

TWO CAUCASIAN JOURNEYS.

A SOLITARY TRAMP.¹

THE fact that the Russians have erected refuge huts near and in the massif of Elbruz has facilitated the ascent in many respects, although technical and meteorological conditions remain the same. These huts are known as: (1) O.P.T.E., near Tegenekli, 1756 m.; (2) Krugasor, ? 2830 m.; (3) Preejut-Adinnst, 4104 m. At the present moment, Tegenekli, the base of departure, can be attained by motor in 6–8 hours from Naltshik. In 1933 the reasons why I took 24 hours for the same trip were the breakdown of the motor engine, or episodes connected with the high road.

The Russian authorities were unwilling at first to allow me into the mountains without a 'guide': whether this was owing to apprehensions concerning my personal safety or from political motives, I cannot say. All my efforts towards convincing them that I was accustomed to travelling alone were useless—anyway no one in Naltshik appeared at all impressed by my arguments. Finally, as I remained obdurate and, moreover, could not afford to pay the 200 roubles demanded for a 'guide' for the several days' journey through valleys and over passes, permission was granted for me to travel alone. However, they charged me with the price of a female interpreter as far as Tegenekli!

Before reaching Tegenekli we experienced the road troubles hinted at above; we had to spend the night out some 70 kilometres from Tegenekli, in the Baksan glen. Incidentally I was able to prevent the theft of my luggage and my four weeks' store of provisions. The malefactor was a lady! At Tegenekli, where I pitched my little tent in a pine wood near the barracks and tents of the 'Inturist' camp, the people, native and Russian, although inquisitive, were courteous and kind. My plans included glaciological and altitude measurements as well as the ascent of Elbruz; however, in view of the delicate 'guide' question, I said nothing.

Irik Glacier.

Once more, but this time at Tegenekli, attempts were made to foist a guide on to me, but, remaining very firm, I at last satisfied the authorities by promising to leave a paper describing my intentions and times of absence for each trip. I then started for the Irik

¹ The paper is given in the original form as far as possible. Following former precedents, the spelling of place-names and heights—where existing—is taken from Mr. Freshfield's map.

We are indebted to Herr C. Egger, the Caucasian authority, for his annotation of *both* 'Journeys.'—*Editor*.

valley, one of the interesting and sparsely inhabited glens of the Baksan. My plans were to make measurements and a study of the region, as also an attempt on Elbruz, although from this, the S.E. side, there were no conveniences in the shape of Club huts. My load, including provisions for several days, a tent, the hypsometric apparatus weighing 5 lbs., and numerous extras, was very heavy. It was therefore 3 P.M. before I reached a striking terrace near the end of the glen.

My hopes for Elbruz were, however, soon shattered. My benzine cooker became defective and burned itself out, there being no means of soldering it up. Accordingly it was impossible to melt any ice or prepare a hot meal. Elbruz was out of the question and a return to Tegenekli obligatory. Before starting back I went up to the Irik Glacier and took a measurement of its snout. Judging from the Russian measurements of 1887-1889, there was a loss in depth of 44 m., and a retreat of some 230 m.—the level of the snout being about the contour 2584 m. From this side Elbruz shows as a beautiful, symmetrical ice-coned pyramid. It appears all the more striking because, although about 13 kilometres distant, it is yet the most prominent of all visible Caucasian peaks. In the evening I moved up far from any human habitation, well above the tree line to within a kilometre of the glacier. I had to eat my soup uncooked, since warming it with the lantern produced as much effect as leaving a glass of water exposed to the sun. However, my situation and the scenery were so impressive that nothing else mattered.

At sunrise next morning I struck the tent, but to spend the time before returning to Tegenekli and avail myself of the fine weather, I tried to climb one of the insignificant 3000 m. points bordering the upper glen. As luck would have it, I was joined by a Balkar shepherd. He stared, kept on staring, but said nothing. He noted all my movements, remaining glued to my side, so that it was impossible to cache my load without risk of theft. Accordingly I had to struggle up the steep slopes with my full load of 55 lbs. My speed was so reduced that time began to run short. The weather changed for the worse, and about the snow-line, some 650 ft. below the top, I was obliged to retreat. I just had time to take a panorama in six photographs of the superb Central Range about Ullukaratau, with that peak, 4302 m., glinting fantastically below and between the mighty thunder-clouds. In the late evening amidst rain and lightning I re-entered Tegenekli, having obtained some delicious sour milk in the centre of the glen, given to me by a native woman as a reward for having photographed her children playing in front of her primitive abode.

Elbruz, 18,470 ft. (July 29, 1933.)

Having repaired my cooker, I went up the broad Baksan valley two days later. I intended to attempt the mountain this time from the S. side. No one knew of my intentions; my note stated

truthfully that I meant to spend some days in the region of the Azau Glacier for scientific measurements. The route to the Krugasor hut, serving likewise as a meteorological station, was easy along the gently inclined and wooded valley. Towards the head of the latter, close to the great Azau Glacier, there is a steep rise of nearly 2000 ft. which will always be toilsome, especially in the noonday heat. The height of the hut measured as 3200 m. appeared far too high: my own instruments gave no more than 2830 m. During the night a violent storm raged in the Elbruz massif. I was well sheltered, however, as, thanks to the courtesy of the Russians, I spent the night in the observatory room, the roof of which, however, dripped water like that of the Tegenekli barracks. Rain and mist prevented a start on the following morning, but a slight improvement in the afternoon permitted me to go up to the Little Azau Glacier, where I measured the snout with the usual difficulties inseparable with all glaciers terminating in steep terrain. I had to stand in the midst of the torrent under an incessant bombardment of crumbling ice and stones. Bright sun awoke me next morning in the tent, but I was so stiff and tired after a cold and sleepless night that I started late, finding perfect weather and all the peaks clear. Making for the highest hut, Adinnst—the 'Eleven'—situated at 4104 m. on an outcrop of lava emerging from the mountain's ice cone, I found it hard to discover, especially for solitary or guideless individuals. It is quite concealed and invisible even at a few yards' distance. The route leads over the extensive ice and névé slopes of the Little Azau and Gara-Bashi Glaciers, where tracks are difficult to find and still more easily melted. In consequence I took a considerable time extricating myself from a crevassed zone and, using all due precautions, to attain the hut. On arrival I found some very tired Russians already in possession; storms and heavy mists soon obscured the landscape, Elbruz quickly vanishing. The heavy air appeared to vibrate on the hut and all hopes of fine weather seemed remote. It was a cheerless evening; the melancholy songs of the Russians harmonized with the storm lashing against the hut. As weariness overcame the visitors' voices, the song of the icy elements penetrated every crack and fissure of the building.

On the following morning, with the true inconsistency of Caucasian high-altitude weather, everything was again brilliantly clear. The shining light played on me as, at 6 A.M., I left the gloom of the hut. The indescribable grandeur of the Central Range—Dykhtau, Kosh-tantau, the Matterhorn-like Ushba, and the many summits as far as Kishkidar—lay revealed before me. No photograph, however beautiful, can give any idea of its overwhelming splendour—a memory that can never fade.² Cautiously I slunk out of the hut,

² See the famous panorama by Vittorio Sella in *Freshfield*, ii, universally acknowledged as the great artist's supreme achievement.—*Editor*.

put on my heavy boots and started. It seemed almost too late for any attempt, while my feelings were hardly optimistic. Long, troublesome hours were to pass before my goal was attained.

Ice, cold and rarefied air are the factors combining to make the ascent of the final 3500 ft. of Elbruz a first-class performance; yet technical difficulties are conspicuous by their absence. Dazzled by the glare on ice and snow, I slipped and fell in my own shadow on one of the ice slopes. My snow goggles had momentarily blinded me. As luck would have it, I stopped myself with the pick of the axe, but remained incapable of movement. At last, hooking the middle finger of my left hand into the tiny orifice made by the axe, I contrived, supported by this grip alone, to cut steps with the other hand and eventually to bind on my crampons. The great 17,000 ft. névé plateau, much softened by the sun, took many hours to cross—all the more as I was alone and had to break my own trail. I made a short halt for a rest and sleep in the midst of the uncrevassed surface, but soon became aware that if I wished to reach the summit before sunset there was no time to lose. I started off again, but quickly perceived that, try as I would, an increase of speed was impracticable. Any attempt thereat caused but a momentarily better progress, followed immediately by a kind of suffocation. To get over this I had to breathe hard, standing with my legs wide apart. Henceforward my speed had to be adjusted to my breathing powers. The former rhythm of my steps was lost, while the utmost energy was called upon to prevent my relapsing into mere inertness.

Once on the saddle of Elbruz, 5330 m., I discarded my pack and, without halting owing to the lateness of the hour, set to work immediately on the higher top. Steep and icy rock terrain alternated with powdery snow 4 ft. deep. The ascent became intensely toilsome and, although struggling my hardest, progress seemed but a dawdle. Finally, at 5 P.M., 10 hours from the start, I attained the top. A stiff northerly wind was blowing, whirling up loose particles of snow into an almost continuous sheet. The sun was getting lower, which together with the cold formed strong inducements to return. That the latter had played mischief with three of my fingers I was to learn later. The frost-bites were not serious, but it was six weeks before the tips recovered their sense of feeling. Casting a last look around at the darkening valleys and endless sea of peaks, all between 3000 and 5000 m., their shapes and heights dwarfed by the altitude of Elbruz, I turned hurriedly downwards. By sitting glissades where snow lay, and by standing upright where ice cropped out, I regained the hut just as the first stars began to glimmer.

The Adylsu Valley.

It was quite dark, with threatening clouds, when I returned for the third time to Tegenekli in the Baksan valley after a quiet walk.

Many tourists and expeditions had in the meantime passed through this beautiful spot, which is rapidly becoming a first-class centre. The 'Inturist' has built a nice and spacious inn close to the Baksan torrent and just at the base of Yusengitau. A young Russian doctor was there *en route* for Suanetia and the romantic southern slope of the Central Caucasus—Betsho, Mestia and Gul. He was, however, unable to start, for he required transport, donkeys, etc., which were not forthcoming. In the meantime patients were at hand: a female employee of the tourist station had found a bath in the glacier stream too much for her; another Russian had taken a bad fall and injured his shoulder, besides incidentally losing his ice axe. His sister who was accompanying him had avoided the fall but had her hand in bandages. She showed me four fingers which had turned black as far as the knuckles. Calmly, but in tears, she informed me they had been frozen on the glacier and that she feared two would have to be amputated.

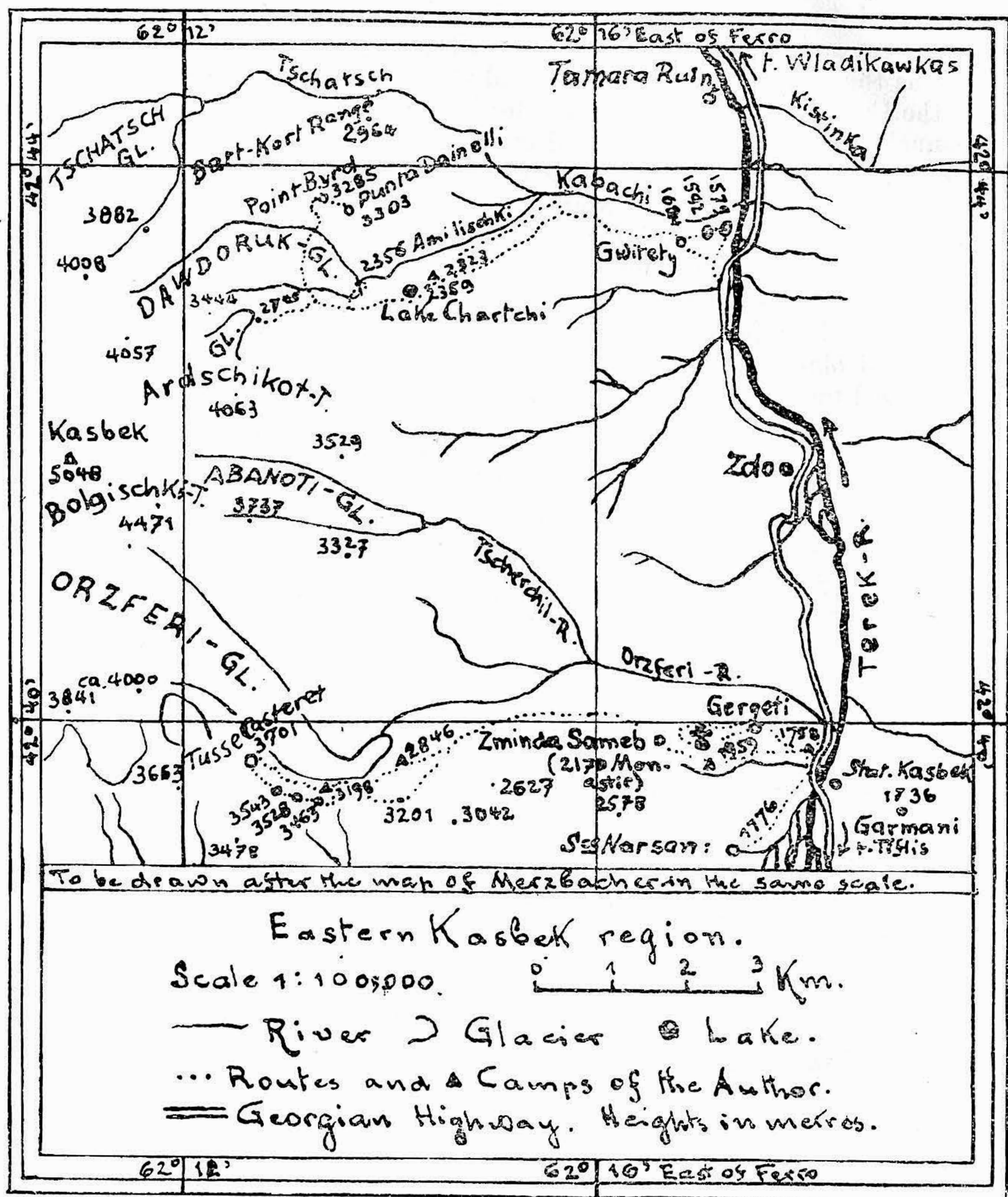
In accordance with my original plans, I started for the Adylsu valley to continue my studies and measurements of the Jantugan-Chiran, Bashkara, and Kanugo-Ushkan Glaciers. A slight change then came over my lonely existence, as for two nights I was the guest in that remote country of a Russian scientific expedition. No climbing was really possible, but at one moment I hoped to get some. Having finished with the measuring of the Kanugo-Ushkan Glacier, a sudden idea seized me—to climb the S. arête of Kurmuichitau, 13,314 ft.³ An exposed and stimulating climb took, however, too much time, especially as I had started late. Precautionary and safeguarding methods expended the hours, but I went as high as I could, not even turning back when an impromptu bivouac high up in the rocks appeared inevitable. Finally, heavy mists swirling over the pinnacled ridge compelled me to return when about 1000 ft. below the top. Long after sunset I regained the Russian camp in the now fog-filled glen.

Kasbek Region.

For a few hours I was once again in Tegenekli. The place was covered with wonderful strawberries. I returned to Naltshik, where dysentery had broken out and where the 'hotel' reeked of foul-smelling disinfectants. It was extremely uncomfortable, so I stayed but two days before proceeding by rail *via* Besslan to Vladikavkaz—now called Ordshonikidze. Spending a night there in a quite comfortable 'Inturist' hotel, I took a still more luxurious motor car at 9 A.M. next day to Kasbek village, on the great Georgian road, where I pitched my tent opposite in a meadow on the left bank of the Terek. As in Tegenekli, there exist here an 'Inturist' station, barracks, and large tents.

³ *Freshfield*, ii, p. 251. First ascent, July 21, 1914, Herren C. Egger and G. Miescher.

The climate was very different from that of Elbruz, although both regions belong to the Central Caucasus. Rain was very frequent,



MAP 2.

and all the tops, even the lower promontories, remained smothered in dark clouds. I spent these rather tedious days in measuring, among other things, the Narsan sources, a delicious mineral water spring in the Terek valley 2 kilometres above Kasbek village. I also visited the now abandoned Greek Church monastery of Zminda Samebo, situated about 1200 ft. above the Terek river on a promontory.

My first attempt to reach the Ortsveri Glacier proved a failure through rain and storm. But to stay in camp day after day without stirring and without doing the slightest good was a wearisome business. It was all the more tiresome because of the waste of time and food. My provisions were rapidly diminishing, and no time was to be lost if I wished to do anything useful before these were completely exhausted. Moreover, although my tent was quite waterproof, there was moisture and cold enough about to disgust me with my idle life. Accordingly I started one evening, without preliminary arrangements, but carrying my tent and three days' provisions, in the direction where I supposed Mt. Kasbek and its glaciers lay. As twilight gathered I struck and followed a path. Darkness came on imperceptibly, the track soon vanished, and I could see neither the direction, nor the terrain, nor even what sort of surface I was on. I trudged on nevertheless, but complete night soon stopped me. Fumbling around, I came up against a wall and pitched the tent, an awkward job in the dark, and I often hit my fingers while driving in the pegs. Lighting the lantern caused great bats to circle around me with their queer and characteristic chirps. Later in the night I was aroused by a sudden bright light. Not knowing what it could be, I emerged from the tent to find a shining moon flooding everything, while the sky was quite clear. My position was now visible; I was in the immediate neighbourhood of the ruin of some ancient keep, once perhaps a refuge and defence for the former princes of Kasbek.

On the following morning I tracked up the slopes towards the Ortsveri Glacier, but was unable to attain its snout for my measuring observations owing to the glacier torrent. Vainly I several times tried to cross. The water was not only too deep, but also far too swift. It raced downwards, displacing great boulders, which settled again with resounding thuds. I had to give up or else risk drowning—at any rate, the loss of all my instruments. Dripping wet, I was obliged to camp. For the first time that night I saw in the far distance the ice-covered reddish rocks of Kasbek, 16,546 ft.

‘*Tusse Casteret*,’ 3701 m. (August 14, 1933.)

The cold and draughty air made my night somewhat sleepless. The morning was, however, bright and fine, while Kasbek, the only visible peak of importance, shone gloriously in the clear sky. But what can be more uncertain than Caucasian weather? While I was moving my camp upwards to about 3200 m. the sky became overcast, and Kasbek and the lower tops were completely shrouded in dull and dark fog. Nevertheless, towards midday, I attacked a group of nameless, unsurveyed peaks. In succession I climbed four points of which the heights read, according to my instruments, as 3463, 3528, 3540 and 3701 m. The first carried a cairn containing a linen strip marked ‘W. A. Wowa, A. Fura, July 25, 1929.’ The others showed no traces of human beings. Having measured the heights, I built a cairn on each and left a card. I named the fourth

point, 3701 m., 'Tusse Casteret,' after the famous French cave-explorer, Norbert Casteret, the true discoverer of the Pyrenean Garonne.

In spite of fatigue, the following night was also a sleepless one. I was camped on rocky ground near the snow-line and suffered much from cold. A stiff N.W. wind, amounting at times to a gale, forced me many times to crawl out of the tent to tighten the guys. Shivering, I awaited the dawn, and on its appearance started for 'Pic Ortsveri,' perhaps 4000 m. A howling snow-flurry drove me speedily back to camp. During a second attempt and when I had attained the level of 'Tusse Casteret,' a fresh snowstorm blew up suddenly. Although I waited shelterless for half an hour, it showed no signs of diminishing, so, covered with snow, I was forced to return.

'Point Byrd,' 3285 m. ; 'Punta Dainelli,' 3303 m.
(August 18, 1933.)

I had time for one more expedition from my base at Kasbek village. I could not delay, however, and was obliged to start whatever the weather conditions. On a moist and dull morning, with mist clinging to near the very end of the Terek valley, I left my base and walked down the Georgian high road in the direction of Vladikavkaz, near Gviletui, where I was entertained most hospitably by two Ingur natives. I turned [W.] into the Kadakhi and proceeded up into the Amilishki glen. Many times I expended both time and energy in striving to reach the highest terrace of the glen. A path which I had discovered soon dwindled away after the manner of Caucasian tracks. Soon I had to decide to return or cross a meadow covered with moist vegetation 3 ft. high. I chose the latter alternative, but was quickly compelled to desist ; I descended accordingly to the Amilish torrent and forced my way up its very bed towards my objective, the Devdorak Glacier. Soon even this 'path' became impossible: the torrent flowed through a narrow gorge and there was no space between it and the walls. I was obliged to scale the extremely high and steep wall forming the torrent's bank. Having climbed the lower slopes and crossed terraces covered with saturated vegetation, I came to the true wall, the ascent of which, with 55 lbs. on my back, was far from easy. Progress became increasingly difficult and perilous owing to the extreme angle and smoothness of the wet rock. All my labours were in vain ; holds of any sort vanished rapidly. Disappointed, I had to retreat, which, without a rope, would have proved a sheer impossibility. Once again I tried the face, this time some 200 yds. further north. Again it proved perhaps unjustifiably dangerous, but this time I attained the upper terraces, where I pitched camp.

The following night, in spite of my previous exertions, proved to be rather a sleepless one. My clothes were soaked through. I had nothing to change into and was at a height of about 2300 m. with no covering whatever. I suffered much from cold and half the morning

was gone before, having dried my clothes, I could reach the Devdorak Glacier. I measured it as 2356 m. under its 250-ft.-high terminal snout. During the afternoon I visited and measured the Khurtkhi tarn, spending my spare time in repairing gear defects and hunting the little frogs which were abundant near the water. These fried with fat and onions proved useful as supplementary food.

Next day I tried to reach the tongue of the Ardshikot, a former tributary of the Devdorak Glacier, now petering out some 900 ft. above the large ice-stream. In this I failed: the hot-plate below the glacier was so steep and polished by innumerable ice and rock slides that climbing proved impossible. I accordingly mounted the right bank of the gorge and tackled the extremely abrupt and difficult wall, touching once again the limit of what is possible without foolhardiness. I endeavoured to attain the same level as the ice tongue and took its measurements.

On my return to camp, being then about halfway down, I stopped for a few moments to look round. The weather was perfectly calm and bright, the sun glinting everywhere on that part of the Caucasus. I was now ready to bid farewell to the mountains for ever: my provisions were nearly exhausted, and nothing was left in consequence but to pick up the tent and go home. Naturally that interior craving for something one cares about still existed. . . I looked, as I say, around me, and my glance was suddenly arrested by the view of the ridge bounding the northerly edge of the lower Devdorak Glacier. From the map I discovered that the highest point in that ridge has neither name nor height. I set about climbing it at once; after a most interesting but rough scramble over the crevasses, ice ridges and pinnacles, I succeeded in crossing diagonally the lower Devdorak Glacier. This famous ice-stream has on several occasions, notably in 1832, collapsed in great masses. These shocks have been caused by earthquakes centring about the Darial gorge, 10 kilometres to the N. of Kasbek village. The entire glacier had then slipped as one gigantic avalanche some 7 kilometres right down to the Terek valley.

It was a wearisome business of some hours to mount the steep slate slopes below the ridge. The actual climbing on the last rocks came as a pleasant change, but I met with no serious difficulty and duly reached the top. There were no signs of predecessors. Having built a cairn in which I left a card, I measured the summit, which came out after the necessary corrections as 3285 m. in height. In memory of the man who has visited both the Poles, I named the peak 'Point Byrd.' It is not the highest point of the ridge forming a spur of the Bartkort range, for farther E. lay the true summit, which I likewise climbed. It is composed of reddish rocks, and there were again no signs of previous visits. This point I measured as 3303 m. and named it 'Punta Dainelli' in honour of the well-known Asiatic traveller and scientist, Giotto Dainelli of Florence.

Many neighbouring peaks appeared very attractive, but my time being now up, no attempt on them could be made. Late that

night I remembered the imposing mass of Kasbek, and at once decided that, whatever happened, I must try it. I set about my preparations and spent one of my rare good nights. However, at 3 A.M. dense fog enveloped everything. I waited till 6, but there was still no change; I gave it up accordingly, broke up my camp and started on my last walk down the remote and utterly deserted glen.

WERNER HEYBROCK.

[We fear that the three 'personal' names suggested for the peaks climbed—after gentlemen in no way connected with the Caucasus—will scarcely appeal to authorities on the Range.—*Editor.*]

THE SWISS EXPEDITION, 1934.

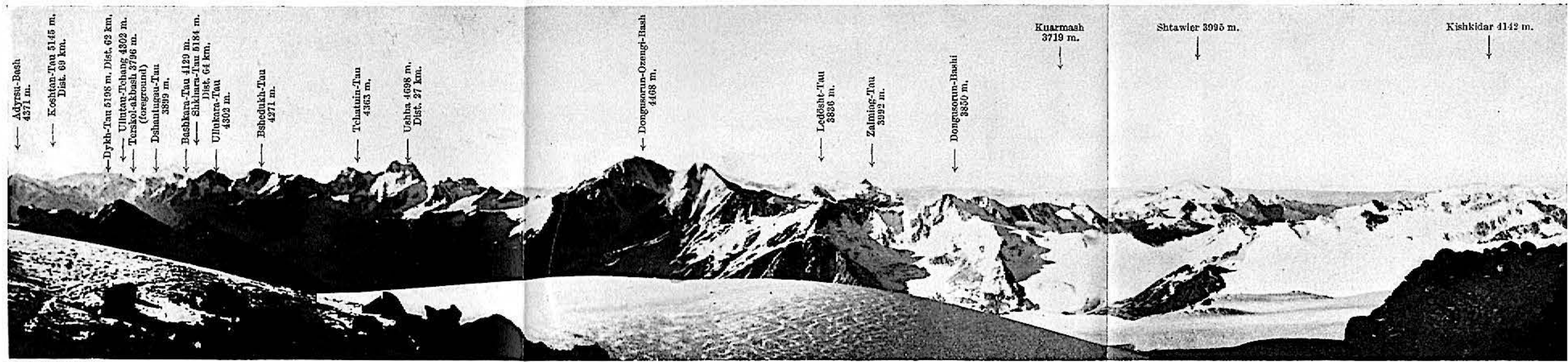
(Translated from the diary of Herr Lorenz Saladin.)

Herren W. Frei, O. Furrer, Hans Graf and I (the leader) left Zürich on June 10, 1934, bound for the Caucasus to try the ascent of some unclimbed 'four-thousanders.' After a long but successful journey, and after G. Charlampiew had joined us in Moscow as interpreter, we arrived on June 18 at Naltshik. This is the starting-point for most expeditions in the Central Group of the Caucasus.

Having informed ourselves as to snow conditions, we decided to start in the Adaikhokh Group. On June 20, having completed our preparations, we began our journey through the Cherek valley *via* Chegen and Kuniun, first in a lorry and afterwards by means of donkeys or pack-horses. We attained the Karagom valley over the 3348 m. SHTULU PASS and, after an approach march of six days, erected our standing camp on the Karagom Glacier in the Adaikhokh Group on June 25.

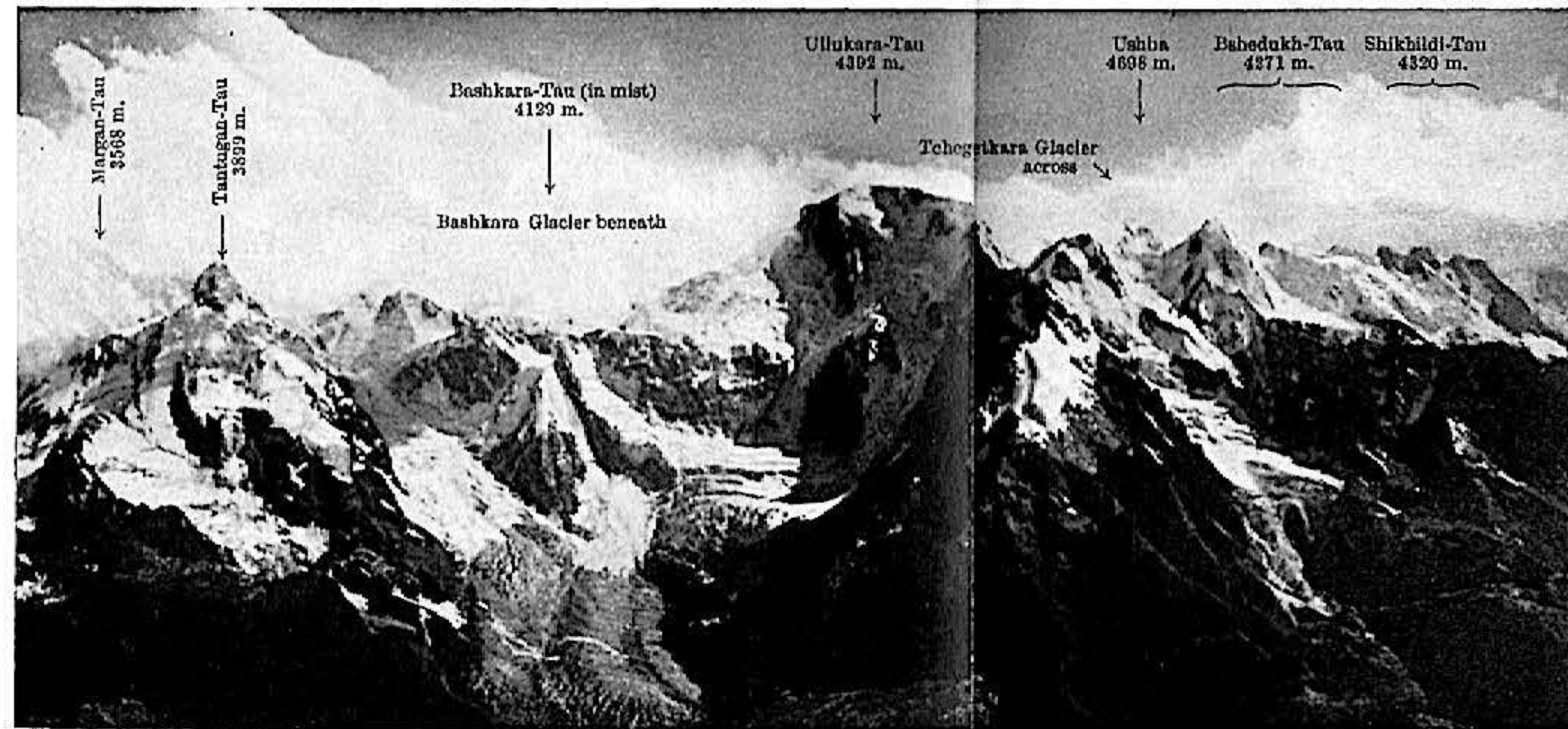
We left for our first climb on June 28 at 6 A.M. We attained the base of Vologata by the moraines of the N. branch of the Karagom Glacier. The ascent of the ice peak of that mountain was made by its N. slope; after a 6 hours' climb we attained the summit ridge of the rock peak, but thick cloud and snow flurries compelled a bivouac at about 3900 m. Starting again next morning at 6, we met with a strong wind howling over the N. face, while deep wind-crusts constrained the greatest caution. To avoid these latter as much as possible, we climbed a slabby but fairly gentle buttress leading straight to the ice peak. At 12.30 we attained the top of the VOLOGATA ice peak, *ca.* 4100 m. This was the first ascent by the N. face.⁴

⁴ The rock peak, *ca.* 13,700 ft., as well as the ice peak—or rather 'ice ridge'—were first ascended and named July 28, 1914, by Messrs. H. Raeburn, R. C. Richards, H. S. Tucker and R. Martinson—*A.J.* **28**, 403–4; **29**, 155 with especially Mr. Raeburn's corrections of the 1 verst map. See also illustrations *A.J.* **29**, and notably *A.J.* **28** facing 132 and 134.—*Editor.*



Photo, W. Heybrock.]

CAUCASUS CENTRAL RANGE, FROM PRIYUT ADINNST HUT.



Photo, W. Heybrock.]

CAUCASUS CENTRAL RANGE, FROM THE SOUTHERN RIDGE OF KURMYKHITAU.



Photo, W. Heybrock.]

KASBEK AND DEVDORAK GLACIER FROM 'POINT BYRD.'

Violent snowstorms prevented further movement, so we dug an ice cave and remained there. On the morning of June 30, in brilliant weather, we began the traverse of the triple Vologata rock peak, taking less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Steering in a southern direction, we made for the saddle between Vologata and the [?] unclimbed Skatikom, where we bivouacked for the third time. On July 1, at 5.30 A.M., we started on the ascent of Skatikom *via* the N.W. arête. A ledge was taken so as to turn the various pinnacles, the ledge leading back to the crest farther on. This was followed by a 650 ft. climb to the first peak, whence a descent to a corniched hollow proved necessary. Next came a comparatively short but very steep scramble to a rock tower, then over a flattened snow ridge to the summit of SKATIKOM, 14,602 ft. (Russian, 1 verst map), the [?] first ascent. We were obliged to forgo the ascent of Songuta owing to the masses of fresh snow. In the descent to the bivouac we took the route of the S.W. face between Vologata and Skatikom.

On the following day, in perfect weather, we went over the E. face of Vologata and E. arête of KARAGOM to the E. peak of the latter, 4513 m. [? 14,805 ft., Russian, 1 verst]. A cairn was built to commemorate its ascent. [The first ascent was on July 28, 1914, by Mr. Raeburn's party—'A.J.' 29, 142 *sqq.*] We left the summit at 9.30 A.M. and made for the W. peak *via* the W. arête. After a few yards we left the crest and attained, by a steep and snowy couloir, a ledge running parallel with the ridge. When this terminated in its junction with the rocky arête, we took to a corniched portion of the ridge leading to a steep snow slope. Over this we attained at 11.30 the W. peak of Karagom—first ascent [? 14,600 ft., Russian, 1 verst].

For the return we decided to descend direct by the W. face to the northern Karagom Glacier. The descent proved very trying owing to its enormously steep angle and the presence of much bare ice. At midnight we bivouacked for the fifth time, securing the rope over a driven-in piton. The halt proved so unpleasant that at 3 A.M. we resumed the descent and by mid-day reattained the northern Karagom Glacier. At 1.30 P.M. on July 3 we regained our base camp in a snowstorm. We had undergone much fatigue and many dangers; our satisfaction at our success was all the greater.

We now turned to the Sukan Group. Early on July 4 we took the return journey *via* Zinago, the chief village of the Karagom glen, to Kussu. Three days later we pitched our base camp on the Doppach Glacier [Doppakh, *Freshfield*]. We started at 2 A.M. on July 8 *en route* for Doppachtau, but an ascent was not our first care, for on that peak lay the body of Paul Bühler, killed during its ascent last year;⁵ we hoped to give him burial. After a wearisome snow tramp we reached the depression between Doppachtau and Sukanbashitau, *ca.* 3850 m., at 7 A.M. The morning

⁵ A.J. 46, 362-3.

sun was gilding the surrounding peaks. Frei and the interpreter Gock started for Suganbashitau, while Graf and I took on Doppachtau. From the depression we reached the upper glacier by a great snow ridge. The little *névé* plateau where Bühler lies buried in the ice was covered with immense masses of snow. Nevertheless, we attempted to free the spot, digging hole after hole with axe and shovel. It all proved vain, and after 4 hours' work we had to desist. Avalanche débris to a depth of some 15 ft. concealed the spot. Nature herself had given Bühler's body eternal rest. During our search thick clouds had rolled up and snow soon compelled retreat. Frei and Gock had reached a height of about 4100 m. when the same storm forced them equally to return. Drenched to the skin, we regained camp at 6 P.M.

On the following morning we attained the Cherek glen over the N.W. *arête* of Sugantau, arriving at Karaul and camping later at the snout of the Fytnargyn Glacier. At this spot about 100 climbers from St. Petersburg had arrived and pitched a holiday camp of twenty tents. On the two following days we gave them lessons in climbing and the use of the rope. In return we received a very welcome addition to our much depleted stock of provisions.

On July 12 we parted company and started up the Dykhsu Glacier, where we pitched camp near the snout on the right lateral moraine. Next day we clambered up the N. slopes of the Ailama Glacier, bivouacking there at a height of about 3030 m. During the night a storm came on with a violent wind, compelling us to shift to a jutting-out rock, where we remained shivering all the remainder of the night. Next morning, with 3 ft. of fresh snow, any attempt on Ailama was out of the question.

On July 15 we set out for [Ailama's] E. *arête*. The route was at first over easy rocks, followed by a sharp and corniced ridge, whence we attained two great boulders at about 3920 m. With snow up to our knees, progress proved very laborious. We forgot, however, all fatigue with the knowledge of perfect weather and of our presence immediately at the base of the final peak. Suddenly a tremendous avalanche thundered down over the N. face in closest proximity. We then perceived the danger of further advance, and common sense caused us to turn back.⁶ It was 11 P.M. before we could regain the St. Petersburg encampment.

On July 19, in company with ten Russians, we left the Cherek glen. On reaching the Dykhsu Glacier, we divided into two parties, while Furrer proceeded to Naltshik in quest of food and photographic materials. Frei and Gock were bound for Sella's Pass⁷

⁶ The first ascent of Ailama was made *via* the N. face by Mr. Hermann Woolley with Christian Jossi, August 20, 1889—*A.J.* 18, 298–301, with a superb illustration facing 291.

⁷ *Ca.* 14,000 ft. From the Krumkhol to the Bezingi Glacier.—*Editor.*



Expedition photo.]

SKATIKOM (14,602 FT.) AND SONGUTA.

[To face p. 114.



Expedition photo.]

E. AND W. KARAGOM PEAKS.

and the traverse of Bashichatau, while Graf and I wished to make another attempt on Ailama by a new route. Two of the Russians joined up with us. At 5 P.M. we attained the upper branch of the Ailama Glacier, where we bivouacked. There was a bad thunderstorm during the night, and it was 10 A.M. before we could start. Having traversed the glacier, we came to the N. face leading, at an angle of 60° , to the E. ridge. We reached the latter at about 3850 m. after two hours' strenuous cutting. Suddenly stones and icicles broke loose, one of the Russians being so badly hit on the head by a stone that he lost consciousness. His injuries were so serious that we had once more to abandon the attempt. Belaying carefully, we lowered the injured man down the steep ice slope, engineered him over the bergschrund with much difficulty, and arrived at our bivouac at 1 A.M.

Next day we parted company with the two Russians. The wounded man had recovered during the night and could walk without assistance, his companion being quite capable of convoying him on the descent to the Cherek. We others, crossing the Dykhsu Glacier, went up the southern branch of the Bashkha-uz Glacier to the hunters' *kosh* situated at about 3080 m. Next day, continuing up the glacier, we joined up again on the Bashkha Pass with Frei and Gock. They had accomplished the traverse of BASHKA-AUZ-BASHI, 4452 m. [The first traverse of the peak was in 1930 by Herren W. Müller and H. Tomashek.] On July 24 we attained SELLA'S PASS in stormy weather and dug a cave in its W. slope.

On July 25 we commenced the assault on Mishirgitau, which had repulsed several previous attempts. We left the cave at 5.30 A.M. and scrambled up to the mountain's S. arête. The first four towers were turned, while the fifth was climbed. The connecting ridge led to the gap in front of the sixth, which rose steep and repellent before us. Having crossed the gap, we clambered up to a preliminary rocky knob by a difficult and exposed route. The ascent of the tower itself appeared, however, to be impossible; there was not a single hold of any description for the lowest 7 ft., while all attempts to drive in a piton or lasso a rope failed altogether. We appeared to be defeated, but by means of a human pyramid contrived to overcome this difficult step, from the edge of which both slopes fell away at a terrible angle. An extremely exposed diagonal traverse over a crumbling ledge followed immediately after; the ledge led to a crevice by which we reached the top of the sixth tower. The climb, especially for the leaders, had proved extremely hazardous: the ascent of 160 ft. took $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours. We now found ourselves at the base of the final summit at an altitude of some 4700 m., but meanwhile darkness had crept round us. Sitting on a sharp ridge, wrapped in a tent-sack with our feet in rucksacks, we waited for dawn. The night was calm, clear and cold, but it was 6 A.M. before we could stir from our uncomfortable perch. Some 2 hours later we started on the last

bit, clambering up a steep icy crevice about 120 ft. high leading straight towards the summit, but we were then forced by an overhang on to its left edge. By great ice-covered slabs we reached eventually the summit of MISHIRGITAU, 16,408 ft. [= 4926 m.].⁸

After halting for 1½ hours on the top, we descended by the ice crevice. Roping down over the S.W. face, we arrived at an ice couloir of 70°. Driving an ice piton into this after descending about 150 ft., we reached the Sella Glacier [*sic*; ? Pass]. At 8 P.M. we attained our cave. Next day we descended the glacier towards the S.W., and at 2.30 P.M. attained the Missesskosh on the lower Bezingi Glacier by that glacier's moraine.

On August 2, at 2 A.M., we set out for Missesstau. Mounting the Bezingi Glacier for an hour, we turned to the left [E.] and attained *via* its S.W. flank, a steep scree slope, the Dykhtau Glacier and, by this, the connecting ridge between Missesstau and Dykhtau [17,054 ft.]. *Descending* this ridge in a N.W. direction we came to the base of the former's S. peak. The extraordinary steepness of the slabs left no hope for a direct ascent; accordingly we climbed *down* by a rocky rib to a point, *ca.* 3500 m., whence we attained by a difficult scramble over the W. face the summit of MISSESSTAU, 4421 m. In remembrance of the two Swiss, Mäglin and Hegglin, who mysteriously perished with hardly a trace on the mountain in 1931,⁹ we planted a Swiss flag about the probable scene of the accident. We descended by the W. face to the Dykhtau Glacier, whence the return was by the same route as on the ascent; the Missesskosh was regained at 10 P.M. Frei, Furrer and Gock turned back to Naltshik, while Graf and I decided for Suanetia over the Zanner Pass, 12,967 ft.

At 5 A.M. on August 4 we left the Missesskosh, reaching the ZANNER PASS easily in 6 hours. After a monotonous trudge over the glacier [Zanner] on the far side we attained at 7.30 P.M. Jahmush, the first hamlet. On the following day Mestia, the chief village in Suanetia, was reached after 3½ hours' walk down the valley of the Muhlkura. On August 8 we proceeded to Betsho. Our plans to visit thence the Ushba plateau were given up through bad weather; accordingly we started at once for Mazeri. On the following day, at 5 A.M., we continued towards the Betsho Pass. Our route lay at first through the beech and fir woods of the Dolokala glen; this was followed by a steep glacier leading to the BETSHO PASS, 11,074 ft., attained at mid-day. Without halting, we hastened through a severe snowstorm down the Ozengi Glacier to the Baksan valley; Tegenekli was reached at 5 P.M. In the meantime, Frei, Furrer and the interpreter had arrived thither from Naltshik.

⁸ The eastern peak, some 24 ft. lower than the western and higher top, was climbed by Mr. Hermann Woolley with Christian Jossi, August 5, 1889.—*A.J.* 14, 446; 15, 176; illustration 18, 294.—*Editor.*

⁹ *A.J.* 43, 400, 404.



Expedition photo.]

MISHIRGITAU (16,408 FT.).

{ To face p. 116.



Expedition photo.]

DYKHTAU, E. PEAK.
From the way up Mishirgitau.

On August 11, at 8 A.M., I set out, in company with Gock, for the ascent of 'Pic Shtshurowski.' After crossing the Bshedukh Glacier, we came to the crevassed face of the Bshedukh peak, and over this to the base of 'Pic Shtshurowski.' Here owing to a tremendous thunderstorm, we were compelled to bivouac at about 3200 m. At 4 next morning we set out for the climb, but the numerous crevasses of the northern Ushba Glacier soon stopped progress. Accordingly we determined to try our peak by its W. face. Crossing the bergschrund, a difficult and endless bout of step-cutting began. Owing to thick clouds but the faintest conception of height and angle could be obtained. It was only on reaching the summit of 'PIC SHTSHUROWSKI,' *ca.* 4259 m. [first ascent, 1915, by S. Golubev and J. Frolov], at 11.30 A.M., when the wind lifted the clouds for a few moments, that we realized the immense steepness of the W. face. We could hardly understand how we had succeeded in the first ascent of that face, for in clear weather we should never have attempted it. The cloudy conditions had prevented any realization of the great dangers incurred in our most lucky success.

After 2 hours' rest we descended the S. arête with the intention of bivouacking on the Ushba plateau and trying that mountain's N. peak¹⁰ on the following day, but our plans came to naught owing to a violent snowstorm. A bivouac in soaked clothing and in such cold was altogether out of the question. We descended accordingly over the northern Ushba to the Bshedukh Glacier, reaching Tegenekli at 10 P.M.

August 4 witnessed Furrer, Gock and myself *en route* for Elbruz from Tegenekli. Our way lay up the Baksan valley through magnificent, lofty trees. Entering the beautiful Terskol glen, our eyes were gladdened by the appearance of Elbruz's snow dome, in all its blinding sheen and striking simplicity. Over far-stretching lava deposits on grass, we reached at 1 P.M. the Russian Tourist Club's hut, Krugasor, 3200 m. The further way leads over a moraine to the glacier and thence over endless, gentle snowfields. Towards evening we arrived at the observatory, *ca.* 4225 m. At midnight we set out again. The slopes were steeper now, the cold more intense, and the wind almost unbearable. In 2 hours we reached a boulder where we sheltered as best we could. We stood shivering there, kicking our feet against the rock and clapping our hands together to stop frost-bite. The temperature was -22° C. After 2 hours' halt we started again and climbed up the eastern slopes of the E. peak. At 10 A.M. we reached the E. summit of ELBRUZ, 18,347 ft. The bitter cold and biting wind were so trying that we gave up the ascent of the W. summit, 18,470 ft. We descended the W. slope to the shelter hut in the depression between the two summits, traversing thence in an E. direction to our line of ascent. Nothing fresh occurred, and that night, at 10 P.M., we re-entered Tegenekli. We

¹⁰ So far but twice accomplished.—*Editor.*



Expedition photo.]

THE N. FACE OF SHKARA (17,038 FT.).

[To face p. 118.]



Expedition photo.]

THE UNCLIMBED ZURUNGAL PEAK (13,916 FT.).

had accomplished the ascent of Elbruz in record time. [The W. summit has been attained in less than 7 hours from the hut.]

On August 20 we left Tegenekli, taking a Ford car through the Baksan valley to the 140-kilometres-distant Naltshik. Two days later we attained, by rail, Vladikavkaz, whence on the following morning we went by car over the main Darial road to Gviletui. Our attempt on Kasbek, 16,546 ft., by the N.W. arête, failed after two days, owing to continuous bad weather. On August 26 the car brought us to Tiflis, whence a day later the night express conveyed the party to Batum. A beautiful journey *via* Constantinople, Piraeus, Naples and Marseilles landed us in Genoa on September 14. We met with a warm reception on arrival in Zürich after a three months' absence.

L. SALADIN.

[We must express our grateful thanks to the writers for their interesting accounts.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

MONT BLANC : NOTES ON EARLY ASCENTS.

By J. MONROE THORINGTON.

I. DID EDMUND KEAN EVER ASCEND MONT BLANC ?

DISCUSSION of the above question has received so little attention in Alpine literature that I venture to quote pertinent paragraphs which appeared in *Notes and Queries* (Fourth Series, vol. iv.) during 1869 :

(P. 31.) 'Now that Edmund Kean's claim to an Eton education is effectually disposed of, it may not be idle to ask if he ever ascended Mont Blanc. Mr. Hawkins says he did about 1818. The celebrated ascent of M. Saussure was in 1787, and that of Auldjo in 1827—I quote both dates from memory—and if Kean preceded Auldjo by so many years, surely it must have excited notice at the time. Possibly, in moments of excitement, he boasted of a feat he never accomplished, as he was known to have asserted that he was present at the battle of Waterloo.

' U. O. N.

' *Westminster Club*.'

'In Hawkins's *Life of Edmund Kean* (ii. 57) we are informed that in 1817, while on his Continental trip, Kean ascended Mont Blanc, and much enjoyed the view from the summit. As in those days, and indeed previous to 1880, ascents of Mont Blanc were few and far between, perhaps some of your readers may be able to inform me whether any details of this interesting ascent exist at Chamounix or elsewhere. The scaling of the mountain by Dr. Hamil [*sic*] in 1820 and by Auldjo in 1826 are duly recorded, and it would be a thousand pities if that of Edmund Kean in 1817 should be forgotten ; certainly the most interesting since that of Saussure. How the little man must have electrified his guides !

' J. A. H.

' *Portsmouth*.'