthward.

Magnificent planes overlooked the road. Bum would delight a gardener's heart. We were lucky enough to find the Bum bazaar in full swing. The stalls were filled with various commodities, doubtless of no great price. I noticed specially red handkerchiefs and water-melons. Gérôme bought a basket of figs, which, though small, were of excellent flavour.

After leaving Bum we passed beautiful wooded hills, many with shapely crests and heads. We met a number of heavily laden loudly-creaking native waggons, and Baker carefully examined some rice-mills. We also saw one or two men with falcons on their wrists in search of game.

At Kutkashin we were hospitably received and had a comfortable meal, though the rice and apricots, from which

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great things were expected, turned out a failure, and were given to our Lesghians. I happened to be next the balcony of the house and suddenly saw Ali come forth with the pot of rice as though he were obeying the stage direction, 'Enter first murderer.' After a stealthy look round he scooped a hole in the earth, emptied the pot and buried the contents. Then, not daring to look on 't again, he fled into the house.

We left at about 2.30 P.M. with a three-horse carriage at full gallop, the Lesghians agreeing to follow with the baggage. When we came to the turn for the Batoum-Baku railway one of the horses stood bolt upright, but the driver seemed to think this quite natural, and soon reduced him to submission. Along the roadside walnuts had been planted and filberts were plentiful, as the driver offered us handfuls of them. But when he stopped the horses and began to gather filberts from a tree which overhung the road his generosity showed less admirable. In one place—how dear a sight to the Druid hoary chief would it have been!—I saw eight mistletoes in one oak.

At 6.15 P.M. we arrived at Chelibi, where we were to put up for the night. The caravanserai is an old building with a thatched roof, the yard being entered through a mighty wooden gateway with ponderous doors which looked as if the days of marauders had not altogether been forgotten. We noticed the same massive portals at Nidshe, famous for its hazel-nuts. We slept under a sort of balcony on the ground floor, Baker in a hammock, Gérôme and I on the ground. Luckily we had mosquito-nets, as many of those pests informed us of their presence during the dark hours. The night was ushered in by the croaking of frogs, the barking of dogs, the jingle of horse-bells, and the doleful chanting of morsels of song by our fellow-travellers, of whom there were a large number.

In the morning we breakfasted under a mulberry-tree, where we were exposed to the attacks of many fowls, not tame villatic but persevering and predatory. They pecked a cake of bread to pieces in no time. In a pen close by two buffaloes, a cow, a heifer and a calf reposed together. We were well contented to set off for Nucha. On the way we saw the effect of the heavy rains, where a torrent from the mountains had spread out for several hundred yards over the road. We saw, too, an arabah fast in the last channel of the same torrent, a black stork, and half a dozen tortoises.

We met with a hearty reception at Nucha, and spent the rest of the day in calling on friends and visiting the bazaar.

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In the evening we paid off our Shin men, who had arrived after sunset, and, as in the case of the Kurush hunter Mourad, parted from Ali and Cassim with mutual expressions of goodwill. They were good fellows and had served us well; better servants, in fact, it would be difficult to find anywhere.

On our way to the omnibus in the morning we learnt how the buffalo is shoed. The poor ungainly laborious beast had his head tied back and his legs bound, and was thus delivered to the smith—a mere mass of helplessness. Then, to remind us we were in Asia, two camels came stalking up the street. After a pleasant visit to the ever-hospitable M. Seleffkoff, we started. At the first station wasps' nests abounded. I counted five under the roof and two above the window. The nests were for the most part small. Soon after we met a caravan of camels. The journey was hot, dusty and without incident, except an abnormal consumption of water-melons; but as we crossed the bridge (it serves both for road and railway) over the Kur, near Evlake, the water on our right was still lit with the red glow of sunset, while on our left the moon had risen, and so, with this kindly farewell upon us, we drove into the dusk and the Evlake railway station.

Is Daghestan safe for travellers? We should answer the question in the affirmative without any hesitation. We heard from time to time stories of bandits, but saw no signs of anyone actually labouring in that vocation. We were, it is true, occasionally offered a man to watch the horses at night, but I think it was more with a view to the pay than to any actual belief in the danger that the offer was made to us. Everyone who had broken the law seemed to be by no means shy in recounting how he had done so. Not to put too fine a point upon it, the fault was generally homicide. These narratives we seriously inclined to hear *viâ* Gérôme. They amused us. They also, no doubt, reached us without being minimised. And if we listened to lies? Doubt not that Solomon listened to many an one.

I cannot close this paper with the usual justly merited compliments to a Payot or an Almer, but I must assign the well-earned credit of our success to my companion. Nothing had been neglected or forgotten by him, nothing left to chance. Especially do I congratulate him on the photographs, due entirely to his skill and perseverance, in which

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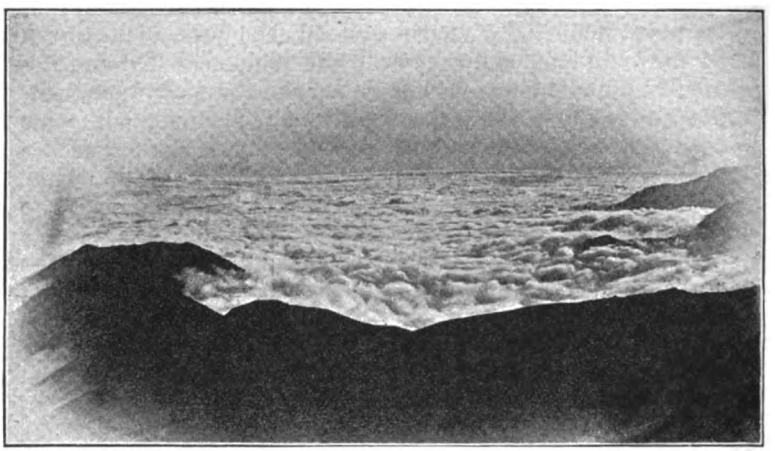
those glorious days we spent in Daghestan find so satisfactory a memorial.

I would briefly here repeat our thanks to the authorities, both in London and Tiflis, who were so kind as to help us, as well as to those good friends at Batoum, Tiflis, and Nucha, who seemed never able to do enough for us.

The splendid weather which we enjoyed, the kindliness of the reception we everywhere met with, joined to Gérôme's *bonne camaraderie* and the willing help of our Lesghians, make us look back with unmixed pleasure to our Basardjusi campaign. May all mountaineers who visit Daghestan fare as we did.



THE SEA OF CLOUDS.

From Camp on Basardjusi, 11,600 *feet*.

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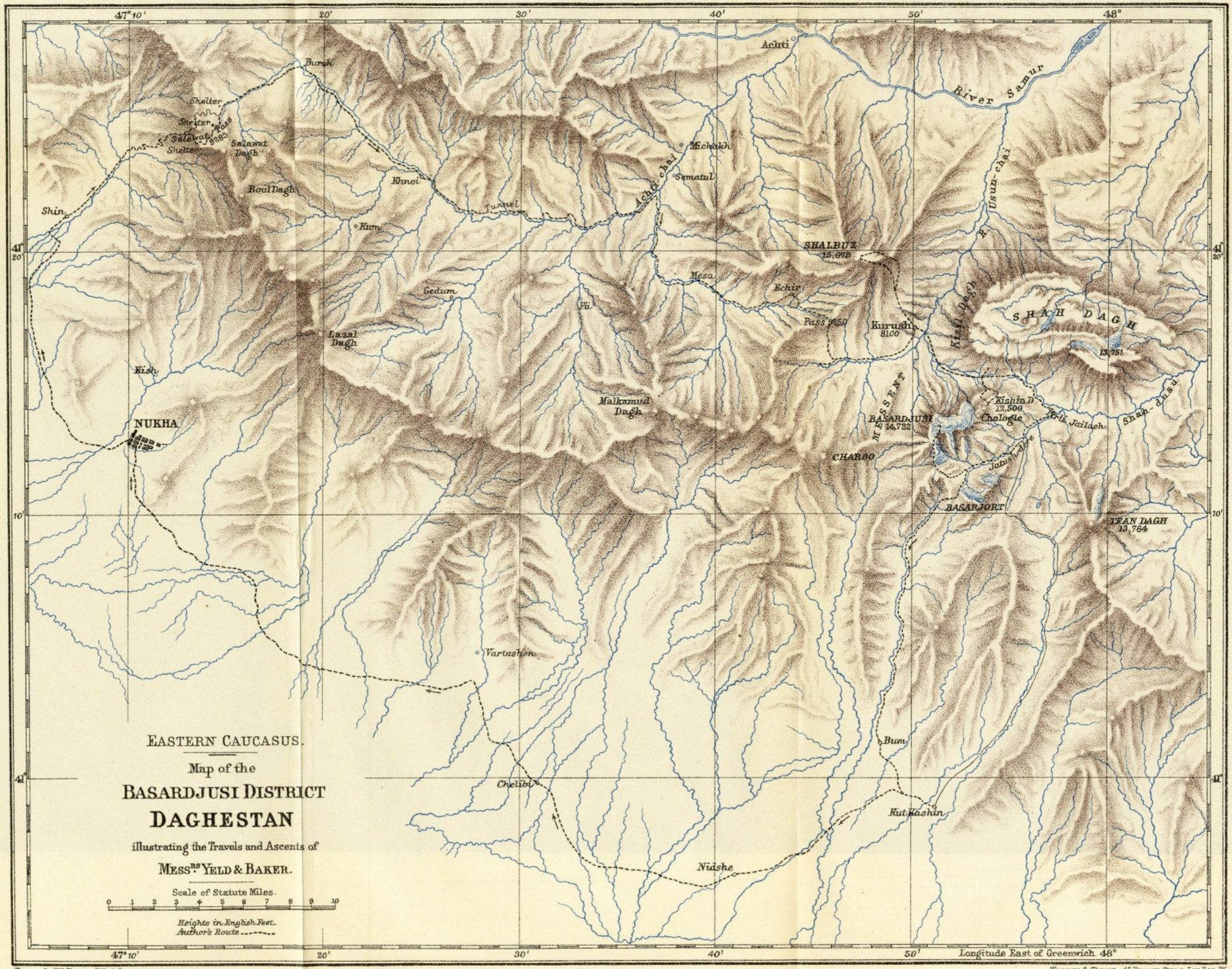

Drawn by W. Shawe, F.R.G.S.

Published for the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society.

Turner & Shawe; 43 Brewer Street, London, W.