# THE CAUCASUS IN 1874

*Moore's diary of his expedition to the Caucasus in* 1874 *covers the same ground as that in F. C. Grove's book,* The Frosty Caucasus. *The MS. diary is a substantial, bound volume,* $13\frac{1}{2}$ in. × 8 in., *written with meticulous care and illustrated by photographs (mostly too faded, now, for reproduction) and some paintings.*

*The diary was brought to the Alpine Club in June* 1954 *by the Baroness von Twickel, daughter of the (late) Dowager Lady Throckmorton, the possessor of the book. In August* 1954 *Lady Throckmorton very generously presented the volume to the Club, and it now rejoins the other volumes of Moore's diary which have been among the valued possessions of the Club since* 1914. (*A.J.* 28. 332; 29. 74.)

*Pasted into the front of the book is a letter from Lucy Walker to Lady Throckmorton's husband, [Lt.-Colonel] Richard Courtenay Brabazon Throckmorton (b.* 1866, *killed in action* 1916), *eldest son of Sir Richard Throckmorton,* 10*th Baronet (b.* 1839, *d.* 1927). *The letter reads:—*

*South Lodge,*
*Princes Park,*
*Liverpool.*
*20th Oct. . . .*

*Dear Courtenay,*

*I have today sent off the beautiful book to you. Mr. Pilkington is quite clear that I am able to do so & he, with me, thinks that it would have pleased my brother that you should have it. So I send it to you with pleasure. Mrs. Cornwall Legh is with me now, and is I regret to say far from well. She is much too enduring I think. I hope your wife & children are well.*

*Believe me,*
*Yours sincerely,*
*Lucy Walker.*

*Lady Throckmorton informs us that the diary came into Lucy Walker's possession as a gift from her brother Horace, who had inherited it from A. W. Moore.*

*Horace Walker's brother, Philip Ainslie Walker, married Miss Constance Case, who, on his death, married secondly Henry Martin Cornwall Legh, of High Legh, Cheshire. It was through Mrs. Cornwall Legh's friendship with Lady Throckmorton that Lucy Walker sent the diary (vide her letter above) to the late Colonel Courtenay Throckmorton.*

*No one needs to be reminded of the close association of A. W. Moore with the Walker Family; and Moore's relationship to the Throckmortons was through his sister, Frances Stewart Moore (d.* 1895), *who married the* 10*th Baronet.*

*It may be noted also that A. W. Moore's eldest brother, John Arthur Henry Moore [-Brabazon], was the father of the present Lord Brabazon of Tara, who, in addition to his posts as a minister of the Crown and his achievements as a pioneer aviator, is also a noted winter sports enthusiast, which gives him a spiritual affinity with A. W. Moore, who had made some of the earliest winter mountaineering expeditions of note in the Alps.*

*To the late Lady Throckmorton; to her sister-in-law Miss Brenda Throckmorton; and to her daughter, the Baroness von Twickel, the Club has to express its gratitude for the gift of this addition to our MS. collections.*

*As regards the editing of the diary, the proofs were set direct from the MS. and the only amendments made were the silent correction of a few mis-spellings and the occasional insertion of additional marks of punctuation. The diary in MS. runs to* 192 *foolscap pages and is astonishingly free from errors. That Moore should use different spellings of place names, &c. from what might be in vogue today, is natural enough; we have not thought it desirable to make wholesale corrections of this sort, but to let the diary stand as written.*

*In a few places, Moore refers to pictures inserted into the MS. which cannot now be reproduced: on such occasions, the necessary changes in words have been made by us without indication.*

WHEN in 1868 I left the Caucasus I did so with little hope of ever again visiting its fascinating recesses, or of extending or renewing at some future time my acquaintance with its peaks and glaciers, its passes and valleys. That expedition, on which, with Freshfield and Tucker, I had ascended Kasbek and Elbruz, and traversed the wild and beautiful country intervening between those famous peaks, remained, as years flew by, a pleasant memory, but the idea of repeating it did not seriously enter into my calculations. Considerations of time and money seemed alike to bar anything of the kind.

It was not till the early spring of 1874 that, when meditating over my holiday programme for the summer, and after arriving with regret at the dismal conclusion that the campaigns of the last four years had to a great extent exhausted for me the attractions of the Swiss Alps, it one morning occurred to me whether the considerations alluded to above were, after all, such insuperable obstacles to a Caucasian trip as they seemed. Circumstances had changed since 1868. Not only had the completion of several then unfinished lines of railway brought Odessa within four, instead of seven, days' journey from London, and diminished the cost in a corresponding degree, but, more important still, the opening of the line from Poti to Tiflis had substituted a certain and easy transit of 16 hours for a doubtful and laborious journey occupying any period from four days to a week or longer. The result of my lucubrations was that in the nine weeks to which one's official holiday might be made to extend it would be quite possible to go to the Caucasus and



A. W. MOORE.

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return after spending at least five weeks in the country,—surely a more profitable and satisfactory performance than an Alpine tour of similar length on the old and, now, rather worn out pattern. So much for time! The consideration of money could not be so easily disposed of. A railway journey of some 2500 miles, the distance between London and Odessa, though less expensive than a corresponding distance by post, involves a good pull at the purse-strings; while a certain sum would have to be spent on equipment. Still, on reflection, it seemed to me that, assuming a party of three or four, £150 a head ought to be the outside limit of expenditure. Was the game worth that amount of candle? I thought it was, for once in a way.

*Our Party*

So also thought my old friend and comrade on many Alpine walks, Horace Walker, when I broached the idea to him; he agreed to join me and enlisted, as a third man, his friend F. Gardiner, one of the most active of the younger members of the Alpine Club. This was originally intended to have been the strength of our party, but my friend F. C. Grove, hearing what was proposed, obtained leave for one season to shake off his matrimonial chains, and volunteered to join us. It is needless to say that we hailed with pleasure an accession of strength which gave us the company of an old traveller and genial associate. Two points alone remained to be settled in regard to our personnel. First, should we take a Swiss guide? Our party of 1868 had been fortunate in the attendance of François Dévouassoud, of Chamouni, an excellent mountaineer, and a man singularly handy and well qualified for the sort of journey we had then made. But he had been more useful to us as a general servant than as a guide, though upon some of our excursions his technical skill had undoubtedly stood us in good stead. We had returned upon that occasion impressed with a strong conviction that while for future ascents of Kasbek and Elbruz the services of a professed guide would be unnecessary, it would be hopeless to attack the other and more formidable peaks of the Caucasian chain without a very strong force. The result followed that to take out a single man would be useless, while to enlist the services of more than one was impossible owing to the great increase of expense which would be involved. My feeling was therefore to take no one. But my companions thought differently. They, not unnaturally, hoped that our carefully formed opinion of 1868 might prove wrong, and thought it at least possible that with a single henchman we might discover ways up the double headed Ush-ba, the many peaked Koshtan Tau,[1] and the sharp cone of Dych Tau, which had not suggested themselves to the experienced eyes of François Dévouassoud, or the anxious ones of Freshfield, Tucker, and myself.

[1] In reading this account it must be remembered that when Moore writes Dych Tau he refers to the mountain that we now know as Koshtantau, and *vice versa*. The two names were interchanged by the Russian surveyors. See *A.J.* 14. 436 and 17. 219.—D.F.O.D.

*Peter and Paul*

So it was determined that we should take a guide, and from the limited choice of men available, we selected Peter Knubel of St. Nicholas, an old friend of Gardiner, who agreed to accompany us for 1000 francs for the trip and his expenses.

The remaining point to be settled was in regard to an interpreter. I had lost sight of Bakoua Pipia, ' Paul,' who had been with our party of 1868, and it seemed at first unlikely that we should either get hold of him a second time, or find any one to replace him. Enquiries thro' our Consul at Odessa elicited no news of Paul, and, as regards substitutes, a very strong opinion from Major Stuart that we should have great difficulty in getting the sort of man we wanted. As he said, plenty of men speaking Russian and Georgian would undertake the job, but would probably be found utterly useless up in the mountains where they had never been ; besides which, a man with a knowledge of no other European language but Russian would be of no service ; a smattering at least of French, German, or Italian was indispensable. As a last resource I wrote to Mr. Gardner, Vice-Consul at Poti, and he, to our equal surprise and satisfaction, actually found Paul himself within 20 miles of Poti ; where he had some employment in connection with the railway. Paul was quite ready to join our party, provided that he would not thereby lose his place, a matter which Mr. Gardner succeeded in arranging.

*Equipment*

The next thing to be considered was our kit. Although our baggage in 1868 had not been excessive in quantity, it had yet been sufficient to require a very large staff of porters whenever our route lay over ground not accessible to horses. Now we had been very unfavourably impressed with the qualities of the Caucasians as beasts of burden ; we had always great difficulty in coming to terms with them ; they carried ridiculously small loads, but nevertheless dawdled horribly on the way, starting late, halting early, and stopping at intervals of a quarter of an hour or less throughout the day ; and nothing would induce them to cross the chain except by routes with which they were acquainted, and in fine weather. Now we could not expect to dispense with their services altogether during our journey, but we were anxious to be able to be independent of them at a pinch, and not to be encumbered with more personal luggage than we could, upon occasion, carry ourselves, in case we felt disposed to make a dash across the chain for a few days, leaving our miscellaneous stores on one side or the other. Therefore each man limited his baggage for the actual journey through the mountains to a sleeping bag, of the pattern which has become well known to Alpine men of late years, a big mackintosh cape, and a good sized sling bag, in lieu of knapsack, containing his wardrobe. This I, personally, cut down to the lowest point, dispensing with a second coat, but indulging in a change of trousers, and a fairly liberal supply of shirts and

socks, besides one real luxury in the shape of a pair of slippers. My bed, cape, and bag with its contents weighed a trifle over 18 pounds, a weight not heavy in itself, but appreciable to a man quite unaccustomed to carry.

*Shall we take a tent?*

It will be seen that we did not take a tent. We were at first unanimous on the point, feeling that no one of us would under any circumstances be up to carrying one even of the most convenient pattern, Mr. Whymper's. But as the time of departure drew near I began to doubt the wisdom of our decision. I could not help recollecting the comfort which a tent had been to us in 1868, and picturing to myself what would have been our position without one on the wet nights which we experienced between Gebi and Jibiani, and on other occasions. I therefore put it to the others whether we should not reconsider the point; they however agreed in thinking that it would more often be an incumbrance than of use, and that we might take our chance. So the matter was settled, but, as some further protection against possibilities of weather, I persuaded each man to take an umbrella,—as the sequel proved, a very happy thought.

A supply of portable soup, Liebig, and Chollet's compressed vegetables; a convenient cooking apparatus comprising in a portable case a saucepan, frying pan, teapot and kettle, and a number of tin plates, besides knives and forks; and a well-filled medicine chest, completed our equipment, with the addition of a couple of tin bottles for water, and a certain number of many bladed knives for presents to deserving natives.

*Route*

A few lines will explain the route which we proposed to follow after reaching our ground. From the southern slopes of the western Caucasus three considerable rivers find their way to the Black Sea; these are, reckoning from south to north, the Rion, the Ingour, and the Kodor. From the corresponding slopes on the north side, the Tcherek, Tchegem, and Baksan, tributaries of the Terak, flow into the Caspian sea, and the Kuban follows a long and devious course to the Black Sea, which it enters at its extreme north-western corner. In a line drawn from the sources of the Rion and Tcherek on the east to those of the Kodor and Kuban on the west, rise the highest summits in the main chain of the Caucasus, to wit, the Nuamquam, Djanga, Tau Tetnuld, Ush-ba, and others either nameless, or with names which it would be useless to attempt to place on paper. But a peculiarity of the Caucasian chain is that the greatest elevations of all are not found actually along the watershed, but in spurs thrown out to the north of it. Kasbek, 16,546 feet, is an instance of this, and there are equally marked examples in the section of the chain briefly defined above. Notably, between the two branches of the Tcherek is the immense spur which is crowned by the magnificent peaks of Koshtan Tau,

17,096 feet, and Dych Tau, 16,925 feet, not to mention a third summit between these two which, though it can be little inferior in height, is neither named nor indicated in the Russian 5 verst map. Other examples might be given, but the most conspicuous is the great mass of Elbruz, between the Baksan and Kuban, rising to a height of 18,526 feet at the northern end of a spur some miles in length, which, before it merges in the main chain to the south, sinks as low as 11,500 feet.

*The Start*

Our plan of operations was, to ascend the valley of the Rion from Kutais, cross from it to that of the Tcherek, explore the glaciers at the head of both branches of that valley, more particularly of the western branch, pass from the latter into Svanetia, climbing Tau Tetnuld en route, if it looked at all feasible, recross the chain to the village of Urushena or Urusbieh at the foot of Elbruz, repeat the ascent of that mountain, descend its western face, or cross its northern spurs, to Utchkulan in the country of the Karatchai on the Kuban, from there traverse the chain once more by the Bakhan pass to the valley of the Kodor, and follow that river down to Soukhoum Kaleh and the Black Sea. To carry out this not really very ambitious programme,—for though it comprised a good many expeditions it did not range over a great extent of country,—we had five clear weeks which we were sanguine would, weather permitting, prove sufficient for our purpose. The qualification ' weather permitting ' was however a most material one, for, as will be seen, the one absolutely indispensable condition to successful exploration in a mountain country was, for two-thirds of the time at our disposal, altogether denied to us.

*Krakau*

All preliminaries being at length arranged we started from Charing Cross at 7.40 on the morning of the 19th June, and travelling via Ostend, Kreiensen, and Magdeburg, reached Berlin at noon on the following day. A detention of twelve hours in that most commonplace and evil smelling of capitals was unavoidable, but at 11.0 the same night we resumed our journey, passed Breslau early in the morning of the 21st, crossed into Austrian territory beyond Myslowitz, and at 4.15 p.m. were dropped by the slowest of slow trains at Krakau, where we found Knubel awaiting our arrival. Being Sunday afternoon the quaint old town was thronged with a picturesque crowd in gala costume and looked its best. We visited the Cathedral which contains the tombs of the Polish kings, but were less interested than, perhaps, we ought to have been ; however, we thoroughly appreciated the striking view from outside over the Vistula and surrounding country. The commerce of the place seemed to be entirely confined to ' wechsel,' money changing, carried on by Jews who swarmed on all sides, every man, to look at, the picture of his fellow. This plethora of money changers was to us a mystery beyond solution ; a consequence was that we converted our Napoleons into roubles on very fair terms. The Hotel Victoria

supplied us with a decent dinner and we started for Lemberg and Odessa at 9.35 p.m. Our night between Ostend and Berlin had been passed in a sleeping car, and that between Berlin and Myslowitz in a roomy first-class carriage which we had to ourselves. On this third night we were less fortunate, as the train was full as far as Lemberg. At that place the line forks, the southern branch going off to Czernovitz, Jassy, and Bucharest, the northern to Woloczyska, Kieff, Odessa, and Russia generally.

*Odessa*

The Russian frontier station is Woloczyska where we arrived at noon, and changed into the Russian train. The baggage examination was a mere formality, and the exhibition of passports gave no trouble; they were collected by one official, handed over by him to another, and by him returned to us duly stamped at the end of an hour. The whole detention was about an hour and a half, which facilities for a wash, and a tolerable buffet prevented from seeming at all excessive. For the onward journey we had a big saloon carriage to ourselves, with seats arranged so that the backs could be disconnected at night, and hitched up to the roof with straps and hooks, thus forming two comfortable beds on each side of the carriage, one berth above, the other below. The country between the frontier and Shmirinka, a large junction which we reached at 7.35, though scarcely picturesque, has at some points, where the line passes over a sandy tract planted with widespreading firwoods, a character of its own. A good buffet at Shmirinka supplied us with dinner, to obtain and pay for which I had to bring into play my small (very small) stock of Russian. Beyond that point darkness covered the landscape, and when morning broke on the 23rd, we were running over a flat uninteresting country towards Odessa. We arrived at that place at 10 a.m., and, after a grand scramble at the station, a very poor and, I imagine, temporary erection, managed to get ourselves and our effects packed into two Droshkys, and drove off along the broad, dusty streets to the Hotel de Londres, on the seafront, where I had put up in 1868.

We had got through our journey with very little fatigue, and four days does not, at first, seem too long for the distance between London and Odessa. But it might be done in a good deal less; the 12 hours and 5 hours detention at Berlin and Krakau respectively might surely be shortened, while between Myslowitz and Krakau, and from Woloczyska onwards, the pace is of the slowest.

*The Black Sea*

The steamer for Poti did not leave till the afternoon of Thursday the 25th; consequently we had the best part of two days to spend in Odessa. That city has no attractions, but we had business enough on hand to occupy us fairly well. A large supply of roubles had to be obtained, many of them in the shape of small change, 10, 15, and 20 copeck pieces, far less portable than the paper notes, but absolutely

indispensable for small payments in the mountains. The bulk too of our impedimenta was considerably increased by purchases of tea and sugar which we had preferred making in Odessa to London ; we paid a higher price for tea but got, in my opinion, a better article. In all our transactions we had the benefit of the advice and assistance of Mr. Hunt, our most obliging Vice-Consul, who trotted about with us all day with the utmost good nature. There is a very attractive 'Caucasian Magazin ' at Odessa ; the prices are double and treble those of Tiflis, but the choice of articles, both embroidery and silver work, is good, and some of us invested largely. The Hotel de Londres seemed to me to have fallen off since 1868 ; the cuisine was now, as then, excellent, but the bedroom accommodation, though showy and dear, was bad. Walker and I, who occupied adjoining rooms, had to abandon our beds after a very brief sojourn, and passed our two nights on an ingenious arrangement of chairs,—a misadventure, at which elsewhere we should have stormed, but which here seemed pretty much a matter of course, and was so regarded by us.

We took our tickets for Poti on the morning of the 25th, and were most cleverly done out of Rs. 10 by the Clerk at the Steamboat Office who, in counting our fare, slipped a note of that amount up his sleeve with a dexterity worthy of Hermann. We could not prove the fact, but there was no doubt of it. When therefore we embarked on my old friend the ' General Kotzebue ' in the afternoon, our tempers were in a state comparable to that of the Euxine at the moment—ruffled. It was indeed blowing half a gale when the steamer started at 3.15, and only two of our party, of whom I was not one, put in an appearance at the four o'clock dinner ; but we all managed to face the 8.0 p.m. tea. The meal hours on board were as follows : tea, with bread and butter or biscuits, at 6.30 a.m., in our opinion at least an hour too early ; *déjeuner à la fourchette* at 11.0 ; dinner at 4.0 p.m. ; and tea again at 8.0 p.m. The food was good enough, but neither the déjeuner nor the dinner could be called ' heavy ' meals in point of quantity. The boat was crowded with officers, ladies, and children, on their way to the various bathing places on the Crimean coast, and we were fortunate in getting good berths ; the latter in all the vessels of the Russian Company of Navigation and Commerce are fairly roomy and clean.

*Yalta*

A rough sea in the night did not disturb our repose and by morning it went down. At 7.30 we touched at Eupatoria, a small place on a sandy coast ; we did not land, as time was short, and the few objects visible from the deck, viz. : a domed mosque, some minarets, and a certain number of windmills, did not promise much of interest. We reached Sebastopol at noon. As the boat only stayed an hour, there was no time to do anything but stroll up the main street which struck me as being less ruinous than in 1868 ;—houses had not been rebuilt, but ruins seemed to have disappeared. The afternoon was delightfully fine and the voyage along the grand coast to Yalta was most enjoyable.

We dropped anchor off that place at 6.15 and remained there $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours; most of our passengers here left us, and we too landed for an hour. The place has more than doubled since 1868, and building was going on in all directions. Few watering places have greater natural attractions, and Yalta has, no doubt, a future before it.

When we went on deck on the morning of the 27th, we had left the beauties of the Crimea behind us, and were skirting the flat sandy coast between Theodosia and Kertch, at a distance which became less respectful as we approached the latter place. Passing underneath the formidable earthworks on the high ground to the south of the town, we were alongside the jetty by 1.0 p.m. We landed and, after a most successful piece of bargaining for a droshky, drove to the so-called Tomb of Mithridates, a lantern shaped building on a hill close behind the town, and to the excavations some three miles outside over the Steppe, which I had seen before. Driving along the shore in the neighbourhood of Kertch is scarcely a pleasure; the tideless bay is the town sewer, and the stench is fearful. The steamer from Taganrog brought us an accession of passengers, and at 7.30 we were off once more. Getting out of the bay of Kertch is a delicate operation, it being necessary to back the vessel and then swing round so as to hit off the very narrow passage through the Straits; however, before dark we were outside and running towards the Caucasian coast.

*Captain Telfer*

Early morning tea on the 28th, found us steaming out of the long, narrow bay of Novrosiski, having there taken on board an Englishman, Captain B. J. Telfer, of the Royal Navy, like ourselves travelling for amusement in these parts. He had driven overland from Kertch, and was on his way to Kutais, whence he hoped to visit the district of Guriel towards the Turkish frontier. The meeting was scarcely a surprise, each party having heard rumours of the other but was none the less pleasant. Mrs. Telfer being a Russian lady, Captain Telfer, more fortunate than us, was not without acquaintances on board, from two of whom, Monsieur Salzmann, an architect of Tiflis, and General Kebnitski, of the Depôt Topographique Militaire, we got much valuable information. They took much interest in our plans, and reminded me of a circumstance which I had forgotten, which was that although the governor of Kutais could, as he no doubt would, give us all the papers necessary for travel in his district, yet that those papers would be useless beyond his limits; it would be absolutely necessary that we should have from the central authorities at Tiflis an 'Otkrytyjilist,' or open letter, which would pass us over the whole country. Now this document could only be obtained at Tiflis. It therefore became necessary to include in our programme a preliminary visit to that city, at the cost of two or three days' delay; this I myself rather grudged, but my friends were naturally not inconsolable at an opportunity of seeing so famous a place.

*Soukhoum Kaleh*

All day long we kept close to the coast, which is rugged and picturesque, a succession of narrow, deeply scored, green valleys running up from the sea into the mountains, on which heavy rain was falling, though we, until late in the afternoon, were steaming along under a cloudless sky. With the exception of Touapse and Sotcha, Russian colonies, there are no villages on the coast, and the country inland is, I believe, equally bare of inhabitants, since the forced migration of the Circassian tribes to Turkey some years ago. We touched at both those places but it was difficult for boats to come alongside, for, though the sea was smooth to the eye, there was a heavy swell, and both the 'Kotzebue' and the shore boats rolled tremendously. The storm with which we had kept parallel all day, extended seawards towards evening, and a dirty night ensued, which was succeeded on the 29th by a dirty day. When we went on deck at 6.30 a.m. we were just dropping anchor in the bay of Soukhoum Kaleh; a heavy sea was rolling in, the rain was falling in torrents, the shore was scarcely discernible through the mist, and the prospect was altogether dismal. We passed an anxious day. At Soukhoum passengers for Poti are trans-shipped into a small flat-bottomed steamer capable of crossing the bar of the Rion; this vessel brings from Poti the passengers bound for Russia and returns with those eastward bound, and its arrival at Soukhoum should correspond with that of the Odessa boat. The morning passed however without a sign of it, and I spent hour after hour tramping the saturated deck scanning the horizon for the first signs of the missing craft. In the afternoon arrived the 'Rion,' a dirty cargo boat, bringing news that the 'Galubchik,' by which the passenger service is carried on, had stuck on the bar of the river, and might not be got off for a week! This catastrophe is, I imagine, not uncommon, but neither our captain nor the Company's agent on shore seemed prepared for it, or to have any clear idea of what course should be followed. At all events, if they had they kept their own counsel, for not a scrap of information could be got on board. Under these circumstances every one was at liberty to draw upon his own imagination, and availed himself of that liberty. At one moment it was reported on the best authority that we were all to be turned on shore, and left to find such accommodation as we could for an indefinite period. Then, the story was that, a point being strained, the Company would allow us to remain on board, but that the steward would supply no meals unless separately paid for. The circumstance however that the four o'clock dinner was served as usual discredited this, and consoled many to whom the mere loss of time, which most afflicted us, caused no pangs. After dinner, the rain having held off for a bit, we went on shore with Lieut. Kwitka, a pleasant young officer of the Cavalry of the Guard, who spoke English perfectly, and who was fired with desire to ascend one of the green wooded hills behind the town. We started in the desired direction, but did not go far, for the mud was knee deep and the hill more distant than it seemed. On returning on board uncertainty as to our movements

still prevailed, but a rumour gradually spread that the 'Kotzebue' was, after all, to take us on towards Poti, and that we should be met somewhere by a substitute for the stranded 'Galubchik.' This turned out to be true.

*Delay !*

*An official proposal*

A curious proposal was made to me in the course of the evening. A gentleman, addressing me in French, said that it was a great object with the Government to find a practicable route over the western end of the main chain of the Caucasus, to connect Soukhoum and Kutais with the upper valley of the Kuban and the Kubardah by a military road ; that with this object a Commission had been formed for the purpose of examining the various tracks, more or less frequented by the natives in times past before the depopulation of the country, which traverse the chain between Elbruz and the Black Sea ; that this Commission was about to commence work by crossing the Marukh Pass, the best known of these tracks, and that he was authorised to propose to us to accompany them. The adoption of this course would have involved the total abandonment of our original plan, and the substitution of a quasi-official journey through a part of the country, from our point of view comparatively uninteresting for an independent ramble through the wildest and least known districts of the loftiest section of the chain. With the official party we should no doubt see what we did see, thoroughly and under great advantages, but this consideration was a poor set-off against the superior attractions of our own scheme. I therefore, with all due politeness, expressed my regret that the very short time at our disposal would not allow of our accepting the very flattering proposal made to us.

The steamer started in the night, and I shall not soon forget the spectacle which met our eyes when we went on deck shortly after 6.0 a.m. on the 30th. We were slowly steaming along at a distance of six or seven miles from the shore. The bad weather had passed away and the sky was without a cloud. In front of us stretched a vast amphitheatre of snow-clad mountains, the great chain of the Caucasus on the left, and the ranges along the Turkish frontier on the right ; the latter are really of very moderate height compared with the former, but the outline of the peaks is good, and now, owing to the large quantity of snow with which they were still covered after an exceptionally severe winter, they rivalled the great chain in appearance. The two peaks of Elbruz were plainly visible though perhaps scarcely revealing their real height of 18,500 feet above the smooth waters of the sea from which, at a distance of some 70 miles, we were regarding them. In the freshness of the early morning the whole scene was most glorious, and of a kind entirely novel to us all ; there are indeed few points within the ordinary range of European travellers from which a view of a great mountain chain is obtained from the sea.

*Aquatic entertainments*

At 8.0 we met a small steamer sent out from Poti, into which our passengers and baggage were transhipped; the operation was a long one and it was 11.30 before we parted company from the 'Kotzebue' and turned towards the shore. Our difficulties were not yet over, for on approaching the bar of the Rion, it turned out that our vessel, though only drawing two feet of water, could not get over; at all events the captain would not try. Another prolonged delay ensued, until a still smaller steamer, one of those which act ordinarily as ferry boats, came out. The delay was rendered somewhat less wearisome by the performance of some Tartar musicians from the Crimea, mild looking, melancholy men, who played some national airs, melodious but somewhat depressing, reminding me strongly of many Welsh airs. After more than enough of this, a tall Mingrelian prince, good looking but of rather dissipated aspect, was persuaded to dance, in a space cleared on the deck, a sort of hornpipe or sword dance, to an air accompanied at some points by a marked clapping of hands on the part of the audience. It was impossible not to admire the entire absence of 'mauvaise honte' with which, on very slight pressure from some Russian officers and ladies, he went through his rather trying performance. In spite of these diversions, the heat, the rolling of the vessel, and the shrieking of many babies, combined to make the position not altogether comfortable, and the arrival of steamer No. 3 was hailed by all. The passengers were sent off first, luggage being left to follow; the tiny vessel was dangerously overcrowded, and we were fortunate in fine weather, as with anything of a sea on, the risk of accident would have been considerable. As it was, we got into the river at last, were landed on the wharf at Poti at 4.0 p.m., and were soon in possession of rooms at Jacqueot's Hotel, where, to our surprise and satisfaction, our effects turned up in the course of the evening.

*Poti*

Notwithstanding the completion of the railway, Poti did not seem to me to have materially changed since 1868; the frogs at all events were in as great force as ever; their note is most peculiar; some quack like ducks, others absolutely bark like dogs; all keep up a never ceasing chorus which is almost deafening. The harbour works which were in progress have altogether failed, and the half-finished piers have all been washed away by the sea; operations are, I believe, to be renewed on a fresh and (of course) better plan, but the natural difficulties are very great, and, in combination with the want of honesty inherent in subordinate officials in these parts, will probably prove insuperable. The late supervising engineer, with or without reason, is generally credited with having put into his own pocket as many roubles as he sunk in the sea! There is some talk of abandoning Poti and making Soukhoum Kaleh the Black Sea port of Tiflis, diverting the railway to it. The anchorage there is good but exposed, and protective works could no doubt be constructed; the railway line would be more difficult, as

heavy bridges would be required, and some of the rivers, notably the Tugour and Kodor, are erratic, subject to sudden floods, and liable to shift their beds. Still, unless Russia, by fair means or foul, gets hold of Batoum, this scheme will, I imagine, one day be carried out, though possibly not until roubles enough to pay for it have first been sunk at Poti.

*The Auroch Ox*

The Hotel Jacqueot seemed to me to have deteriorated; we got a very indifferent dinner which was however eaten in good company,—Mr. Gardner, our Vice Consul, Lieut. Kwitka, Capt. Telfer, Mons. Bertin, member of a great wine house at Bordeaux, and Count Rozmorduc. The last named is a Frenchman, married to a Dadian princess of Mingrelia and resident near to Sugdidi; he is a mighty hunter, and when he heard that the valley of the Kodor lay in our route, discoursed with much eloquence on the subject of the Auroch Ox, a somewhat mythical beast, which he assured us was, nowadays, to be found there and there only. His description of the animal was indeed so startling that we scarcely knew whether to be more pleased or alarmed at the prospect of encountering it; we were, however, a little consoled to learn that our informant had himself never seen the beast, except the single stuffed specimen which is in the museum at Tiflis. Equally discomposing was Mr. Gardner's account of a certain beetle which haunts, or is said to haunt, the Mingrelian and Abkhasian forests; this obnoxious insect attacks the sleeping traveller, and burrows into his flesh, head first; the victim's instinct is of course to pull out the intruder by the tail, but this course is fatal, as the body comes away from the head which continues to burrow deeper and deeper and has finally to be cut out with a knife. Mr. Gardner was good enough however to tell us the one and only way of ensuring the exit of the creature intact; a lucifer match, lighted, applied to its tail is more than it can stand; upon such an application it curls up and comes out! I am happy to say that, in the end, we were not troubled either by the Auroch Ox, or by the less bulky but more insidious, beetle.

*Paul*

While we were dining, the last and most important member of our party appeared—my old friend Paul, arrayed in orthodox Mingrelian costume which he professed his readiness to change for the more convenient but less picturesque garb of western Europe,—for a consideration! We had no difficulty in coming to terms, but they were about three times as high as in 1868. As he justly said, he had then no idea of what would be the character of the journey, and he would now, for the time being, throw up a well paid appointment. He therefore asked £15 a month. Had he asked twice as much he would have been cheap at the price to us. Apart from his linguistic and culinary powers, his unimpeachable honesty and devotion to his employers make him quite a phenomenon amongst Mingrelians, and invaluable on such a journey as

we proposed. It would not be easy to imagine a position more forlorn than that of a party in some portions of the interior with a servant in league with the villagers. So Paul's terms were agreed to at once, and the cooking apparatus was handed over to him as a badge of office.

One more piece of business remained. It was of moment that we should be detained at Tiflis as short a time as possible. I was therefore advised to telegraph at once to General Pribil, Private Secretary of Baron Nicolai, and ask for an interview with H.E. in order to apply personally for the necessary papers. This I did, stating simply that I had arrived with three friends and a Swiss guide for the purpose of making a ' voyage de touriste ' in the country, and adding, as a sort of introduction, that I had been one of Mr. Freshfield's party in 1868.

*Kutais in decay*

A night at Poti is not an unmixed delight. We had no fault to find with our beds, but the heat was fearful, it being necessary to sleep with windows closed for fear of the malaria which renders Poti the deadliest spot on a notoriously unhealthy coast. The early rise rendered necessary by the circumstance that the Tiflis train started at 7.38 was therefore not unwelcome. The station is on the right bank of the river, i.e. opposite the town, and a small steamer, one of those used in former days for the service to Or-piri, ferried the passengers across. A bridge was in course of construction, and has since been finished. We reached Tiflis at 10.45 p.m. The line follows, first, the course of the Rion, and then the track of the old post road up the valley of the Quirila and over the pass of Suram. Between Poti and Kutais station there is a magnificent view of the huge mountain wall which towers over the sources of the Tugour, seen beyond the intervening wooded ranges of Mingrelia. There is no distant roadside view of the Alps at all comparable to this, just as no section of the Alpine chain is so continuously lofty and steep as this part of the great watershed between Europe and Asia. At Kutais station, reached at 11.15, we dropped Peter and Paul, in order that they might get on with the arrangements for our start into the mountains. The town is six miles from the station, a curious arrangement, resulting, as we understood, partly from a rather short-sighted policy on the part of the Govt., who, desiring the shortest possible line between the two terminal points of the railway, shut their eyes to every other consideration but that of directness, partly to an equally ill judged refusal on the part of the townspeople to contribute a sum of 60,000 roubles towards the extra expense which the détour would have involved. The consequence is that the town which, in 1868, had been one of the busiest and most flourishing in the country, is in a state of complete decadence. In old days it was the necessary starting point for Tiflis ; there was a great posting establishment, and a constant bustle of persons, official and others, coming and going. Now all is changed, no one thinks of stopping there en route to Tiflis, and the only officials in the place are those connected with the Government of the province. The old Hotel de France is shut up, and others

of inferior pretensions have followed suit. The talked of abolition of Military Governors in the Caucasus will, if carried out, complete the ruin of Kutais, a place which, by its charming position on the Rion at the point where the river leaves the mountains and turns towards the sea, merits a better fate.

*Railway to Tiflis*

Carriages are changed three times between Poti and Tiflis ; (1) at Quirila, where the number is reduced ; (2) at Bejatubani, where a further reduction is made, and where a ' Fairlie ' engine,—a monster, resembling two ordinary engines welded into one,—is attached for the actual passage of Suram ; and (3) at Michaelova, the station for Borjom, where the passengers, who have been packed as close as possible, are once more dispersed in a train of the ordinary length, for the long descent of the valley of the Kur, a portion of the journey rendered interesting by the lines of cave dwellings by which the cliffs on the left bank of the river are honey-combed. So far as a layman can form an opinion without careful observation, the engineering of the line is well done ; although the actual height of the Suram pass is not great,—only 3,027 feet,—the final ascent from Bejatubani is steep, and the pace of the train is of course very moderate. The tunnels are few and short. Halts of half an hour are made at Quirila and Michaelova for breakfast and dinner ; the buffets at those stations are good, and the prices reasonable. A shorter time is allowed at Gori for tea ; I imagine every soul in the train partook there of that refreshing beverage, and the chorus of 'Tchai!' with the refrain of 'Limone!' was quite deafening. The station at Tiflis is on the left bank of the Kur, quite outside the city, on this side of the German colony. Having all our luggage ready to hand we got first away from the station, and so secured the last vacant rooms in the Hotel de l'Europe.

*Tiflis*

On arrival, a letter from General Pribil was placed in my hands to the effect that Baron Nicolai was at his country seat some 50 miles from Tiflis, but that my telegram had been communicated to him, and that he had given orders for one of the employés of the Chancellerie to call upon me in the morning, for the purpose of learning our exact route in order that the requisite papers might be prepared. Next morning a gentleman appeared as promised, heard everything that I had to say, and assured me that the papers should be in my hands by the following evening ;—pretty sharp work, considering that they would have to be sent for signature to Baron Nicolai at his country residence ! This business over, we had nothing to do but wander about the city, the attractions of which impressed me much more than they had done in 1868. I don't think I ever enjoyed anything more than the afternoon we now spent in the bazaar, chaffering with the various traders. The only investments we made were in silver belts ; of these we purchased several handsome ones, each negotiation requiring a lot of bargaining,

which I flatter myself I managed very well, though the word ' skolko ? ' how much ? and the Russian numerals, were about the only weapons at my disposal. We generally got the things for one half of the price first demanded and were certainly not ' done,' for everyone to whom we afterwards showed our purchases valued them at much over their actual cost. Grove and Gardiner toiled up the hill which is crowned by the ruins of the old Georgian castle, an exertion which Walker and I shirked as the heat was tremendous.

*Kwitka and Bernoff*

While strolling about, we met our steamboat acquaintance Lieut. Kwitka with a friend of his, Lieut. Alexander Bernoff, who spoke English fluently, and seemed a very pleasant fellow. This *rencontre* had consequences. In course of conversation Bernoff intimated that he had a great desire to ascend Elbruz ; now we on our side were most anxious to have the company of a Russian officer upon the occasion, in order that there might be no sort of room for the expression of doubts as to our success, if we *were* successful. I believe that among the small official fry of the Caucasus, who in that country represent the general public, scepticism as to the reality of the ascents of Kasbek and Elbruz made in 1868 was general. The feeling as to Kasbek had, no doubt, been somewhat shaken owing to the ascent having been repeated by a certain Mons. Muromzoff who, while plainly avowing that he had not before believed a word of our story, had been constrained to admit after his own success that there was no longer room for doubt. But as to Elbruz, really the less difficult of the two mountains, public opinion remained, I imagine, pretty much what it had been, vizt : that we were, to put it mildly—romancers. Now this sort of feeling is liable as years roll on and the date of an event becomes more remote, to spread upwards into circles where the truth has originally been quite well appreciated ; the actors and local eyewitnesses at the time disappear from the scene ; the good name and fame of a party of foreigners regard no one ; and their story if remembered at all is remembered only as an attempt to impose on public credulity. We had therefore all along hoped to secure the company of a quasi-official witness to the reality of an ascent of Elbruz in 1874, if one was effected, and were delighted to have stumbled so opportunely upon the sort of man we wanted.

In the course of the day I unearthed my friend Goumilevsky, whose acquaintance I had made on the Black Sea in 1868. His astonishment at my appearance was quite real ; ' well,' he said, ' I can understand a man coming once to these parts,—but a second time ! that is indeed inexplicable.' He dined with us at the hotel, and told many amusing stories of the Shah's goings on when at Tiflis en route for Europe,—stories not very creditable to ' the great King.' Kwitka and Bernoff came in during dinner, and, before we separated, the Elbruz matter was settled. Whether Kwitka would be one of the party was left doubtful, but Bernoff undertook to meet us at Urusbieh on the 26th July, and we agreed that we would not leave that village for the ascent

until the 28th. We gave our friends all sorts of good advice as to their mode of life in the interval, which they were going to spend at Piatigorsk, and enjoined upon them as much walking exercise as possible, and, above all things, to come to the rendezvous well shod ! The purchase of a pair of snow spectacles commenced Bernoff's equipment that very night, and was, at all events, an evidence of zeal on his part, which encouraged us to hope that he, at any rate, would come up to time, as to which young Goumilevsky, at whose house we took tea, was profoundly sceptical.

*Visit to Kadjori*

Next morning (July 3rd) Grove, Walker, and Gardiner started by the early train for Kutais, in order to look after 'the two apostles,' as we had naturally christened Peter and Paul ; I stayed behind for the promised papers. They were not promised till evening, so I devoted the morning to a drive to Kadjori, to call upon Genl. Pribil and thank him for his courtesy. Kadjori is a summer resort of the official world, 3,000 feet above Tiflis, on the hills which, burnt up and unpicturesque, enclose the city in the south ; the distance, as the crow flies, or rather, as the telegraph goes, is only eight versts, but the road makes it eighteen. The ascent is for the greater part of the way continuous, and the drive out took me one hour and forty minutes in a light phaeton with four horses harnessed abreast. The road, a good one, winds up the slopes behind the city, and then penetrates a ravine running up into the hills, until it emerges on to an undulating grassy plateau, reminding me strongly of the South Downs on a large scale. The view from the top of the ascent, over Tiflis and the valley of the Kur is fine. Kasbek was cloud covered, and invisible. Kadjori is a collection of pretty villas, each one in its own wrinkle of the hill, and buried in trees ; the greenery is pleasant to the eye by contrast with the parched country round, and the place must seem a paradise to the ordinary dwellers in the sweltering town below. I paid my visit, with many apologies for my 'costume de touriste,' was most courteously received, and by 1.30 was back in Tiflis. The road was quite blocked with long lines of bullock carts, fitted with the curious solid wheels peculiar to the country —indestructible, I should think, but very clumsy.

*Government Papers*

A visit to Col. Stebnitski, at the Bureau Topographique, who had my aneroid compared with the Barometer in the Observatory, furnished me with some sheets of the 5-verst map for correction, and provided me with a thermometer,—followed by a drive with Goumilevsky in the gardens beyond the German Colony, filled up the afternoon. In the demi-official 'Kavkaz,' the arrival was announced of four 'members of the Alpine Club of London,' with intent to ascend Kasbek and Elbruz ; several persons called at the hotel during the day to 'interview' us, but the early departure of my friends and my absence from home left the enquirers disappointed. Personally I was not sorry to

be relieved from receiving visitors animated merely by curiosity. Late in the evening the papers arrived, vizt : a letter to Count Leverschoff, the Governor of Kutais, and a 'general letter' of recommendation to all whom it might concern. The latter was *the* essential document and in terms, freely translated, was as follows :

' Chief of the Central Administration
' of the Lieutenant of the Caucasus.
' No. 159. Tiflis, 21st June (3rd July) 1874.

The local authorities ' of the country will be pleased to afford all possible co-operation and ' protection along the line of route followed by the bearer of this docu- ' ment, Mr. Moore, an English Traveller, proceeding by permission ' of the Lieutenant, H.I.H. The Grand Duke, together with Messrs. ' Grove, Walker, Gardiner, and Knubel, from Tiflis through Khutais ' to the Terek region, and from thence to Svanetia and Soukhoum, and ' they will also give the said Travellers a convoy of civic guards wherever ' the same may be necessary.'

' Chief of the Central Administration
' State Secretary, Senator

Baron Nicolai.'

A letter from General Pribil also stated that instructions had been sent specially to the chiefs of all the Governments through which our route lay to facilitate our journey in every possible way. Nor was this assurance a mere form. For, on reaching the north side of the chain, we found that orders for our good treatment had been sent by the Governor of the Terek district to the heads of all the villages through which we had to pass ; so stringent indeed were the instructions that the good people were prepared to see a princely company, and were at a loss to understand why the government should interest itself so deeply in such a very ragged quartette of pedestrians.

*Kutais*

My business being thus satisfactorily ended, there was nothing to detain me longer in Tiflis, so I left on the morning of the 4th, by the 8.15 train, and at 8.50 the same evening rejoined the rest of the party at the ' Hotel Colchide ' at Kutais, where I found them with Telfer just finishing dinner,—a meal which the hotel served fairly well. In other respects there is not much to be said in favour of the establishment ; the bedrooms are squalid ; fleas abound of a size which filled Walker with astonishment ; and the charges are very high. Grove had seen Count Leverschoff who, though just about to give up his government for good and leave for Russia and therefore full of business, had, as in 1868, interested himself keenly in our plans, given us a letter from the chief proprietor of Gelic, on the upper Rion, to the people of that village, enjoining on them to treat us well, and had promised us a special letter from the newly appointed ' Natchalnik,' or ' Superintendent ' of the Letschkum district, addressed to the heads of villages

in Svanetia. This document reached us in due course, and was in the following terms :

'The village Elders and their assistants of the Letchkum district and 'Svanetia prefecture are hereby instructed to afford every co-operation 'to the British subject Mr. Moore, travelling with scientific (!) object, 'with four Englishmen and an interpreter. And on their arrival 'within the limits of the district and of the Svanetia prefecture, the 'Elders and their assistants shall assign to them sleeping quarters, 'and shall give them guides, and should such be required by them, 'they shall be provided with village horses at mileage rates.'

'Letschkum District Chief
'23rd June 1874 } Grinefski.'

*A Brigand*

With papers therefore we were furnished sufficiently well, and in all respects but one our prospects looked good. The one doubtful point was the weather. An exceptionally hard winter had been succeeded by a wet spring, and the past June had been a month of almost incessant rain. The last few days had been fine, but rain had begun again on the morning of the 4th July, and I could not help fearing that we might be in for a thoroughly bad season. Paul did not trouble himself much about possibilities of weather, but shook his head over our prospects for another reason. He had picked up in the town alarming stories about a brigand chief who was stated to be somewhere in the Nakerala mountains on the path between Kutais and Oni, which we were to follow. The man was said to be a native of those parts who for some crime had been imprisoned at Tiflis, but had escaped, returned to his old haunts, and, with other evil spirits, had assumed the character of a professed highwayman. Now we did not believe a word of this story, and Count Leverschoff, to whom Grove had spoken on the subject, laughed it to scorn, repudiating all knowledge of anything of the kind. Paul however refused to be comforted, and therefore proceeded with the arrangements for our journey to Oni without much heart. We were accordingly equally relieved and surprised to hear, the first thing on Sunday morning, that the aforesaid brigand, whose existence had been disbelieved in by us and denied by the Governor, had just been brought into the town under a guard of soldiers ! The gloom on our servant's face vanished like a morning mist, and he sallied forth at once to look out for two horses to carry our baggage as far as Oni, on the upper Rion, two, perhaps two and a half days' distant.

*Conduct of the expedition : personal apologies*

He shortly afterwards returned with a little dwarf, height about three feet nothing, with whom ensued a grand palaver. It must be understood that our negotiations, whether for lodgings, food, horses, or porters were invariably conducted by Paul in the manner which he thought best ; we never interfered, unless difficulties arose, when he

appealed to me, and I then put words into his mouth which he passed on to the parties concerned as *my* deliverances not *his*, and therefore which it behoved them to attend to. Partly owing to his previous acquaintance with me, partly from the fact that I was the only one of the party who had had any experience in the country, Paul invariably looked to me upon these occasions. So it fell out that throughout the journey I had to take, more or less, the position of leader,—a position which I would gladly have delegated to one of my companions had it been possible. But it was not ; the circumstances, alluded to above, of my previous knowledge both of Paul and of the country obliged me to accept the position, which, apart from those considerations, would have been better filled by Grove or Walker. Certainly no leader could have been more fortunate in his followers ; they always acquiesced in whatever I proposed as regards the details of our route, and bore with equanimity my sometimes not very amiable moods. No one only accustomed to the incidents of a Swiss tour, where the sole anxieties are in connection with weather, can at all realize the very different nature of such a journey as mine of 1868 and 1874 in the Caucasus. The management of the first had fallen almost entirely on Freshfield, and I had had but a very small share in disposing of the daily difficulties as they arose. I had therefore faintly appreciated the incessant worries attendant on progress through a country where the ' tourist ' is utterly unknown ; where a European (even a Russian) is rarely seen, his object in travelling an inexplicable mystery to the people, and himself regarded as a curious novelty to be stared at open-mouthed ; where the most carefully considered plan is liable to be helplessly deranged by a very moderate degree of bad weather or trivial commissariat difficulties ; where walking is repugnant to the people and carrying burdens hateful ; and where bargains are made only to be broken on the most frivolous pretext, so that arrangements which have apparently been settled overnight, have all to be gone into again in the morning, after perhaps hours of talk. Of all the trials to the temper which a Caucasian party has to undergo, the complete indifference of the country people to time is the greatest. At least we felt it to be so in 1874. Five weeks were all we had at our disposal, and we were bound to catch the steamer of the 10th August at Soukhoum Kaleh ; to miss that steamer meant a week's detention which to Grove for family, and myself for official, reasons, would have been something more than inconvenient. To me therefore as responsible to the rest the journey was one prolonged anxiety about time. I had always, as it were, to think two days ahead, and be prepared with an alternative plan in my pocket for the one which we had in hand at the moment, in case that one should not go smoothly or seem to involve too great expenditure of time. Now this is not a position conducive to constant equanimity, especially in such weather as we had, and, in that respect, I cannot pretend to have shone ; but, on the other hand, I may boast that I always *had* a practicable plan, and that, all obstacles notwithstanding, we *did* reach Soukhoum in good time for the boat. So much for

personalities, but that much was needed to account for the frequent use in these rough notes of the pronoun ' I ' in lieu of the ' we,' which would seem more appropriate, and certainly comes more pleasantly from the pen.

*Engagement of horses*

To return to our dwarf. That individual, in spite of his few inches, was quite equal to the occasion, and demanded 16 roubles for two horses to Oni. Paul responded with a gesture indicative of contempt coupled with a desire to kick, and intimated that he was *not* a dolt and an idiot, but that our small friend *was*, likewise a pig. The dwarf, quite unaffected by the want of favour shewn to his offer, proceeded to argue the point, but gradually lowered his price to 12 roubles to which Paul agreed to save further talk. The little man at once put on his hat, and having executed a ' pas seul ' round the room, to our infinite amusement, danced out of the door in such glee that it was clear he had made what he thought an exceptionally good bargain and that we had been done ! We were not much concerned at this but when, in less than half an hour, he danced in again and with a grave face declared that he could not, on reflection, undertake the job for less than 13 roubles, or one more than had been agreed on, we lost patience, and broke off negotiations altogether. So his want of self control and greed cost him dear. Paul went out into the town, and very soon got hold of two men of Oni with whom, being en route home, he had no difficulty in arranging for 8 roubles, a favourable bargain both for them and us.

*Start for Gebi*

In the morning I called on Count Leverschoff to present my Tiflis letter,—a mere form as he had already acted on the instructions contained in it. In the afternoon I drove with Paul, in drenching rain, to the railway station with our heavy luggage, which was sent off to Poti to Mr. Gardner, who had kindly undertaken to forward it on by steamer to Soukhoum, there to await our arrival. Then all preliminaries could be regarded as completed, and the evening was devoted to the best banquet which the Hotel Colchide could furnish, at which Telfer joined us. His Guriel expedition had fallen through, but he had tumbled on his legs, for the new ' Natchalnik ' of the Letschkum district and Svanetia was about to make an official tour in those parts and had offered to take Telfer with him. He would thus see the most interesting part of the country under the most favourable auspices. We contemplated crossing the chain into Svanetia from the valley of the western Tcherek ; if we did so, the two parties were almost sure to meet, in which pleasant expectation (doomed, however, to be disappointed), we parted. To save time in the morning we discharged our bill overnight ; the landlord ran it up pretty stiff, but we were in no mood to haggle, and paid without a murmur,—to Paul's enormous discontent. Under these circumstances we considered as somewhat

gratuitous our host's suggestion to Paul, as an explanation of our extraordinary decision to travel on foot, that the only possible explanation *must* be, a discreditable desire to economize ! The beds of the hotel Colchide are emphatically *not* ' beds of down,' but when we reflected, as we turned in, that they were the last we should occupy for five weeks. They seemed not without merits.

*The Mamison road*

The early morning of Monday the 6th July was fair, though not promising well for the day. The horses arrived at 5.0 and we started at 6.0, three of us shouldering, each man either his bed or haversack. Our object was to accustom ourselves to carrying something, in case to do so might hereafter be a necessity ; but the proceeding completed the astonishment of our host who stared at us in stupid amazement and could scarcely respond to our adieux, as we marched off iceaxes in hand. Our route was for the best part of three days to lie along what is known as the Mamison road ; this is a horse path which follows generally the valley of the Rion on the south side of the chain and that of the Ardon on the north, and connects Kutais with Vladikavkaz, the great military station where the Terek debouches from the gorge of Dariel. In point of distance it is a short cut between the two points compared with the round by Tiflis and the Kreuzberg pass ; it is indeed the third side of the triangle ; but the pass across the chain is 9,390 feet high and therefore closed except during the summer months, while the path, though well planned and in places practicable for light carriages is not metalled, and is therefore after rain reduced to a state of decomposition. Between Kutais and Vladikavkaz therefore, the longest way round remains the shortest way home, especially now that the railway is open to Tiflis. The pass is however the only one across the 700 miles of the Caucasian chain which there has been any systematic attempt to make practicable, or which can be regarded as anything but a hunter's, or purely local, pass. Above Kutais the Rion makes a wide sweep round a low range of hills called Nakasala ; the path therefore does not follow the river in its lowest course, but cuts across those hills by the Satchori Pass, 3,972 feet in height. Some distance on the other side is the large village of Nikortz-Minda, which we hoped to make by nightfall, and so reach Oni on the second day, and Gebi on the third.

*Gardiner's plunge*

Passing out of the town, our way lay for three quarters of an hour along the left bank of the Rion ; then turning our backs upon that river a short ascent up a side glen brought us to a low col overlooking the valley of the Tokal-Tsiteli, a stream which falls into the Kvirila below Kutais. Straight opposite, picturesquely perched on the top of a green, wooded, hill, was the great monastery of Gelati, founded, according to Thielmann, by King David of Imeritia in the eleventh century. Apart from its sentimental interest, the spot is attractive from the natural beauty of the position and from the view which it

commands towards the great chain. But we could not afford time for the détour which a visit to it would have involved, so kept down in the valley below and passing through the village of Kursubi, following a pretty direct course along the stream of the Tsiteli. The scenery was pleasing, of the character of some of the side valleys of the Simmenthal, but not specially striking. At 10.30 we came to a clear, swiftflowing stream,—not I believe the Tsiteli, but a feeder,—which had to be crossed without the aid of a bridge. Walker led the way on one of the baggage horses, not in the saddle, but clinging to the baggage and hanging, *not* gracefully, down over the animal's hindquarters. He got over all right, but to a looker-on his position during the passage seemed equally grotesque and insecure, and I believe his emotions were, in fact, not altogether pleasurable. I at all events did not care to imitate him, and preferred to wade through, the water being only knee-deep. Gardiner, as little impressed with the merits of my performance as I had been with those of Walker's, struck out a plan of his own, and got astride of the baggage on the second horse. As far as midstream all went well, but there the baggage, not too well adjusted in the first instance, shifted a little, and shot our unlucky friend into the water, where he measured his length. Not to laugh was, for the bystanders on dry land, an impossibility, but the joke, naturally, did not seem so good to the victim as it did to them.

*The valley of Dzeruli*

Two more streams had to be forded before we reached Khrishili, at noon. There the first of a series of ' Duchans ' or ' Cantines,' which occur at intervals along the Mamison road, offers refreshment, of a sort, to the traveller ; the bill of fare was not extensive, being confined to spirits of various kinds, drinkable wine, price 45 copecks a bottle, and bread. We had come so far without a halt, to my no small surprise, as our horsemen were, like ourselves, on foot ; I had been prepared for a constant struggle with them in regard to stoppages, but they had kept moving of their own accord, and would now, I believe, not have waited had it not been absolutely necessary to rest the horses. As it was we remained for $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours,—a long time, but far more agreeable and beneficial to both man and beast than a constant pulling up for a few minutes at a time, which irritates the former (if an Englishman, at any rate) without doing much good to the latter. By the time we started again the clouds had descended and the threatened rain was falling ; it continued during the rest of the day, and afforded my party their first experience of the disagreeable side of Caucasian travel. A steady ascent took us to a low green pass which separates the valley of the Tsiteli from one watered by a stream called on the map ' Dzeruli,' also a tributary of the Kvirila. As far as this point the muddy state of the road, though unpleasant, had not been a serious inconvenience, but now, for a long stretch it became one ; the mud was literally knee deep, and each step had to be taken as slowly and deliberately as in crossing a heavy snowfield in the Alps ; the horses could with difficulty get

through it at all, and required constant encouragement and management on the part of the men leading them. The mist was so thick that it was impossible to understand the details of the route we were following, but I believe that after crossing the first ridge and descending a little we either crossed, or wound round the end of, a second ridge, before reaching the main valley, the sides of which seemed, judging from transient glimpses, to be densely wooded. Once fairly in it, the path improved somewhat though the weather did not, and we got on better. We passed two more ' Duchans,'—the first at the foot of the descent, where we treated our men to some wine to keep them in heart ; several natives were standing about, mostly unarmed even with the orthodox dirk ; all were very civil, though curious, and one man, to my great astonishment, seemed, if I did not misconstrue his gestures, to really have an idea of the use of our axes.

Beyond the second ' Duchan ' the path began to ascend again by gentle zigzags ; there was more than one track, and our party got separated,—a contingency to be always avoided. There was often a fork on the way which Grove, Walker, and I followed, apart from the others, and it was more by luck than skill that we kept right and eventually, at 7.0 p.m., reached a third ' Duchan,' a quarter of an hour or so before the horses. It had been pretty clear to me for some time that we had no chance of getting to Nikortzminda that night ; the two horses, and some of the bipeds of the party were tired, and when we found, as the result of Paul's enquiries, that the pass even was an hour and a half distant, there was no difference of opinion as to the propriety of staying where we were, and, at all events, getting a roof over our heads.

*Tkvibula*

Tkvibula was given to us as the name of the ' Duchan ' which in appearance resembled a decent Swiss châlet. Numerous mud covered natives quickly turned up and devoted themselves with much eagerness to our service ; every man wanted to do something for us, and a division of labour was therefore effected whenever possible. On this principle one man took off my right boot, another my left ; both parties then retired happy and proceeded to clean the boots after the manner of the country, which I discovered, when too late, i.e. next morning, to be by filling them with water and leaving them to stand in that condition all night ! A brew of soup succeeded by one of tea put us on good terms with ourselves once more, and afterwards we were glad to escape from the cold, which was sharp, though we were at a height of less than 3,000 feet, by getting into our bags and taking up our positions for the night on the floor. A horde of fleas followed us promptly, and gave us a lively time. However our turn came. If the fleas had their fun at night, we had ours in the morning. Our bags were regular traps, for the enemy got embedded in the thick swansdown lining of them, and were unable or unwilling to emerge from it ; consequently after a ' warm ' night we had only to turn the bags inside out, and slaughter

our foes as they lay, gorged with our blood. Upon this particular occasion Walker and I had a private source of consolation in the sufferings of our friends, who, having at Odessa escaped the attacks to which *we* had been exposed, had boasted themselves, somewhat prematurely, of their imperviousness, alleging that fleas—Swiss fleas at any rate—would not bite them. They now discovered that the Caucasian variety was more appreciative or less particular.

*The Satchori Pass*

When we crept out of our bags at 4.30 a.m. on the 7th, rain was still falling, everything was shrouded in mist, and the general prospect was as gloomy as could be. Nor had it materially improved when we started at 6.0, though the downpour had diminished to a comparatively harmless drizzle. Just beyond the ' Duchan ' a torrent had obliterated the path, and left a steep bank of mud and débris, which the horses could with difficulty be got across by daylight ; at night they could not have passed. A succession of zigzags, deep in mud, through woods, then led up to the Satchori pass, 3,972 feet, which we reached at 7.30, without having been able really to form any idea of the scenery on the south side ; glimpses of steep sided, densely wooded glens had been revealed from time to time, but they were only transient, and we could only speculate as to what might be the attractions of the route in fine weather. The mists had lifted a little, but the clouds still lay too low to permit of our seeing anything from the pass ; I question however whether it commands much distant view, or whether under any circumstances the great chain is visible from it ; the height is not great, and the peaks and buttresses of the Shoda and Tsit-kharu on the north side of the Rion, not to mention nearer ridges, intervene.

*Nikortzminda and Khotevi*

Immediately below, on the north side, a basin of some size and depth filled with water clear as crystal and cold as ice, gives birth to the river Sharaula, a tributary of the Rion. This stream, according to native story confirmed by the map, after running a very short course, disappears in the ground above Nikortzminda and re-appears some way lower down. A party in a hurry, like ours, has no time to investigate phenomena of this kind, if the investigation involves a détour ; the moral, perhaps, is, ' Don't be in a hurry !', to which can only be replied : ' Necessity has no law ' ; it is surely good to see something, even though something else, perhaps not less interesting in itself, has to be passed by unseen. The first stage of the brief upper course of the Sharaula is through a beautiful forest, with a luxuriant undergrowth ; further on, the forest has been cleared, and the valley opens out and is under cultivation, the scenery being decidedly dull. The path, which had for some distance improved, went to the bad again as we approached Nikortzminda, a large village with a church, surmounted by a green cupola in the approved Russian style, placed on a hill. The mud here was fearfully deep and adhesive, so much so, that

in extricating my left foot from a specially soft place, I wrenched my ankle severely and walked the rest of the day in great pain. The ridge on which the village is built forms an almost imperceptible watershed between the buried Sharaula and the Khotevi, a more eastern feeder of the Rion, which the path follows. Just beyond the village is a 'Duchan' where we halted from 10.30 till 11.45; we had been $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours from Tkvibula, so that we had done wisely in halting for the night at the latter place. A mounted party, with the road in good order, might no doubt get from Kutais to Nikortzminda in a day, but for pedestrians the distance is too great.

*Up the Rion valley*

From the 'Duchan' the path wound steeply down a chalky hillside to the village of Khotevi, which, like Nikortzminda, seemed deserted by its adult population; but, as we passed through unobserved, a chorus of children's voices came from what must have been the school-house, worthy of an English infant school. Passing beneath a ruined castle we shortly crossed to the right bank of the stream, and followed it down through tame scenery,—limestone cliffs in the right, green hillsides on the left—to its junction with the Rion which we struck once more at 2.30, and were to follow thenceforwards to its source. The valley is here broad and green but not specially striking,—a cross between the valleys of the Rhone and Aosta, as those valleys may have been before the days of diligence roads. The path follows the left bank of the river for nearly an hour, and then crosses to the right at a point where the valley contracts; just above, at a spot called Tseshi, which we reached at 3.50 is another 'Duchan.' Beyond this the scenery is for some way very picturesque; the finest point is where a large stream, the Lukhunuri-tskali falls in on the north; the hillsides here are wooded from top to bottom, and on opposite sides of the Rion a church and the crumbling ruins of a castle face each other; an artist could not desire a more tempting subject for his pencil, and for us the scene was lit up to the best advantage by a fleeting gleam of sunshine. A certain distance up the side valley watered by the Lukhunuri-tskali is the large village of Uravia, from which a horsepath leads over the Tsit-kharu to Lashketi on the upper Zenes-tskali; it is, I believe, a day's ride from point to point.

Above the junction of the Lukhunuri-tskali the character of the valley changes again, becoming less wild but not less charming. The hills on either hand, still clothed with wood, draw back somewhat, and the path leads over a broad belt of turf, worthy of an English park, thickly dotted over with oaks, box, and other trees. The afternoon being comparatively fine and the way good the walk was very pleasant, but we were not sorry, nevertheless, to reach at 6.10 the village of Sori where we had some time resolved to stay the night if we could get quarters, in lieu of struggling on to Oni, three hours further distant. A group of villagers was standing round a 'Duchan,' and from one of them we elicited that Sori possessed a priest, and that in his house we

could no doubt be taken in for the night. Our informant may have been the reverend gentleman himself ; on this point, writing sometime after date, my memory is a blank, but I know that before the matter was settled, it was clearly explained that we were prepared to pay for our accommodation. The priest's house was outside the village, high up on the hillside, but, when reached, afforded very tolerable quarters, in the shape of a large room with a sort of broad wooden divan running along one end of it, which was covered with a flea-infested carpet, and was the bed of the whole party. Outside an open verandah served as a receptacle for our 'impedimenta.' Butter, eggs, and milk were forthcoming, so that with soup from our own stores, and an omelette fashioned by Grove, who was emphatically the gastronome of the party, we fared well.

We found, to our great satisfaction, that the failure to reach Oni, as we had hoped, would not prevent our getting to Gebi by the morrow evening, the distance from Sori not being beyond a day's march. Our horsemen had come along so well that we were glad to keep them as far as Gebi, tho' they asked three roubles each for the extra day,—at least a rouble too much. We tried hard indeed to persuade them to come with us for the whole journey by offering a tempting lump sum ; but after a good deal of vacillation, they finally refused, not caring to go so far away from home or to trust themselves or their horses amongst unknown people. This, as it turned out, was fortunate, for I question whether we could have got the horses across the main chain by either of the two passes which we eventually crossed, vizt : the anonymous one from the Rion to the Tcherek, and the Nakhar from the Kuban to the Kodor, though both are said to be practicable for cattle. A breakdown halfway in the journey could have been both embarrassing and costly.

*Oni*

At 6.10 on the 8th, we were again on the move up the valley which hereabouts presents no remarkable features, for two old towers on the left bank of the river can scarcely be considered such. At 9.15, after crossing a torrent, the Khebi, flowing from a wooded glen, we were abreast of Oni, the principal village on the upper Rion. It is very picturesquely placed on the left bank, under a line of green bluffs, crowned with towers, and just above the junction with the Rion of a large stream from the south. Several white houses, two storied, give the place a very civilized appearance, and it would no doubt be a very good headquarters for excursions in the beautiful green hills which surround it ; but the height is only 2,750 feet above the sea, and it is a long way from the great chain. We had no object to gain in going into the village so kept to our own bank of the river, by a path carried at some height above it. A descent soon brought us to a narrow but rapid torrent,—the Sakaura flowing from the recesses of the Shoda, a peak 11,128 feet high, which can be ascended from the village of Sakavo, a little way up the glen of the Sakaura. The Rion in its downward

course from Gebi flows round the base of the Shoda and nearly encircles it ; the peak thus stands between Oni and Gebi, and is as near to one place as the other ; if, as I do not doubt, the ascent from Gebi is practicable, that place, being 2,000 feet higher, would be a preferable starting point to Sakavo. The peak must command a wonderful panorama of the whole length of the main chain from Ushba to Adai-Khokh, and its summit would, I have no doubt, explain many topographical mysteries, especially the real relation of the peak of Koshtan Tau to the watershed. It is among the greatest of my many Caucasian regrets that both in 1868 and 1874 I was prevented by bad weather from making this ascent.

*Tau Shoda*

There was no bridge over the Sakaura at the point where the path struck it, and we were preparing, very unwillingly, to wade, when Knubel, sniffing about after the fashion of a Swiss guide, who always hates getting wet unnecessarily, found the trunk of a tree thrown across a little higher up, which took us over, the horses going through. Above, the valley contracts very much, where the river flows between the eastern buttresses of the Shoda and the western ones of Tau Dolomistsveri on the left bank ; several big torrents come down from the last-named group, more than one of which looks, from below, like the real Rion, which, however, sweeps steadily from the north. We had fixed upon Utzera as our midday halting place, but the distance from Oni to that village is a good deal greater than it looks to be on the map, and it was 12.55 before we reached it, or rather the ' Duchan ' above it. The place itself consists of a few scattered cottages, buried in walnut trees ; it has a special attraction in the shape of a mineral spring, the sanitary virtues of which are said to be great ; a good-natured peasant, unasked, brought us a bottle full of the water, which is slightly effervescing, saline, and decidedly agreeable to the taste. The resources of the ' Duchan ' were precisely the same as elsewhere, thin wine, bread, and hard biscuits, with various qualities of ' Vodka ' ; it was, though we scarcely realized the fact, the last place of the kind we were to come across until within one day's march of Soukhoum Kaleh and the sea ! A cloudy and threatening morning had given place to a fair afternoon, and we spent a pleasant hour lolling on the grass, in front of this last outpost of civilization, before resuming our way at 2.10.

*Off the Mamison road*

*Caucasian dogs*

At every step the valley now grew narrower, and the scenery more savage and striking ; we shortly plunged into a dense forest, which clothed the hillsides from their very summits down to the water's edge, and at 3.50 reached the by me well-remembered point where, below the junction of the eastern and western streams of the Rion, the Mamison path turns off to follow the former to Glola, Gurshavi, and the glaciers of Adai-Khokh. It was a strange sensation to stand once more on a

spot which at the time, in 1868, I had never expected to see again, and I could hardly realize that six years had flown since the day on which, after our passage of the Karagam glacier, I had pursued my solitary way from Glola to Gebi by the track which we were now again to follow. For a track it is, and a rough one, in marked contrast to the comparatively well kept path which had served us hitherto, and whose merits we had scarcely appreciated as they deserved. A very steep ascent begins at once, over a projecting spur of the Shoda ; the view from halfway up across the densely wooded valley is wonderfully fine in its own peculiar way ; at the junction of the streams the forest is thickest, and, to one looking from above, the carpet of vegetation is continuous for miles and miles in either direction, *down* the united valleys and *up* the eastern branch. The single fir tree which crowns the ascent, and which in 1868 had impressed us by its size, symmetry, and solitary position, was easily recognizable ; it seemed as big and shapely as ever, but less solitary ; perhaps its neighbours had grown up in the interval, while it had remained stationary. Opposite the large village of Tchiora, on the left bank of the river, several women were working in the fields, close to the path, and addressed some remarks to us, apparently of a facetious character, from the laughter with which they were accompanied by the speakers. The joke, whatever it may have been, was thrown away upon us, and our attention was speedily diverted to serious matters, by strong demonstrations of objection to our presence exhibited by a big, and very fierce, sheepdog ; the brute came at us, evidently meaning mischief, but was stopped by a counter demonstration with a revolver which Grove, the wielder of the weapon, would have liked to make something more. This was our first experience of perhaps, the only real danger attendant on pedestrians in the Caucasus ; the dogs all over the country are unmitigated brutes, not to be conciliated, persistent in their attacks, and with a good deal of tactical skill ; a single one can, of course, always be kept off, but two or three together are foes not to be despised, as while one comes on in front the others will sneak round and make a diversion behind. It is of course easy to shoot, or rather to fire at them, with a revolver, but such a proceeding would, probably, be deeply resented by the natives to whom the beasts belong, and lead to endless discussion and difficulties. Watchfulness therefore and stones are the only means of defence really available, but it is hard work for the traveller to bring himself to use no other weapons,—the more so, as the people, either from not realizing the danger or from perverseness, are slow in calling their four-footed allies off the objects of their attacks. Upon the present occasion I restrained Grove with difficulty, and throughout our journey, he had an ardent longing, with which we all sympathized, to make a target of at least one of our tormentors.

*Arrival at Gebi*

In this part of the valley the torrents which come down from the successive glens of the Shoda are great impediments to progress on

foot ; they are, without exception, bridgeless, and rapid enough to require careful fording. Otherwise the walk, through thickets of wild roses and honeysuckle in full bloom, was pleasant enough. The evening was cloudy and it was therefore getting dusk when we came in view of Gebi and its many towers crowning a bluff on the left bank of the Rion, in the angle between that river and a considerable tributary, the Tchosura, which flows from the main chain. In 1868 I had thought that nothing could be more picturesque and striking than this village seen from below and I thought the same now that I approached it once more after an interval of six years. On reaching the bridge we found that, for some reason unexplained, the cross planks had been removed for some space on our side, the side poles alone affording a rather precarious passage to the part which was in proper order. The effect, of course, was to make the bridge impassable for horses, and not easy of access for men, the bare and slippery poles, with the roaring stream beneath, not offering an inviting pathway. While we were discussing what to do, a native came down to the other side, between whom and our Oni men a shouting communication took place, which resulted in our crossing, and in the horses being unladen and the luggage carried over, the animals being left to roam at will on the right bank. The two horsemen here came out very strong, in more senses than one, for without wasting any words or waiting to be ordered, they promptly shouldered between them with some help from Paul, but without allowing us to assist, the horses' loads and carried them not only across the very ticklish bridge, but up the steep path which leads from it into the village. I should not have thought it possible to stand under such burthens, much less carry them up hill.

*Old friends at Gebi*

We were led to a good sized wooden house with two rooms, of which the outer one was the schoolroom, fitted up with benches quite in the orthodox style ; the inner one, which was bare of any sort of furniture, was made over to us. I am not quite sure whether the building is the same we occupied in 1868 ; the school, at any rate, is an institution established since then. The house had an upper story approached from outside by a staircase, which served as the place of meeting of the Gebi parliament, or debating society, which during our stay was in permanent session. Along the front of this upper story as well as of the basement, ran an open verandah, and in front of this the elders of the village were assembled to receive us, headed by the two chiefs, one of whom, a fine-looking elderly man, wore on his breast several Russian medals. I was at once recognized by two grizzled old men in the crowd as an old acquaintance ; they had been two of our porters in 1868 to Jibiani, and manifested apparently unaffected pleasure at seeing me again ; one of them in particular was never tired of grinning at me and pointing in the direction we had then followed, with the explanatory word ' Svanetia ' many times repeated. Making our way at last into our quarters we were at once followed by as many of the population as

could squeeze in after us. Bargaining then began. Now I had a very lively recollection of the talents of our entertainers in this line, and was anxious to fix a fair market price for everything we wanted before buying anything which was brought. Unluckily, my companions, less well informed, could not resist the fascination of a moderate sized bowl of fresh milk which was offered; the milk disappeared in no time; then came paying? 'how much?' 'One rouble,' or ten times the fair price. Remonstrance was useless; the milk had been drunk, and, in spite of Paul's vigorous denunciations of the vendor's rascality, the money had to be paid for peace and quiet's sake. The effect was disastrous; the price of everything rose in proportion; for eggs, threepence a piece was demanded, for bread, the small, round, flat cakes of the country, 30 or 40 copecks each. Upon these terms it was simply impossible to deal, so I took the bull by the horns and refused everything which was brought. Man after man was sent away with his goods unsold, and the result was, that in time a reasonable tariff was established; eggs came down to a copeck apiece, or three a penny, and bread to from 8 to 10 copecks a cake, on which terms a great deal more was offered than we wanted. The head of the village had nothing to do with all this; trade was perfectly free; a great annoyance was the having to pay for everything on the spot; a man would bring a single egg or a single cake, and nothing would induce him to leave it without immediate payment, though he knew that in five minutes, or less, he would re-appear with something else of equally small value. The run upon our small change was therefore severe. The cheapest thing we got was so-called 'wine,' of which a large flagon cost a mere trifle; but the nastiness of the liquid was such, that it was easy to understand the readiness of the people to part with it.

*The men of Gebi photographed*

I was very anxious to make some excursion from Gebi before crossing to the north side of the chain; much time there we could not afford; but two days would, I felt, be well expended in ascending either Tau Búrdisúla, a peak about 14,000 feet in height, above Tchiora, at which the main chain changes its Northwest and Southeast direction for one nearly due East and West, and therefore well placed for a view or else the lower but equally well situated Shoda already mentioned. I could not help fearing that unless we took advantage of a fine day, wherever we might be, to make whatever excursion might seem most feasible, instead of simply pushing on day by day along the route we had chalked out for ourselves without diverging to the right or left, we might find ourselves at the end of our tour, having ascended nothing but Elbruz, and possibly not even that. This possibility I suggested to my companions in words that unfortunately proved prophetic, and they quite shared my views; it was therefore agreed that if the weather on the morrow looked at all promising we would make arrangements for an ascent either of Búrdisúla or the Shoda on the following day. But the morning of the 9th proved hopeless. Clouds covered the sky from