THE CAUCASUS IN 1896.

By VITTORIO SELLA.

Signor V. Sella sends the following detailed notes of his recent journey in the Caucasus, the third he has undertaken.

Signori Vittorio Sella and Emilio Gallo, with two young servants from Biella, left Kadgaron on July 15 for the Fiagdon valley. They reached Dalakaff, the most populous village, in the evening. Below Guli, in the limestone region, they met with a fine defile; the valley above is uninteresting and entirely bare of trees. Kolota, 7,800 ft. by barometer (from L. Casella, London), consists of two or three houses, surrounded by grass slopes, and inhabited only during the summer. From Zuikoi Khokh (black schists), about 12,000 ft., a good view of Tepli was obtained.

Ascent of Tepli.—The north-east ridge was considered the most practicable, the glacier above Kolota leading to a considerable height on it. In a first attempt they reached a saddle (12,600 ft.) above the glacier, but bad weather prevented further progress. On July 23, by climbing rocks at the head of the glacier, they gained the ridge of the mountain. The snow was in bad condition, and huge cornices on the N. obliged them to keep considerably on the opposite side of the ridge. The rocks on the ridge were not difficult. They reached the central summit (14,460 ft.) at 12.30, in seven hours from a camp (10,000 ft.), on the left moraine of the glacier above Kolota. They built a cairn and took photographs. A further point appeared to be a few feet higher and very difficult of access.

Leaving Kolota the party crossed a pass (11,060 ft.) to Zakka, with two donkeys and a horse, in five hours. The Zakki valley is arid, vegetation scarce, the roads ruinous and at many points difficult for horses. The route became more interesting, at the opening of the Ginat and Zrug valleys, where they fell into Mr. Freshfield's 1868 track; thence Zikara is a beautiful peak. Nar and Espe are villages particularly characteristic of Ossetia. By the Mamison road they reached St. Nikolai, and ascending the Zea valley camped behind the moraine of the glacier, after climbing to 10,000 ft. to reconnoitre towards the Songuta. Here they were informed by the interpreter that the baggage deposited at St. Nikolai had been stolen. Leaving the camp they went down at once. The chief of the district was informed and made inquiries. To their astonishment the stolen effects were returned. They were mysteriously replaced near the door outside the house in good condition. The fact that they consisted of films and other objects of no value to the thief possibly explained their restitution. A spool of film exposed had been opened, and the stereoscopic work done in the Zakki valley destroyed.

From Sadon they crossed into and went up the Songuta valley, camping near the foot of the glacier in bad weather. While shooting with a native hunter S. Sella was fortunate enough to

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bag a fine tur. The ice-fall of the Songuta Glacier is very beautiful, not less than 2,000 ft. in height, and recalled that of the Karagom. The peaks at the head of it are steep and difficult, and very beautiful in shape, forming an imposing amphitheatre. After two excursions on the tributary glaciers which flow in from the E., they undertook the ascent of the peak rising at the head of the western arm of the glacier, which dominates the adjacent valley of Skatikom. Their first object was to observe from it in what way the ridge of Adai Khokh unites with the head of the Songuta basin.

Ascent of Skatikom Khokh.—The party ascended the ice-fall, keeping to the right side, following steep snow-slopes and crossing some huge séracs. Then they gained the rocks, and easily climbed to the top (14,200 ft.) in seven hours from the camp (8,500 ft.). Adai Khokh at first seemed invisible, but after careful observation with a large Zeiss binocular stereo-telescope * they discovered that Adai Khokh was almost completely masked by a peak at the head of the Songuta Glacier, to which the figures 14,600 are appended in Mr. Freshfield's map of the Adai Khokh group, 'A. J.,' vol. xvi. p. 31.

Having left the Songuta valley they travelled towards the north side of the unexplored Bogkhobashi group. The way to it follows the Urukh River to the junction of the great affluent from Stir-Digor, crosses it over a bridge, ascends to Donifars (erroneously placed on the right bank of the river in Freshfield's map), then passing near Kumbuitui ascends to the Burovsek (pass, 10,700 ft.), descends into the Khuiznui valley, and by another pass not much lower crosses to the Sugan valley. On the Burovsek they found many fossil shells. This journey occupied nearly four days. Donifars is a large and Kumbuitui a smaller village. They are surrounded by slopes entirely bare of trees. In the two above-named valleys are no villages and only a few koshes. Vegetation is scanty, in Khuiznui much more so than in Sugan. The landscape, however, does not give the impression of wildness. The vivid warm colours of the abrupt calcareous peaks on the N. of the passes call to mind the Tyrolese Dolomites.

From a camp behind the left moraine of the eastern Sugan Glacier, near some poor bushes of rhododendron, they climbed to the summit of the ridge between the Sugan and Ptysvachki valleys (11,000 ft.). Thence they observed that the best way to climb Sugan is probably by the western glacier and the northern ridge. They ascended to 10,500 ft. on the western slope of Mount Tuyala, which gives a magnificent view of the Sugan range. The weather was windy, and not favourable for several days.

Ascent of Sugan.—On August 21 they left camp at 11 P.M. by moonlight. The ice-fall took nearly 2 hours at dawn. Higher up they got on quickly. Above the bergschrund they kept to the rocks, which were frightfully rotten and steep. On a saddle (14,500 ft.) they left the large camera behind. Ice-slopes and difficult rocks alternated to the northern top, which they reached

* 'I strongly recommend this binocular glass to mountain explorers.'—V. S.

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at 11.10 A.M. They did not visit the highest snowy southern summit. They built a cairn on the rocks of the northern peak (14,800 ft.).

In three days' travel they crossed from Sugan to Chegem. At Bezingi they learnt that the well-known tall chieftain had died two years ago. They visited the Jilkisu, a curious and interesting limestone valley, with a narrow and imposing defile. They climbed Kom (12,874 ft.); it commands a splendid panorama, of which photographs were obtained. From the kosh behind the moraine of the Bashilsu Glacier they crossed to the Leksur Glacier. It may be remembered that Mr. Mummery got into great difficulty in crossing the chain near this point. This (the Bashil) pass is not habitually used by the natives of Chegem, although its existence has been mentioned to many travellers, including Mr. A. W. Moore. A Chegem hunter who served as porter pointed out to S. Sella the native pass. It is a narrow gap to the N.W. (right in ascending) of the broader depression at the head of the Bashilsu Glacier. The final climb, which is short, is up a gully exposed to falling stones. The descent soon joins the route of the Mestia Pass.

From Mestia they climbed to an eminence of 11,000 ft. on the Gul Ridge, and observed Ushba with the binocular stereo-telescope. One point only on the south-eastern ridge of the mountain appeared to S. Sella very difficult. He believes that by passing the night at a great height it would be possible to overcome it and ascend the mountain entirely by rocks. He considers that to good rock-climbers this route will furnish the safest way to the south peak of Ushba.

Owing to the many delays from the bad weather he had experienced he was unable himself to stop for any attempt. By the Tuiber Pass the party returned to Chegem with a horse, and two natives of Mujal. Many photographs were taken; two turs (bouquetins) and a few birds and several marmots and vipers were collected.

THE BIETSCHHORN FROM THE BIETSCHTHAL BY THE SOUTHERN FACE.

By J. P. FARRAR.

THE first ascent from this side was made on September 2, 1884, by Drs. E. and O. Zsigmondy, Herr Purtscheller, and Professor Schulz—cf. 'Im Hochgebirge' (p. 305), a reprint of various articles by Emil Zsigmondy: the Bietschhorn paper is, however, by Professor Schulz, reprinted from S. A. C. 'Jahrbuch,' xx., 60–102.

The entry in the Ried 'Fremdenbuch'—apparently written immediately after the ascent—reads as follows:—

'Anfangs durch das am meisten rechts gelegene tief eingeschnittene Couloir, dann aus diesem links, über eine sehr schwierige, steile Felsmauer, auf die zwei Couloirs trennende Felsrippe, dann

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