THE RUGGED FLANKS OF CAUCASUS

By

JOHN F. BADDELEY

Πρωτοφυὲς τόγ' ἀνέσχε καταστάξαντος ἔραζε
αἰετοῦ ὠμηστέω κνημοῖς ἔνι Καυκασίοισιν
αἱματόεντ' ἰχῶρα Προμηθῆος μογεροῖο

ARGONAUTICA. Book III, ll. 851–3.

VOLUME I

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD
1940

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
THE TEXT AT
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY JOHN JOHNSON
THE PLATES AND MAPS BY
MESSRS. EMERY WALKER LTD.
45 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
LONDON, W.C. 1

THE AUTHOR IN NATIVE DRESS

FOREWORD

By SIR OLIVER WARDROP

WHEN, on the 16th of February 1940, at Oxford, John Baddeley died, this book was ready for the press. His good friend Sir Charles Hagberg Wright was asked to write a foreword and was already at work on it when he too died. The finished memoir to his friend which follows was to have been contributed to the pages of *Georgica* and was probably the last article he ever wrote.

We have before us a thing of beauty, adorned with clear maps, fine plates which were drawn by the author himself, written in a simple, scholarly way and revised again and again with a keen sense for accuracy and felicity of phrase. It is the product of many years, based on carefully kept diaries, and is a worthy monument to its author, who had earlier made his mark by two first-rate works: *Russia, Mongolia, and China* (1919), on which the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society (now at his old school, Wellington) was conferred, and *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (1908).

Baddeley was born on July 28th, 1854, son of an officer who served with honour in the Crimean War and died young, leaving a widow of rare charm and exceptional social and intellectual gifts, to whom till her death, at the age of 80, her son was closely knit.

After a stay in Latin America, where he made a lasting link with Spanish literature, he paid his first visit to Russia in 1879, with Count Peter Schouvaloff, who had been a friend of the family since his arrival in London, as Ambassador, in 1874.

Thus began a permanent tie with Russia, of which the first ten years are vividly described in *Russia in the 'Eighties* (1921), an autobiography which has not yet met the recognition it merits; it is good history in a fascinating form.

As correspondent for the London *Standard* in St. Petersburg for many years, Baddeley was in close touch with successive Ambassadors, Dufferin, Morier, and the rest, and helped them much and enjoyed their confidence.

He was Vice-President of the Georgian Historical Society, member of the Royal Asiatic and Hakluyt Societies, Fellow of the Royal

Geographical Society; in the proceedings of these learned bodies and in *The Times* (February 21st, 1940) will be found obituary notices.

A mere cursory glance through this book will show its wide scope and its appeal to many kinds of readers: geography, topography, ethnology, history, archaeology, botany, zoology, folk-lore, and many other kinds of learning will be enriched by a study of its pages, and not the least of its merits is that it reveals modestly in the daily life of travel an admirable man to whose memory it is a duty and a pleasure to offer a tribute for his unflagging friendship during the forty-eight years since we first met in St. Petersburg.

There may be some who will not like the spelling used for proper names. Baddeley, who was member of a commission of experts on transliteration and long conversant with the matter, persisted in using his own system for Russian and it need not cause serious inconvenience. As for the Caucasian languages—it would be hopeless in any book for general reading to attempt a phonetic transliteration such as philologists rightly demand for texts.

The last ten years of his life, quietly spent in retirement in Oxford, constantly working to perfect this book, full of memories of the far-away days spent in the delightful scenes here set forth in well-chosen words, pictures, and maps, were, maybe, as happy as any previous period of his life, and his untiring effort to achieve perfection in his task undoubtedly prolonged his days and alleviated the inevitable discomforts of old age. To the end he 'kept his friendships in good repair' and a sharer in one of them will always think of him with respect and grateful affection.

Baddeley left to the London Library a very valuable collection of Russian books and scientific magazines dealing with his subject—many extremely rare and some probably unique—together with a general bibliographical 'index Caucasicus'.

MEMOIR

By SIR CHARLES HAGBERG WRIGHT

TO write an appreciation of Baddeley, to give a full and true account of his virtues, idiosyncrasies, and talents, and to sketch a living picture of the man, is indeed no easy task. Baddeley was born in 1854, the second son of Captain Baddeley, of the Royal Artillery, just when his father was starting off for the Crimean War. His childhood was a happy one, though difficult in many ways as his mother was early left a widow with a large family when he was quite a small boy. His schooldays were spent at Wellington College, where he was not only an apt and diligent pupil but a leading athlete and an excellent football player. Before he was sixteen he played half-back for the School and subsequently for Richmond. At school he developed a love for birds and flowers, greatly stimulated by a family friend, Mr. Bernard Bosanquet (once Head of Eton College), of whom he was a devoted admirer and through whom his taste for travel was greatly encouraged. To Mr. Bosanquet one can trace his early study of White's *Selborne*, Waterton's *Wanderings in South America*, Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, and many other works of this type. Charles Kingsley, an occasional visitor to the School, also made a great impression on him. Baddeley's enthusiasm for natural history continued throughout his life. As a field naturalist he specialized in ornithology and botany, making a particular study of British and alpine flora, while his skill with the brush was shown by his beautiful paintings of flowers, a collection of which is now to be found in the London Library.

In 1871, after a year spent in the City of London, during part of which time he was on the staff of the *Observer*, an introduction to a Peruvian gentleman with interests in Callao and Iquique seemed suddenly to present a more spacious opportunity of earning a living, and he sailed at once for the west coast of South America. Loving the sea as he did the voyage was a new and, in spite of a terrible and nearly fatal storm, an interesting experience to him. But his stay in that rather disturbed continent did not continue as long as had been hoped. In 1872 ill health drove him home. But before long a chance meeting with Count Peter Shuvaloff, the Russian Ambassador, at a

family dinner party, altered entirely the current of his life. From the beginning Count Shuvaloff took a paternal interest in him, carried him off as his guest to Russia, and introduced him to his family and large circle of friends. After some months spent in untiring study of the Russian language, the post of Special Correspondent to the *Standard* in St. Petersburg became vacant. Count Shuvaloff personally recommended Baddeley to Mr. Mudford, the editor of the *Standard*, and he was given the appointment. In those days of very serious crises Baddeley sent much information to London which the *Standard* was often reluctant to print because the news conveyed seemed at variance with what London thought would happen. Prompted as he was by Shuvaloff, however, Baddeley never led his editors astray, and his knowledge of the language and his access to sources of information in the highest Russian circles which were available to no other Englishman in Russia materially helped to enhance the reputation of his paper and were not infrequently of great use to the Embassy in St. Petersburg.

A lovable personality won him many other devoted friends, and he was very popular not only with Russians of all classes but with the English Colony also. A certain natural diffidence sometimes inclined him to be slow in action and in asserting himself. In matters of scholarship, however, his attitude was different. Endowed with unfailing patience and perseverance, he investigated obscure sources of information and puzzled out many abstruse historical questions, and his judgements, once formed, showed no hesitancy. His pen, indeed, was sometimes extremely severe in its denunciation of inaccurate or misleading statements by certain authors in whom he detected carelessness or bias. In his friendships he was staunch, though his intimate thoughts and feelings were confided to few, and he seemed a little capricious in his likes and dislikes. His outlook on life was conservative, perhaps over-sensitive to the opinion of others, but he was very kindly and generous in his dealings with men, though somewhat addicted to that open-handedness in material things which the Russians term 'expansiveness'. His knowledge of Russian and Spanish was wide and accurate, and he could turn from the unravelling of a crabbed Russian manuscript—the Russian archives were on more than one occasion placed by the authorities at his disposal—to his favourite *Don Quixote* for relaxation; and

French, Italian, Dutch, or German records gave him no difficulty. But he was well over fifty years of age before he finally settled down to the literary life to which, by temperament, he was best suited. During the years that he was Correspondent to the *Standard*, and later when he embarked on a quasi-commercial career in Siberia, on the Amur River, and in the Caucasus, his leisure moments were fully occupied in historical, antiquarian, and anthropological research, and in addition he collected a unique series of books and journals connected with the subjects on which he specialized: this collection he presented recently to the London Library. In the unexplored regions of Manchuria and of Asiatic and Southern Russia, where in the course of business he travelled widely, Baddeley became familiar with the manners and customs of the people of the various races around him as well as with the ethnology and archaeology of these regions. These journeys enabled him to gather together a mass of information from hitherto entirely unexplored sources.

He will be known to the scholars of England and the Continent for a long time by his great work *Russia, Mongolia, and China*. This was published in 1919 in a limited edition and was at once recognized as a work of such exceptional merit that the Royal Geographical Society conferred the Victoria Medal on him. I do not propose to review the book again—that has already been done by competent hands—but one salient feature does not seem to have been dwelt on sufficiently. In undertaking this study of Russia and Mongolia Baddeley followed the method of Hamel, the Russian Academician who came to England with Alexander the First. Just as Hamel ransacked the archives of this country and unearthed documents and manuscripts dealing with early voyages and expeditions by English merchants exploring the White Sea and the shores of Russia, so Baddeley, an Englishman, went to Russia to examine the Russian records, and he gave to the West the story of Russia's 'Drang Nach Osten' with many hitherto unknown details of the travels and adventures of the envoys. He added explanatory notes on racial history, geography, and ethnography, and here, too, is to be found much that was unknown to Western Europe. The book has also a fine collection of reproductions of rare maps obtained in various libraries in Russia and elsewhere. Noticeable among these are the previously unpublished Kalmuk maps lent by the University of Upsala. The

generosity of the Librarian who entrusted these unique treasures to Baddeley is in itself a tribute to the opinion held in Europe of his scholarship. Notable, too, is the index, which is a model of what an index should be, and must, in itself, have entailed months of work.

Baddeley's first attempt at authorship dates much farther back than his *Russia, Mongolia, and China*. In 1908 he brought out *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, a full and detailed account of an episode in Russian history which, though generally little known, fills a most important role in the story of Russia's expansion in the Near East. In lighter vein is his *Russia in the 'Eighties*, which has been already alluded to. It is a sketch of the politics of Russia throughout that period and should be useful to historians of the future even though it is happily intermingled with sporting reminiscences, for as a young man he was a keen and good shot with both rifle and gun.

This present work, the child of his old age, reveals his genius as an artist as well as his capacity as an explorer. For all the illustrations are reproductions of drawings made by himself, and they were made by a technique peculiarly his own. In addition to these works, many papers of his have been published in the journals of the Royal Geographical and Central Asian Societies.

To sum up, Browning's lines seem to me appropriate of Baddeley's life and character:

> One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
> Never doubted clouds would break,
> Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
> Wrong would triumph,
> Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
> Sleep to wake.

He died, before this book could appear, on the 16th of February in his 86th year.

CONTENTS

VOLUME I

VOLUME II

LIST OF PLATES

VOLUME I

VOLUME II

MAPS

VOLUME I

VOLUME II

I

EARLY JOURNEYS

Kertch to Ekaterinodar — Kourgan-gold — Alexander III — Permission to visit Central Asia — Sport and brigandage — Bokhara — Death of an Emperor — An alliterative dainty — The oil-boom — Brigands again — Karaboulak to Grozny — Ingoosh ways — Baku, Derbend, Petrovsk — Ouroushi — Prince Bariátinsky — A new oil-field — More about Grozny — Tchetchens — Mountain Jews — Vladikavkaz.

THE town of Ekaterinodar[1] is, or was, administratively in the Caucasus; it is situated, moreover, on the river Koubán, and the head-waters of the Koubán are fed, directly, by the glaciers and snows of Elbrous; so that, having posted to Ekaterinodar and back in 1879 after sailing an open boat across the Straits of Yenikalé from Kertch to Tamanskaya, I may, and even must, count this short journey as my introduction to the Caucasus, though it occupied rather less than three days and nights, during which I saw little or nothing either of the mountains or of the tribes inhabiting them.

Yet the drive was not without interest. We stopped to change horses on the way back at an early hour in the morning, and there was some delay about it. To pass the time, at the postmaster's recommendation, I strolled across the fields to a farmhouse temporarily occupied by Government archaeologists and there saw, set out on shelves and tables, the greater part of the contents of a *kourgan*, or funeral mound, recently opened, including gold ornaments which were afterwards, and presumably still are, amongst the treasures of the Hermitage collection in St. Petersburg.[2]

It was not until 1888 that an opportunity occurred of adding to my personal knowledge of the Caucasus. In that year the Emperor Alexander III paid a visit to his dominions in those parts for the first, and, as it proved, only time after his accession. I preceded him, and afterwards duly described in the columns of the *Standard* the chief episodes of a brilliant 'progress', from the arrival at Vladikavkaz to the departure from Batoum, which took place two days before the

[1] Now Krasnodar.

[2] My readers, if they have not done so already, should, if they take any interest at all in the archaeology and history of south-eastern Europe, turn to Professor Rostovtzeff's most remarkable and illuminating book *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1922.

railway accident at Borki in south Russia which so nearly cost the lives of their Imperial Majesties and of all their children, including the late Emperor, Nicholas II. The Russians of that day attributed their escape to a miracle, the occurrence itself to a Nihilist attempt —in both cases, I think, erroneously.

This time I not only saw the central Mountain Range, to which alone the name 'Caucasus' was formerly applied, but crossed it by the Georgian Road, spending four days on the way, as all the postal relays were taken up for the Emperor's kitchen-staff and I was lucky in persuading a Vladikavkaz fly-man to take me across in his phaeton, the total distance being 134 miles and the height of the pass 7,805 feet.[1] I saw the representatives of the tribes, assembled at Tiflis in all their varied and highly picturesque costumes, from the peaceful gaberdine of the Mountain Jew to the chain-armour of the Toush and Khevsour, and was present at the magnificent ball given by the nobles of Georgia in the capital of that country, in honour of the Tsar; I saw the 'eternal' fire relighted on the shores of the Caspian for the latter's especial benefit, and tended by Hindoo usurers imported from Bokhara for the occasion; and on leaving the Caucasus at Batoum said not 'farewell!' but '*au revoir!*', as Elbrous and his vassal peaks faded from sight over the dark waters of the Euxine—for the enchantment of the mountains was upon me and I had made up my mind to revisit them at the earliest possible opportunity.

The years passed, however, and it was not until the autumn of 1894 that the opportunity came. Central Asia had then long been a forbidden country to Englishmen, and in view of England's attitude towards Russia in the East the prohibition was a natural one; but exceptions had been made, the most notable of all quite recently. My friend Colonel (now Brigadier-General) Waters has told us all about that[2] so I need not go into it again here. But there was another case. The Hubbards, who owned cotton and print-mills in, and near, St. Petersburg, had established agencies as far south as Eriván and as far east as Khokand, where cotton-growing already gave signs of the prosperity it subsequently attained.

[1] The height has been variously stated, even experts blundering, the reasons being that the road itself has been lowered more than once, while the height of the Cross-mountain above it has sometimes been taken for that of the Pass. The difference is not great.

[2] In *Secret and Confidential*, London, John Murray, 1926.

Their enterprise was recognized by the Russian Government as of national importance, and my friend John Hubbard had obtained permission to visit, for business purposes only, Turkestan and Ferghana, accompanied by his Moscow agent—Strother. When he suggested that I should go with them I took up the idea with enthusiasm, but an application to the British Ambassador for assistance in obtaining the necessary permission met with a firm, though kindly, refusal: on the excellent principle, as Sir Frank Lascelles explained, that to ask for anything that will certainly be refused is, as a rule, bad diplomacy. I had hardly expected anything better, and for the moment put the project aside, but I had more than once met the War Minister, General Vannovsky, out shooting, and had found him quite inclined to be friendly; so, a day or two later, I marched boldly into the War Office and asked to see him. An aide-de-camp inquired my business, which I briefly explained, and within five minutes I was admitted to the presence. The Minister, having listened attentively, said he had no objection at all to my going, provided that I gave my word not to travel beyond the area already defined for my companions—which meant, of course, to make no attempt at approaching the debatable Afghan frontier-land; for form's sake he would have to consult Baron Vrevsky, Governor-General of Turkestan, but made no doubt of his consent. He would send him a telegram, and if I came back in a week's time the answer would be ready. I went back accordingly and found a written permit awaiting me—so simple was it—and I could not refrain from walking on to the Embassy and flourishing the document before Sir Frank's kindly eyes. Looking back, it seems probable that the Russian argument was—if we allow England's singularly astute military attaché to visit Central Asia, what harm can there be in permitting this much less dangerous Englishman to join the purely business expedition which we have not only allowed but encouraged? In any case, thus it was that in the autumn of 1894 I revisited the Caucasus and again crossed the Main Chain. I also drove from Akstafá, east of Tiflis, to Eriván; and, having seen the snows of Ararat, crossed the Caspian and visited Bokhara, Samarcand, Tashkent, Khodjent—'Alexandria the Farthest'—and Khokand.

At Baku after dinner (Oct. 28th) Hubbard's lawyer, a Russian, sat with us awhile and gave us some interesting information as to sport and brigandage in the Caucasus. He had arrived that evening

from Petrovsk on the steamer *Alexander III*, our next day's boat, and was enthusiastic on the subject of the 'autumn flight' down the western shore, above and below Derbend, where the swimming, wading, and running birds passed by in numbers beyond computation. To bag thirty great bustards in a day to one gun was not thought much of a feat; of local birds, pheasants were common, but given to running, and without good dogs difficult to flush, and in the Caucasus good dogs were scarce. A Vladikavkaz sportsman, the local dentist if I remember rightly, went after the *Megaloperdix caucasica*[1] (the miscalled 'mountain-turkey') one spring, when these magnificent birds were said to sing melodiously, and wrote a letter about it which was printed in *Priroda i Okhota* ('Nature and Sport'). He had obtained some eggs and put them under hens, hoping to enjoy sweet singing next year in his own garden, but with what result our friend did not know.[2] The pratincole was to be found near Elizavetpol; the pretty francolin, unluckily for itself 'most delicious of all gallinaceous birds',[3] along the middle Koura. As to big game, he had been present at one hunt when a leopard was killed by a soldier with his 'Berdanka'[4] at a distance of eight yards—a lucky shot in the head. The only other leopard he knew of had killed a sportsman in full view of his companions, who were, unfortunately, separated from him by a deep ravine and just out of shot—which made things equal! Bears, on the higher ground, were plentiful, but small compared to those of Russia proper; in the lowlands wild boars abounded, and it was the practice to hunt them with two or three hounds only, and a large pack of mongrels; the reason given being that many dogs were killed

[1] The *M. caspia* has a more southerly habitat. Radde, Gustav, *Ornis Caucasica*, Kassel, 1884.

[2] Pallas, *Bemerkungen*, &c., vol. i, p. 414, refers to this bird, evidently, but knew not its name, nor could he get a sight of it, alive or dead. According to his informants it whistled at the sight of man and thus gave warning to the wild goats (*touri*). The Ossetine name is 'ullargh', and Mr. Harold Raeburn, in speaking of the ascent of one of the Tsei *aiguilles* (the highest, 13,884 ft.) in the Adai-Khokh group, writes: 'It was named "Ullargh khokh" from the abundance of the bird for which that is the native name. This is the Great Rock-partridge. It is like a huge ptarmigan, but possesses, instead of the frog-like croak of that bird, a loud, clear, musical-scale whistle which rang round the rocks above the high camp (9,000 ft.) just at dawn.' *Journal R.G.S.*, March 1915, p. 187.

[3] Radde, *op. cit.* The Russian name is *touratch*.

[4] The Russian service rifle during many years, a combination of the Albini-Braendlin and Chassepot rifles, invented by Col. Berdan, an American (*Cent. Dict.*).

and those that had any breeding must be spared as much as possible. On the plains antelopes were numerous, a small species; there was a larger one in the hill-country.

As to brigandage, there was none in Daghestan, and any there might be in the mountains, generally, resulted more often than not from the application of the Russian penal code to blood-feud cases. A man who had killed his enemy, quite rightly, even ineluctably, from his own and his countrymen's point of view, would, when threatened with the Siberian mines for a period of years, take to brigandage instead and become an *abrek*, an outlaw, for whom highway robbery was the only possible calling.[1] The one really 'bad' country was Tchetchnia, especially near Grozny. Our lawyer friend was once carrying Rs.40,000 of Government money there and, foolishly, at one post-station, allowed his driver to absent himself for an hour on some flimsy pretext or other. The result was an ambush later on in a wooded ravine by four robbers, who all fired at him; but, having nothing better than old flint-locks, all missed. 'The driver had jumped off his box, but luckily he had left the reins across it, so I seized them and started the horses. One of the robbers attempted to stop them but I dropped him with a charge of buck-shot in the right shoulder. I then got the team galloping and made my escape. All four robbers were caught.' In another case an officer and his son, a schoolboy, were returning to Grozny from camp a few miles off when both were shot dead from behind by two natives they had just passed. These men, too, were caught, and when asked why they had committed such a wanton crime, said frankly that they had challenged each other as to whether they could hit or not, and, being doubtful, tried!

'But nothing would induce me to live elsewhere! In Russia there is no room at all; wherever you go, shooting or hunting, you come

[1] According to Maxime Kovalevsky the *abreks* derived solely from the family basis of the tribal society, which could not admit of blood-vengeance within the family. Hence parricide and other such crimes led at most to the exclusion of the perpetrators from the family circle and destruction of their houses and other personal property to induce self-banishment. They became in the fullest sense of the word 'outlaws', *abreks*. They were wanderers, of necessity, and homeless. A thousand dangers attended them and should they fall victims to robbery or murder none would avenge them. *Zakon i obuitchai*, vol. i, p. 40. For a striking case of parricide and further reference to Kovalevsky, see vol. i, pp. 173–4; but the term *abrek* was used more loosely than this in my day, and many *abreks* were merely escaped prisoners.

upon some other person's property', which is exactly what my friend Count Shouváloff said to me of England as compared with Russia, and, of course, with much more reason.

The story of my visit to Central Asia is beyond the scope of this book, yet one incident may be told. Arriving at Bokhara towards evening we found quarters in the station hotel. The bedrooms were all occupied, but we had the billiard-room to ourselves, Hubbard and I sharing the table while Strother slept on the floor. Near by was the house of the Russian Resident, at that time the well-known traveller Lessar; the native city lay some 11 versts away over the plain. We decided to call on him next morning and pay our respects as early as might be so as to have the rest of the day for our first visit to what was then, perhaps, the most fascinating of all the great Oriental bazaars. The night passed well enough, but at breakfast my companions received a telegram announcing the death of the Emperor Alexander III, and what had been meant as mere politeness became an obligation. We learnt on inquiry that 10.30 a.m. was the earliest hour at which we could hope to gain admittance to 'his Excellency'. We chafed a little at the loss of precious time, but there was nothing for it but patience, and half-past ten was striking as we strolled over to the Residency. A sleepy, slipshod servant took our cards and disappeared through a curtained doorway; we listened; some one, evidently, was being roused, not without difficulty. Again we waited patiently—ten minutes or more; then the door opened and Lessar in dressing-gown and slippers made his appearance, shook hands all round, and apologized good-humouredly in excellent English for the delay and for his deshabille, saying 'go to Rome, you know, and . . .'. As, however, we uttered not a word, and looked, no doubt, preternaturally solemn, he broke off abruptly, saying 'but is anything the matter, gentlemen?' Hubbard, who acted as spokesman, said in feeling tones: 'We have come, your Excellency, to offer you our most sincere and heartfelt condolences on the sad occasion of . . .' *Lessar.* 'Condolences? Sad occasion? Why, what has happened?' *Hubbard.* 'I can assure your Excellency that the death of His Imperial Majesty . . .' *Lessar.* 'The Emperor dead? Good God!' *Hubbard.* 'I fear there is no doubt about it; we received this telegram two hours since,' showing it. Lessar took in its contents at a glance, struck his forehead with the palm of his right hand and made a dash

for the curtained bedroom; we heard the rustling and tearing of paper; books fell or were thrown from a table. A few moments later he came back holding a sheaf of opened telegrams in his hand saying breathlessly: 'It is true, gentlemen, quite true. His Imperial Majesty died yesterday afternoon in Yalta. You will excuse me I know—I must put on full uniform at once and drive off to the city to announce the sad event to His Highness, the Amir. Later on, if there is anything I can do for you pray command me—for the present [shaking hands again all round] good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!'[1]

We drove to Bokhara and at lunch enjoyed a dish of superlative excellence—roast quails and quinces, some twenty of each, set alternately round a vast oval platter of boiled rice.

I did nothing at all in the way of travel in 1895 and the only journey of any interest I made the following year was one to the Bogoslovsk iron, copper, and gold mines in the Ural Mountains, on behalf of Messrs. Cammell & Co. of Sheffield (now Cammell-Laird), who had thoughts of establishing steel-rail and armour-plate works there. But nothing came of it—luckily for them, I suppose.[2] A year or so later the 'oil-boom' began in the Caucasus and in the summer of 1898 I joined a small syndicate of St. Petersburg friends who had it in mind to take their chance with the rest in that business. It was in their interest that I made my next few journeys to the Caucasus, with the object of examining and reporting on likely plots and claims in various localities; and though, owing partly to want of luck but more to want of capital, financial success was not achieved, I, personally, profited by the venture in a manner even more to my liking; for whether directly, on business journeys, or indirectly, when I took advantage of enforced leisure—due to delays inseparable from negotiations carried on between Baku, St. Petersburg, and London—to visit the tribesmen in their mountain recesses, I managed, thanks to 'oil', to see a great deal of the Caucasus, as the following pages will testify.

[1] *Khalat*, in Tartar the outer robe of male apparel, means in Russian a dressing-gown, whence *khalatny*, 'slovenly'. But Lessar was no Oblomoff, as even the slight notices of his Central Asian activities that are to be found in my *Russia in the 'Eighties* (pp. 120, 121, and 131) sufficiently prove.

[2] I am omitting a visit to Sevastopol for the I.H.P. trials—eminently successful—of the battleship *Tre Svyateetelya*, engined by Humphrys, Tennant, of Deptford, whose agent I was in Russia. I went on to Batoum and Baku and crossed the mountains, but, on that occasion, confined my attention to business. This was in 1896.

The first of these journeys took place in the autumn of 1898, when I reached Vladikavkaz on October 5th and was met by Ourousbi, an Ossetine, to whom my friend Frank Medhurst had telegraphed, and by Vladeemir Semeónovitch Nitabukh, a Jew oil-land broker, instructed by Mr. Klein, of Baku.

In the course of conversation Nitabukh said: 'The brigands are quieter now, but they have been very bad lately. *Nitchevó!* (No matter!) I have a "Berdanka", so has my Cossack, who will meet us to-morrow at Karaboulak station with horses, and drive you to Grozny next day. I have also a revolver!'

The immediate mention of brigands, rifles, and revolvers is of interest because that chord or triad proved to be the *leit-motif*, so to speak, of existence, within certain limits, in the north-eastern Caucasus as long as I continued to visit it, a sound now faint and low—the merest murmur—now sharp and loud—a very tocsin of alarm—and rising and falling between through all the range of the gamut. There will be abundant evidence of this in what follows, so that I need give no particulars here; but there were certain qualifications which have not, I think, been put forward hitherto by non-Russian writers, at least, the knowledge of which, none the less, is essential to a proper understanding of the case. To begin with, a definite line must be drawn between the mountaineers of Daghestan—not the mixed population on the Caspian coast—and the people, for the most part of Tchetchen race, inhabiting the country composed of forest-clad hills and cultivable plains or grass-lands farther north. The Daghestan mountaineers in the past raided their enemies and committed, as did all the others—and all Europeans in their time—endless atrocities, but they were not in my time addicted to brigandage. The Tchetchens were. Brigandage with them was the very breath of their being, and of this I shall adduce more than one striking proof. Here, again, however, qualification is necessary. The very men who would rob and kill without compunction within sight of Vladikavkaz or Grozny would, if, as well might be the case, they came from the higher and remoter districts, refrain in their home-land from any such crimes. The reason usually given was that the communities to which they belonged being, except in cases of rebellion, left pretty much to themselves by the Russian authorities, had no wish to draw the attention that must inevitably have followed upon the robbery

and murder in their midst of strangers, whoever they might be. But this was less than half the truth. The traditional, unwritten laws of hospitality made up the rest, as will presently appear. The net result was that to drive or ride—no one, of course, walked—in the lowlands of Tchetchnia was always to run a very serious risk of being robbed and murdered, and the nearer the town the greater the danger; whereas, once you had entered the mountain regions, if only you knew the ways of the people, you were as safe as—even safer than—in the most civilized countries of Europe. 'The ways of the people' is, of course, another qualification, but again a very necessary one; as, however, my whole story is largely an exposition of these ways I will not attempt to explain them here.

The three of us set out next morning (Oct. 6th) by train at 7.45 and found Nitabukh's Cossack friend waiting for us with a *povozka*, a rough springless platform on four wheels, at Karaboulak railway station, 52 versts NE. of Vladikavkaz. We drove first a couple of versts southward to the *stanitsa* (Cossack settlement) of the same name, which is that of a Tchetchen tribe the great majority of which emigrated long ago to Turkey, and discussed plans over luncheon in the house of our driver, where we were to pass the night—or part of it. The afternoon was spent in driving to various places north of the railway to see what we could of oil-lands at Nitabukh's disposal. At dusk we were back at the *stanitsa* and turned in early, but sleep I could not; for what with oil-lands and oil-land prices, boring contracts and pipe-line charges, Cossack percentages and Jew commissions, with, of course, a running accompaniment of brigands and brigandage, my brain was in a whirl. It was all very novel and pleasurably exciting, but the result was that when roused at half-past two I had slept but a couple of hours. We drank coffee, and at 3 o'clock Ourousbi and I, leaving Nitabukh—who was returning to Vladikavkaz—asleep in bed, started with our Cossack host by a vague and misty moonlight to drive over and along the hills of the Soundja range to Grozny, a distance of 75 versts (50 miles. See Map V).

Frequently, as we went along in the semi-darkness, we met carts drawn by oxen and laden with produce for the market at Vladikavkaz, their coming betrayed long before they were in view by the creaking of their axles. The natives, by the way, as General von Blaramberg said of the Nogais, when you asked why they did not grease them,

answered, 'Why should we? We are not robbers!' which might or might not be true.[1] But these were Cossacks, for as far as Mikhailovskaya we drove from one *stanitsa* to another on the south side of the railway, and I noticed that in every case the owners stalked both in front of and behind their carts, with rifles ready and often with sword on thigh. Now and then we passed one or more horsemen in *bourkas* and *bashlyks*, the latter half-hiding their faces.[2] Their unshod horses made little noise on the soft ground and they came on us like ghosts out of the mist and darkness. Then we would tighten our grasp on barrel and grip, and sit ready for all eventualities until brief salutations had been exchanged and the doubtful figures had disappeared behind us. Considering where we were and the time of day, or night, 'the Robber's shirt' as the Laks[3] call it, what more likely than that some of them at least were seeking adventures not unconnected with visions of unlawful gain? but a single glance of the eagle eyes would tell them that our *povozka* carried nothing but three men, of whom two at least were well armed, *and ready*! The game was not worth the candle!

As to these gentry the only rational principle on which a stranger travelling in their country—few ever did—could act, was that of trusting entirely to his guides for the time being. No one but a native of the Caucasus, or one who had spent many years there, could possibly distinguish the brigand from the horse-patrol set to catch him; or, for the matter of that, from the peaceful peasant or, as Scott wrote of England in the eighteenth century,[4] even the country gentleman—a native prince, say—out for pleasure, or for business. Indeed, your highwayman of the moment might belong to any one of these categories, for in Tchetchnia and the border-lands young men even 'of the best families' still gave way, now and then, and doubtless do still, to the attraction of a calling their forbears for centuries had held to be the only fitting occupation for men of spirit

[1] *Erinnerungen*, vol. i, p. 101 (Berlin, 1872). Virgil mentions creaking wheels in the *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, while the creaking wheels of the Scythians were noted by Herodotus and by Strabo.

[2] See pp. 126–7.

[3] An important tribe of Mountain Daghestan, also known as Kazi-Koumoukhs. The latter name has led to their being confused by Russian and other writers with the Tartar 'Koumuiks' a little farther north.

[4] *Rob Roy*, p. 77 (Edinburgh, 1880).

except war.[1] Thus, in March 1900, Mr. Walton, an Englishman new to the country, was stopped at high noon midway between Grozny and the oil-fields by two horsemen, who robbed him of his money and other valuables, and even of his boots. They were afterwards traced and caught, and one of them proved to be a 'prince', not a Tchetchen, of course, for they had no princes, but a Koumuik, the owner of some thousands of acres of land in the neighbourhood! Even if it were not so, all alike wore *bourka* and *bashlyk*, with distinctions, if any, no stranger could be expected to recognize; and the latter, if alone, unless he liked to run the risk of shooting a perfectly innocent man and becoming involved in a blood-feud, could do nothing but keep still until all doubts had been settled by the behaviour of those he met on the way. If these were bad characters and really meant business, all the advantages were with them. They knew their intentions; their proposed victim did not. Theirs was the first shot and if they were worth their salt that settled the matter. Now, with your guides it was different. The various races and classes of men you were likely to meet were known to them, as also their ways and the etiquette of the road. They, too, were at a disadvantage if attacked, but as natives, and probably picked men, they were less likely to be so—the robber also had the blood-feud to fear—and in the worst case would be quicker to see what was coming and therefore better prepared to meet it than you, the stranger, by any possibility could be. My own arrangement with my guide or guides, whether Ingoosh, Tchetchen, or Ossetine, was of the simplest—'If you fight I fight; if not I keep still'—and, unless in quite exceptional circumstances, this was the only rational mode of procedure.

As to the stereotyped tales of would-be marauders overawed by the vision of a revolver, or even the butt-end of one, nine-tenths of them can be swallowed only with a very large grain of salt. He is a poor sort of robber, in any case, who lets you 'get the drop' on him, when choice of time, place, and victim are all his own![2]

From Mikhailovskaya *stanitsa* we turned north and passing through

[1] So Ovid: 'Innumerae circa gentes fera bella minantur,
Quae sibi non rapto vivere turpe putant.'
Tristia, Lib. V. x. 15–16.

[2] A classical case is that of Herr Teufelsdröckh, who when menaced by a huge and bearded Russian on the shore of the Arctic Sea, pulled out 'a sufficient Birmingham horse-pistol' at sight of which the ruffian fled. *Sartor Resartus*, London, 1838, p. 186.

a natural gap in the ridge, known as Wolf's Gate, called a halt to break our fast and afterwards to examine the ground in the vicinity; for here, too, oil-land had been 'declared' and in a hollow just north of the gap, running westward, there were pools of naphtha with the gas bubbling slowly but constantly out of them. In places reeds rose thick and high out of the mixture of oil and water; and on the very edges of the pools grasses and weeds grew rank. This spot was about 4 miles from Mikhailovskaya railway station and 28 by road from Grozny, keeping north of the Soundja ridge with its long line of derricks. Beyond the gap I was astonished to see 16 great eagles (*karagouzh*)[1] all in the air at once, circling majestically over our heads, and very many more perched on haystacks, of which from one spot alone I counted no less than 150. Lapwings played round us in flocks, and last autumn, I was told, great numbers of them perished owing to an unusually early snowfall. We had reached the ridge just as the sun rose and turning south-west saw his rays light up Kazbek and, in succession, the snowy summits of the Main Chain beyond, even to Elbrous, which, 130 miles away, glowed for a moment rosy red, in shape a pyramid of Egypt.

Our horses were poor cattle and it was 4 p.m. when at last we reached Grozny. My object, however, had been attained. I had seen for myself the general lie of all the oil-lands between Vladikavkaz and Grozny and had gathered a mass of information concerning them, which was all that I had undertaken to do for two members of the oil-syndicate whom I was to meet and accompany over the Georgian road next day on their way to Baku. At 6 p.m., therefore, Ourousbi and I took train to Vladikavkaz, a five hours' journey, to find that my friends had arrived from Moscow that evening, and had already gone to bed. Nitabukh had met me at the station and we sat up in my hotel, working and talking till 2 a.m. At seven (Oct. 8th) I started for Tiflis.

In the train Ourousbi had introduced me to an Ossetine colonel whose opinions on the brigand question may be considered by some extreme. 'The Ingooshee ought to be hanged—there are only 40,000 of them[2]—or deported to Africa; they steal everything from women

[1] K. N. Rossikoff, *Zapiski Kavkazskavo Otdiéla*, I.R.G.O. (henceforth referred to as *Zap.*), vol. xiii, p. 216, says *Aquila imperialis*; Professor M. N. Bogdanoff, *ibid.*, *Aquila orientalis*.

[2] 'Excusez du peu', as the French say.

downwards; no, there is one exception—pigs! Being Mussulmans they may not even *touch* a pig! But an Ingoosh girl won't marry her lover till he has killed five men and stolen one hundred sheep or the equivalent. *Yei-Bogu* (God's truth)! The girls gather in the evenings and sing to the young men, encouraging them to go killing and robbing! Yet once married they become mere beasts of burden and are beaten and otherwise maltreated.'[1] Ourousbi confirmed this, to some extent, telling how Ingoosh girls, when he was young, would sing that a gallant worthy of their love 'needs no guide on the darkest night, no bridge to cross the Terek'. But his own tribe differed little. Karghinoff writes of an Ossetine who, having killed a priest for 5 kopeks (a penny), sang a sort of *Macpherson's Rant* 'below the gallows tree' and became at once a popular hero.[2] In, or about, 1864 the *Zikrist* outlaw Vara was surrounded in a house in the *aoul* Novo-Ataghee by Russian dragoons and, after a desperate defence, killed. The story was made a song of, and at various road-side places in Tchetchnia stones were heaped up to which every passer-by was expected to contribute, cursing, as he did so, the native *naïb* Goudanat, who, quite properly, had denounced his hiding-place.[3] Scott's *Highland Widow*, so warmly praised by Stevenson, breathes the very spirit of Tchetchen 'chivalry', which was not, of course, that of King Arthur's Court. At Grozny I had heard of an engine-driver recently

[1] Herodotus tells us of the Sauromatian virgins, ex-Amazons, that they could not marry until they had killed one enemy at least, Hippocrates says three. Taitbout de Marigny (*Voyages en Circassie*, Odessa, 1835, p. 55) gives a Tcherkess maiden's taunt to a would-be lover: 'Why you haven't even stolen a cow as yet!' and, essentially, this is what Geoffry of Monmouth tells us of Britain's women, that they 'would not take as lover any save that he were proved three times in war'. See, too, *Times*, 21 Feb. 1936, Spear-blooding in Kenya. Many murders had been committed by men about to reach the marriage age, as a result of young girls' taunts. Of the present-day Rifians we learn that 'whatever religion may say on the matter, a man who has not taken anybody's life before he is married is not considered a man'. Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, 1926, vol. ii, p. 12. So, too, in the Scottish Highlands 'And now ye are a man—full-grown, ye have been blooded; I'm proud of ye', says Ninian Macgregor to his friend Aeneas, who feared he had killed a man. *The New Road*, p. 120 (Neil Munro).

[2] 'Blood vengeance of the Ossetines', *Mat.*, vol. xliv, p. 176 (for full title see p. 20, Note). Burns's version is called 'Macpherson's Lament', 'the saddest air in all music' says a *Times* leader-writer (Nov. 23, 1932), but the older 'Rant' is used in Herd's *Scottish Songs and Ballads*, vol. i, p. 99.

[3] Ippolitoff's article 'The teaching of *Zikr* and the *Zikrists*', *Gor.*, vol. ii, p. 17 (for full title see p. 20, note 1). The date is given as *c.* 1863, but Vara is stated to have taken part in the affair at Shalee related presently, and that was in 1864.

murdered by natives. The railway people had sent a telegram about it to the War Minister in St. Petersburg and this was expected to have some effect, but without much confidence. General Kakhánoff, Governor of the Terek Province, was condemned on all sides as feeble. In a Tiflis paper, on the 5th of October, it was announced that he had gone to Grozny on account of this and other recent highway robberies and murders; four days before our arrival, for instance, a *natchalnik distantsia* (Section Inspector) had been robbed between Grozny and the oil-fields of a gold watch and forty roubles in money. Prince Galítsin, the Governor-General, was also accounted weak, and his rule was compared unfavourably with that of his predecessor, the Grand Duke Michael.

One characteristic Ingoosh story was that of a boy only nine years old who had lately blown his brains out with a revolver. He had lost a few pence playing at huckle-bones and to pay the debt had stolen money from his mother. She reproached him bitterly, not, of course, for stealing, but for stealing from her—a woman and his own mother! That was more than he could thole.[1] On the other hand, a case was on record[2] of a boy of thirteen killing his mother's lover. The point of honour with the Ingooshee, supposed, unjustly, to be the worst of the tribes, was perhaps a strange one, but can it be said with truth that people are wholly bad who kill themselves, even the children, for an idea, however mistaken? Moreover, an Ingoosh, like others of the tribesmen, would suffer death as a matter of course rather than betray or abandon not a friend only but the merest chance 'guest', one whose very name he might not know and would assuredly never ask, a Highland trait again, but glorified.[3]

We had a pleasant drive over the mountains, spent a night in Tiflis and then went on to Baku, where my friends took ship across the Caspian to revisit their agencies in Central Asia.

I lunched that day with Matiévich, of the 'European' oil-company, and met there a Frenchman, M. Panacier, who said that the old Grand Duke Michael (previously Viceroy) hoped that the brigands

[1] See Kovalevsky on the Matriarchate. *Zakon i obuitchaï*, p. i, 41.

[2] *Gor.*, vol. iv, art. 'Crime', p. 80.

[3] *Lady of the Lake*, Note 1, and see Neil Munro (*John Splendid*, p. 209), for 'the two obligations that lie on every Gaelic household'.

would come to Borzhom, his country-seat in the Transcaucasus; if they did he would invite them to dinner—the brigand-chief then most talked about was said to be a man of education, with charming manners—just to spite Prince Galítsin. Everybody abused the latter, said M. Panacier, and nothing gave so much pleasure to all the military and officials from the Grand Duke downwards as some new exploit on the part of the brigands. No wonder they flourished! Some days later (Oct. 20th) I left Baku, also by steamer, intending to land at Derbend and drive to Berekei, some 20 versts north of that city, where fresh discoveries of naphtha were reported.

We left the Baku landing-stage at 4 p.m. and followed the coast-line in the teeth of a northerly gale. The shore of the Caspian being in those latitudes rocky and dangerous, steamers, for the most part, kept well out to sea—too far for the land to be clearly seen; but the loss was not great, for the scenery was neither very grand nor very beautiful, while, on the other hand, there is a special fascination in a mountainous coast, passed in review as the vessel speeds onward, at just sufficient distance to render all detail obscure and cast the glamour of mystery over surf-beaten shore and cloud-capped upland.

The captain and other officers were, as usual on the Caspian in those days, Swedes from Finland, to me a sympathetic race, so acquaintance was soon made, and I learned that the chance of being able to land at Derbend was a slight one, there being no vestige of a port or harbour—at most a miserable, broken-down wooden pier, a few yards long—and the sea was rough. I was completely nonplussed at this news, for it had never entered into my head that there could be any difficulty in getting ashore at so famous a place as Derbend; but, as it turned out, all was for the best. At dinner I met some gentlemen from Baku, also Swedes, and their companion Daïd Bek, a Koumuik from Temir-khan-Shourá, the capital of Daghestan, who, as luck would have it, were bound for Berekei on the same errand as myself. They explained that the best way to reach that place was to go on to Petrovsk in the steamer, and there take train on the railway then building which had just about reached Berekei. The line was not yet opened to the public, but a workmen's train ran from Petrovsk each morning, returning at night, and through Daïd Bek's influence we could obtain permission to travel by it.

They cordially invited me to accompany them and to this I gladly agreed.

Next morning, at 6 a.m. (Oct. 21st), we anchored about a mile from Derbend. A large sailing-boat, manned by wild-looking natives, came out to receive the mail-bags and such passengers as cared to land; but when I saw the latter flinging themselves desperately into the boat, as she surged up alongside on the crests of the waves, at obvious peril to life or limb, I was thankful not to be obliged to follow their example. I sent off a telegram or two necessitated by change of plan and went on contentedly to Petrovsk by sea, reaching that place at 5 p.m., when we succeeded in entering the very bad harbour, in spite of wind and sea, thanks to powerful engines from the Clyde and the skill and daring of our captain. Another steamer, of the same company, lay plunging at her anchors, outside, all through the night, her decks crowded with miserable passengers, men, women, and children, over whom the waves swept continually.

As our vessel glided up along the quayside, I saw, standing there ready to welcome me, in answer to one of my telegrams, the gallant figure of Ourousbi, my servant, guide, and friend. My readers have already met him casually, but he deserves better than that, and by way of more complete introduction I will quote the following passage from one of my note-books in which I describe him as he was a little later on.

'An Ossetine from the village of Sanibá, hidden away in a narrow valley on the northern slopes of Kazbek, Ourousbi is a true "Gentleman of the Mountains" to whom honourable service is no shame, but who would be ready to wipe out in blood an insult by whomsoever offered. The part-owner of lands and houses, flocks and herds, and *starshiná*, or head-man, of a community of nine villages, he is as much at home in the guest-room as in the stable, and after grooming my horse or cleaning my boots, will take his seat at the dinner-table in the best hotel in Tiflis or Vladikavkaz and talk to my guests with a natural ease and politeness that in "civilized" countries we should deem absolutely incompatible with menial employment. I like to think that this attitude of his originated in the feudal relations between knight and squire, so plainly indicated in some of the Ossetine "Nart" stories.[1] He can dance the graceful Lesghynka,[2] sing a song, and re-

[1] See vol. ii, pp. 102–3.

[2] See vol. ii, p. 12.

cite by the page Poushkin's or Lermontoff's Caucasian poems. He can shoot well and ride like a centaur; talks Russian fluently and has a useful smattering of Georgian. He has friends everywhere, in all ranks of life; is not afraid of hard work, though averse to walking; takes the good and the bad in a philosophical spirit; and enjoys rough travel as much as I do, which is saying a good deal. When you add to this the natural courage and devotion of the mountaineer, a good temper, and a handsome person admirably set off by the flowing *tcherkeska* with its silver ornaments, rich arms, and sheepskin *papakha* worn well on the back of the head, it will be admitted that I have been lucky in having Ourousbi as a companion and friend in so many of my wanderings in the Caucasus.' (See frontispiece, vol. ii.)

My meeting with Daïd Bek and his friends turned out to be more fortunate, even, than I had supposed. We learned at the hotel that General Prince Bariátinsky, Governor of Daghestan, was going by rail next morning to shoot wild boars on the estate of M. Lázareff, son of one of the heroes of the Turkish war of 1877, and that a second-class carriage was to be added to the workmen's train for his accommodation. Daïd Bek, as a personal acquaintance and prominent citizen of Temir-khan-Shourá, had no difficulty in obtaining the Governor's permission to occupy with his friends a compartment in the carriage. So next morning (Oct. 22nd), having laid in a stock of provisions, we took our seats about 6 a.m. and soon afterwards the train started. Before long Prince Bariátinsky, hearing that an Englishman was of the party, came into our compartment and remained talking to me until we reached his destination, some few versts short of our own. Nothing could well have exceeded his affability; he assured me of his friendship for my countrymen; his admiration for their spirit of enterprise; his desire to see it brought to bear on the development of Daghestan; and, finding that I could not be persuaded to join the shooting party, gave me a most cordial invitation to visit him at Temir-khan-Shourá at any time, promising me all the assistance in his power, whether I aimed at business or at pleasure.

When the Governor had been set down and driven off by his host, a well-known breeder of horses, in a phaeton drawn by a magnificent *troika*, the train carried us on to Berekei and dumped us on the line, there being as yet no station, not even the cattle-truck which served

as such the next time I came that way.[1] The oil-field to which we were bound lay between the railway and the sea, about four miles off, and for want of horses or other means of conveyance we started to walk there, but presently met a couple of creaking *arbas* each on two large wheels and drawn by a pair of buffaloes. With the drivers we soon made a bargain to carry us to the solitary hut of the engineer in charge of the pioneer boring, but a very few moments of this mode of progression more than satisfied me, and I again took to my legs. We passed through many ricefields, irrigated from the river Darvakh, and nearing the coast found the land of promise mostly in possession of wild boars, jackals, and pheasants; or, in the more swampy places, of innumerable swarms of mosquitoes and wild-fowl.

The higher untilled ground was covered by dense oak-scrub, the rest by brushwood, grass, or reeds; and with the barren sands of Baku fresh in one's mind it seemed an unlikely place for naphtha. But one small derrick was already at work, and oil of a dark colour was being baled by hand from a depth of 60 'fathoms'.[2] We examined the neighbourhood as well as we could without horses to ride, and spent the night on the hard clay floor of the engineer's hut, after a supper of which the better part was furnished by Ourousbi, who bought and killed a sheep, and made a *shashlyk* of the titbits. This savoury dish consists of pieces of meat—kidney, liver, &c., for choice—with layers of fat between, skewered and roasted over the glowing embers of a wood fire, the chief point to bear in mind when cooking it being that the skewer must be kept turning so that the juices instead of dropping into the fire are continually basting the meat. To facilitate this, two little forked sticks are thrust into the ground on either side of the fire at the proper interval, for the ends of the skewer to rest upon.

The *shashlyk* was washed down by some very drinkable Kakhetinsky wine; we talked of oil and many other things till tired; then, wrapped

[1] The first passenger train reached Derbend from Petrovsk on Nov. 6th, 1898; regular traffic began from Jan. 13th, 1899. The first train reached Baladjari (junction with the Tiflis-Baku railway) Sept. 2nd; the first through train from Petrovsk reached Baku on Sept. 9th, and from Oct. 13th, 1899, regular communication was established, so that St. Petersburg and Moscow were thenceforth connected by rail not only with Baku and Tiflis but with Batoum.

[2] *Sazhens*. The Russian land-fathom is 7 English feet, the sea-fathom 6 feet as with us. The *arshin* is one-third of a land *sazhen* (28 inches).

in my *bourka*, I slept soundly in spite of the howling of the jackals and roaring of the breakers, and in happy ignorance of the fact that I had taken in a stock of fever microbes sufficient, a little later, to reduce my not excessive weight by twenty-three pounds in as many days.

Next morning (Oct. 23rd) we were up and off at 6 a.m., I on a sorry nag, straddling painfully a Persian saddle. Luckily the distance to the railway was not great. We caught a workmen's train at 8.45 and reached Petrovsk at 2.30 p.m., the distance being about 85 miles. At midnight we left again for Grozny and arrived there at 6 a.m. on October 24th. There were no vehicles to be had, so we walked into the town and reached the door of an English friend, C—, at the same moment as a telegraph-boy bearing my message handed in at Petrovsk the previous day at 3 p.m. I was thus enabled myself to put the announcement of my coming in C—'s hands!

I had just 12 hours to spare for Grozny this time and drove to the oil-fields. The talk going and coming was, inevitably, as to 20 per cent., or thereabouts, of brigands, and, as to the remaining 80 per cent., of oil. At the station, before catching the 6 p.m. train to Vladikavkaz, I obtained from the restaurant keeper, a Russian, a very different account of the much-abused natives. To hear him talk one would think the Tchetchens, at least, the mildest-mannered and most charming people on earth. He had been there for years and had never had any trouble with them, though he frequently went shooting amongst them, alone. All that was necessary was to speak their language, know how to treat them, and take a little trouble to make good friends, a '*kounak*' or two[1]—then all would be well; and, probably, this was not far from the truth, but it was just these 'necessaries' mentioned so lightly that were almost invariably wanting. Having time to spare I wandered into the *stanitsa*, which was separate from the town, and tried, but in vain, to find screws for the soles of my Finnish boots. Seeing a sort of Castle-Connell rod in a corner of his shop, I asked the bootmaker what sport was to be had and learned that the day before he had been on the Argoun twenty miles away and had caught fifty or more trout, baiting first with

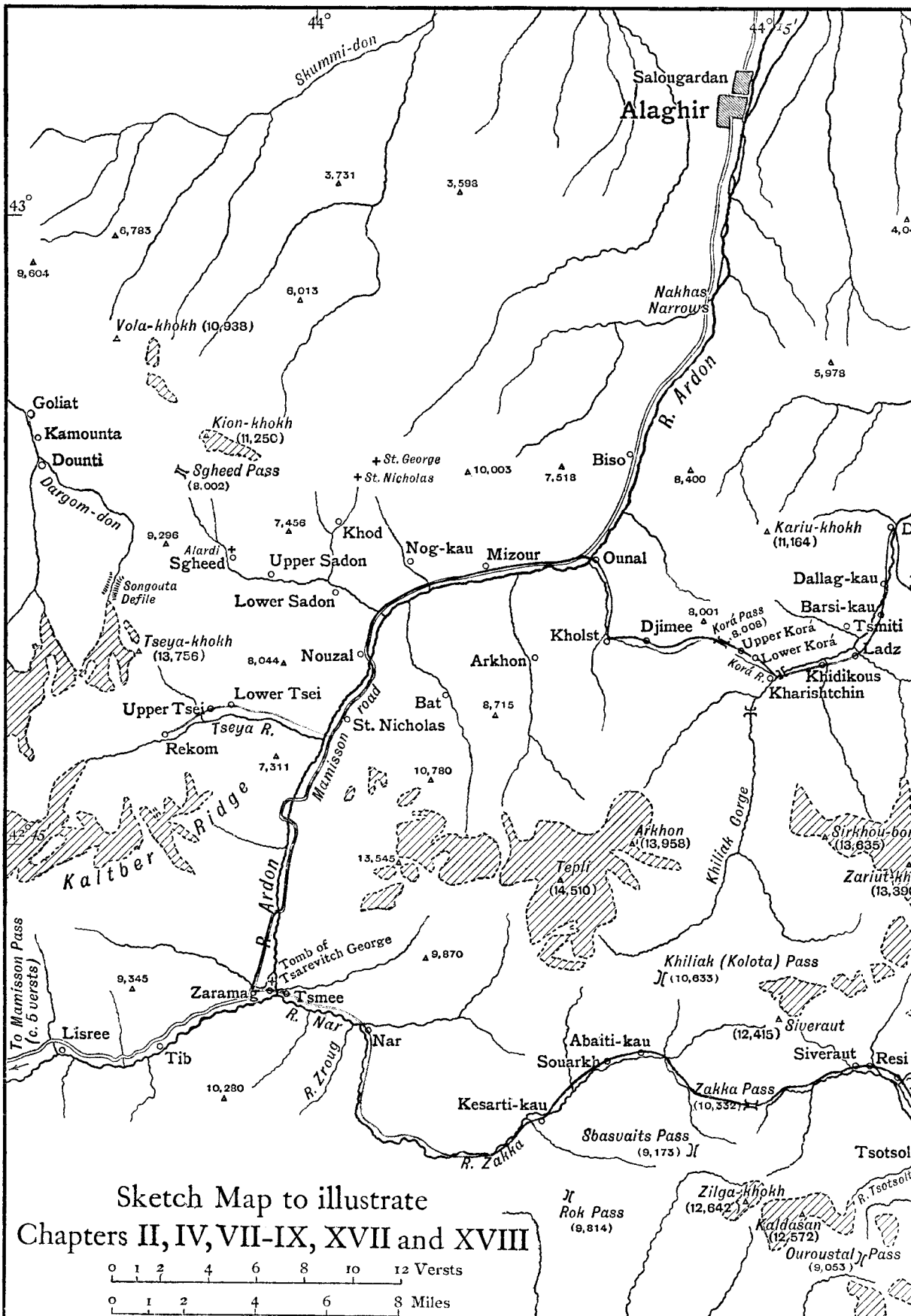
[1] The *conacco* of Interiano, in *Della vita de Zychi, chiamati i Ciarcassi*, Ramusio, vol. ii (1559), folio 140^{v}. The date of his journey appears, still, to be uncertain. It was first published at Venice by Aldus in 1502, as to which date see Bibliography.

worms and then with chopped-up trout itself, which seems as bad, almost, as seething the kid in its mother's milk! There were no trout in the Soundja, a muddier river. At the station I had my first view of the Mountain Jews, a strange-looking people, very unlike any others of the race in appearance, manners, and customs. This was a large family of them, men, women, and children, in gaudy clothes, rings, and bracelets. They are supposed to have been deported wholesale to Daghestan from Persia or Palestine ages ago, and in 1869 numbered altogether in the Caucasus 2,780 families, of which 1,040 were in Daghestan and 453 in the Terek province; of these 197 in the town of Grozny.[1]

We reached Vladikavkaz at 11 p.m. in a dense fog.

[1] See an article on them by I. J. Tcherny, in vol. iii of *Sbornik sviedenii o Kavkazskikh Gortsakh* ('Collected information as to the Caucasian mountaineers'), a very valuable work in 10 volumes, issued somewhat irregularly between 1868 and 1881, henceforth referred to as *Gor*. Miller and Kovalevsky tell us that 'at first they preserved their own language as is proved by the fact that St. Nino, when she came to Georgia from Jerusalem held converse with her compatriots in the town of Urbnis, during a whole month, in Hebrew', 'V gorskikh obshtchestvakh Kabardee' in *Viestnik Evropui*, April 1884, p. 544. Later on they adopted Persian and mingled with it many words taken from the dialects of neighbouring Caucasian tribes, and also certain Iranian elements. The resulting jargon is called Tat, according to R. von Erckert (*Der Kaukasus und seine Völker*, Leipzig, 1888, p. 219) the same as *tadshik*. See too vol. xx, p. 30, of *Sbornik materialoff dlya opisaniya myestnostei i plemen Kavkaza*, the full title of the rare and valuable work, already (page 13, note 2) and henceforth referred to as *Mat*. Also for full and up-to-date information Professor Minorsky's long and learned article 'Tat' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, in future *E. of I.*

The term 'peaceful gaberdine' on p. 2 *ante* is incorrect. These people, like other mountaineers, wear the *tcherkeska*, and carry arms. See Essad Bey's *Der Kaukasus*, Berlin, 1931, p. 107. Chain-mail, as Mr. J. G. Mann has lately reminded us, is a pleonasm, and I have, where possible, altered it accordingly in these pages.


44°
44° 15′
43°
Skummi-don
Salougardan
Alaghir
3,731
3,593
6,783
9,604
6,013
Nakhas Narrows
Vola-khokh (10,938)
5,978
R. Ardon
Goliat
Kamounta
Dounti
Kion-khokh (11,250)
Sgheed Pass (8,002)
+ St. George
+ St. Nicholas
10,003
7,518
Biso
8,400
Dargom-don
9,296
Alardi
Sgheed
7,456
Khod
Upper Sadon
Nog-kau
Mizour
Ounal
Kariu-khokh (11,164)
Songouta Defile
Lower Sadon
Dallag-kau
Barsi-kau
Tseya-khokh (13,756)
8,044
Nouzal
8,001
Kora Pass 8,008
Djimee
Kholst
Upper Kora
Lower Kora
Tsmiti
Ladz
Arkhon
Kora R.
Khidikous
Kharishtchin
Upper Tsei
Lower Tsei
Bat
8,715
Tseya R.
St. Nicholas
Rekom
Mamisson road
7,311
10,780
Kaltber Ridge
R. Ardon
13,545
Tepli (14,510)
Arkhon (13,958)
Khiliak Gorge
Sirkhou-bon (13,635)
Zariut-kh (13,39
To Mamisson Pass (c. 6 versts)
Tomb of Tsarevitch George
9,870
Khiliak (Kolota) Pass (10,633)
9,345
Zaramag
Tsmee
R. Nar
Lisree
Nar
Tib
Abaiti-kau
(12,415)
Siveraut
Souarkh
Siveraut
Resi
R. Zroug
10,280
Zakka Pass (10,332)
Kesarti-kau
Sbasvaits Pass (9,173)
R. Zakka
Tsotsol
Rok Pass (9,814)
Zilga-khokh (12,642)
R. Tsotsoli
Kaldasan (12,572)
Ouroustal Pass (9,053)
Sketch Map to illustrate
Chapters II, IV, VII-IX, XVII and XVIII
0 1 2 4 6 8 10 12 Versts
0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles

II

THE MAMISSON ROAD (1898)

A start for the Mamisson — Farming under fire — 'Abrek' chivalry — Dear silver — The Black Horseman's wraith — Pliny's Gates — Ourousbi's 'line' — The divide — An historical blunder — A topographical puzzle — Leo III, iconoclast — Bird, beast, and saint — The miracle at Ilori — The Asian boundary — On foot to Oni — Koutaïs — The monastery of Gaënat — A wonderful icon.

NEXT morning (Oct. 25th) we started—Ourousbi and I—to cross the Mamisson Pass on our way to Koutaïs and beyond, my engagement to meet my friends again at Baku on their return from Central Asia leaving just time enough. It was late, indeed, in the season for a road culminating at a height of over 9,000 feet, out of repair, and not kept open in winter; but people had come over it from Imeréti quite recently and we hoped for the best.

We went by rail to Darg-kokh station, where a *lineika*[1] and pair was in waiting to take us to Alaghir. A little beyond the station, westward, the river Kambileyevka joins the Terek, which from Vladikavkaz makes a big bend in a generally NW. direction to the inflow of the Malka, coming from Elbrous, and then runs due east, roughly, to the Caspian. With us went, the first few versts of the way, an Ossetine ex-Captain in the Russian service, an acquaintance of Ourousbi's, who found nothing better to do than to abuse out loud in a most violent way Colonel O— whose equally violent estimate of the Ingoosh tribe I had lately listened to.[2]

At Darg-kokh station Ourousbi had introduced me to an Ossetine who had just shot his fifth Ingoosh robber. He belonged to an *aoul* possessed of an outlying lowland farm which the Ingooshee were bent on looting. One attempt followed another and the result was still uncertain; the owners had sworn to defend their property to the last, and so far had the best of it—the tale of dead and wounded showed a balance in their favour—but the luck might change and, meantime, one was inclined to ask what the Russian authorities were

[1] A long, low, springless, four-wheeled vehicle, with a central longitudinal back, and with foot-rests, so that the passengers sat back to back. The length and elasticity of the frame made up to a large extent for the want of springs.

[2] See p. 12, *ante*.

doing. However, farmers, proverbially, must have something to grumble at, and here there was little else, for soil and climate were good, prices remunerative. Driving along, Ourousbi told me a story that showed the *abrek* in a more favourable light than usual. Riding one night alone near Beslan a famous robber with several of his band barred the road and demanded his horse. Dismounting, as if to comply, he drew revolver and *kinjal*, thrust one arm through the bridle and declared that he would stab the horse and shoot the first man who touched or drew upon him. They could kill him if they liked, but they should not have his horse alive. The chief then also dismounted, gravely expressed approval, and offered his hand to Ourousbi, who, not unnaturally, hesitated to take it. The robber thereupon threw down his arms and insisted on their becoming friends, saying that such a *djighit* deserved to keep his horse.[1]

Abreks, said Ourousbi, all had Berdan rifles, whereas honest men carried none—none, at least, when most wanted, that is when going to and from the market towns with their produce or with the money realized by its sale, for in such places the carrying of rifles was forbidden. The cashier, an Armenian, together with a Belgian employé of the Sadon Silver-lead Mining Co.—at this time a Belgian concern—had recently been robbed of Rs.10,000 between Alaghir, where the ore was refined, and the mine itself 33 versts away. The robbers were masked, so presumably local and more likely than not miners or workmen belonging to the Company.

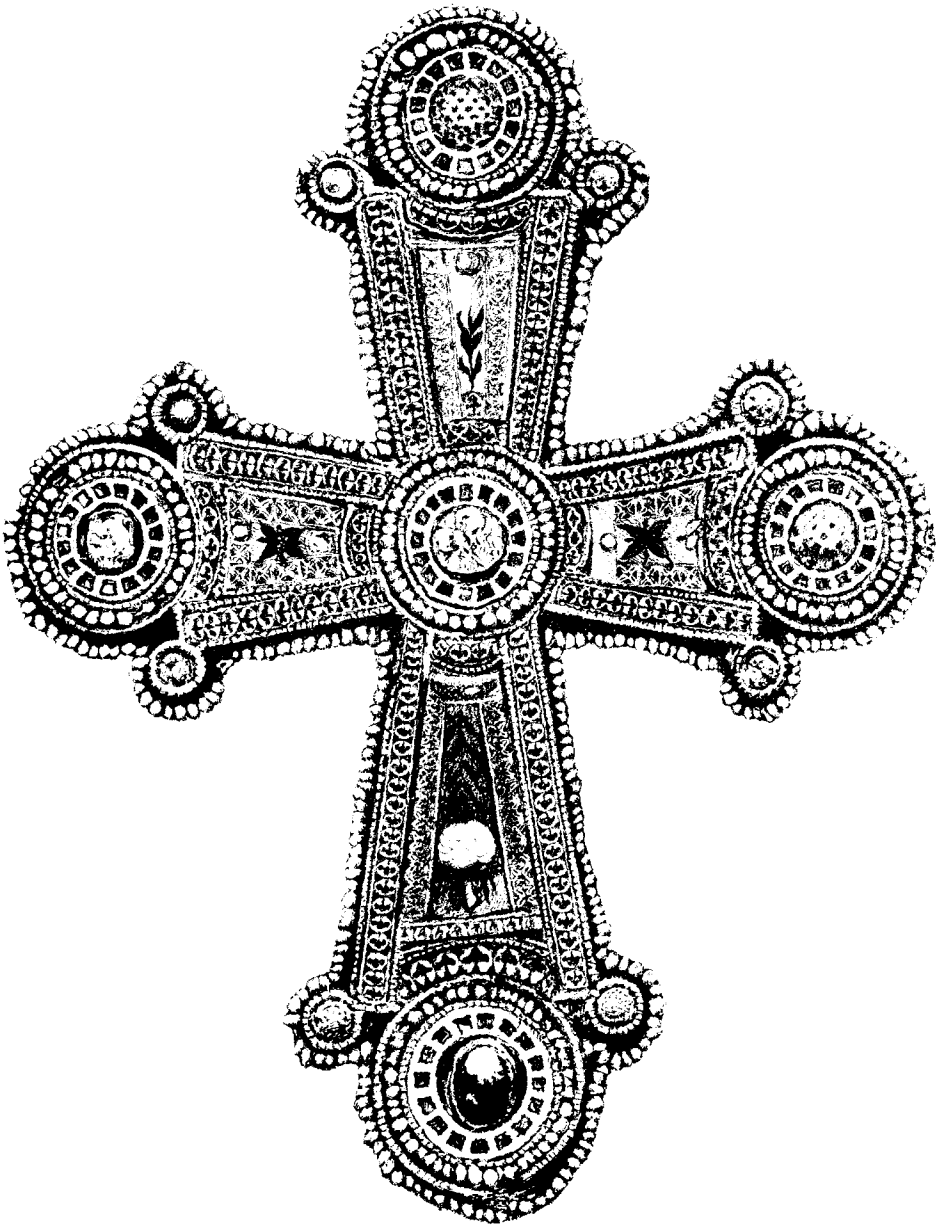
General Potápoff, in the year 1767, was the first to send specimens of silver-lead ore from Ossetia to St. Petersburg, probably from Sadon,[2] which an anonymous writer, to whom I shall have occasion to refer many times in the course of this book, twice mentions as early as in 1781,[3] while Züssermann tells us that in his time[4] the amount of silver won there annually was half a pood (18 lb. Engl.) at a cost of some Rs.150,000, a figure to which even Elizabethan or Paul de

[1] *Djighit* is an untranslatable word. It means one who can perform all sorts of tricks on horseback and is, by implication, a very fine fellow.

[2] Miansaroff, M., *Bibliographia Caucasica et Transcaucasica, opuit*, &c., vol. i, pts. i and ii (all published), St. Petersburg, 1874–6. The present reference is to p. 601.

[3] *Tagebuch*, 1781, pp. 78, 123. For author and full title see Bibliography.

[4] *Dvadtsat pyat lyet na Kavkazie*, 1842–67, A. L. Züssermann, vol. i, 1842–51, vol. ii, 1851–6, both published at St. Petersburg, 1879. Hereafter referred to as 'Züss., *25 years*'; present reference vol. ii, p. 337. But see Bibliography.



Detail from the Khakhouli Icon

see page 44

Lamérie silver at Christie's but recently attained.[1] Later on the ore was treated for zinc as well as lead and silver, and a present-day writer tells us that Sadon is now the only mine producing lead and zinc in the Caucasus.[2]

At the works the Company had a very fine garden and orchard, their russet pears being famous, and deservedly so. We put up at the post-station, a very filthy one, and Ourousbi at once set about getting horses for the morrow, which proved to be a difficult business; but at last, after wading through many streets, ankle-deep in mud, he found a man who had driven him and Frank Medhurst on some occasion—not over the Mamisson, but, I think, prospecting round about—and with him a bargain was struck to provide a *troika* of horses and a trap of some kind to convey us as far as Oni 'if possible', whence post-horses would or should be available for the remaining stages to Koutaïs. His report as to the state of the road was not reassuring, and it seemed at least doubtful that we should get through.

Next morning (Oct. 26th) we made a start at 7.20 a.m. in a dense fog which lasted, in spite of a pretty steep ascent all the way, as far as Ounal, some 20 versts. We then emerged suddenly into a crystal-clear atmosphere with speckless blue sky above us, a not uncommon occurrence in mountain countries—it happened to me once even on Exmoor—but the contrast was more remarkable than on any similar occasion I had so far known, for the fog, pearly grey, lay level as a sea below us, stretching away northward mile beyond mile to a vast distance, with the summits first of the well-wooded lines of the Upper and Lower Cretaceous groups, then of the successive ranges of Tertiary formation, showing as innumerable islands of an infinite variety in size and contour, above it, while southwards rose the dark crags and snow-peaks of the Kaltber.

I regretted having missed seeing the Nakhas narrows through the cretaceous rocks,[3] beginning some 8 versts above Alaghir, and the

[1] But on June 13th, 1929, at the Morse Sale, a pair of Charles II plain circular salt-cellars, 1670, brought £90 per oz.; on Apr. 10th, 1930, a James I steeple cup and cover £132 per oz.; on Apr. 30th, 1930, an Elizabethan salt-cellar and cover (1586) £1,600, which works out at about £140 an ounce, and in July of the same year the Wilbraham cup (Elizabethan) made £165 per oz. (*The Times*). In the long run the American millionaire's dollar beat the Russian autocrat's rouble.

[2] Gambashidze, D., *Mineral Resources of Georgia and Caucasia*, 1919 (Engl.).

[3] Déchy, Moritz von, *Kaukasus*, vol. i, p. 23.

cave and high-perched stone-huts of Biso in the limestones (16 v.), the cave, especially, on account of the legend connected with it, which I have named

The Robber's Friend.

The Ossetines believed that even highway robbery, which was, so to say, a compulsory subject in the curriculum of every boy's education, had its patron-saint, Sau-baredji Dzouar, 'the Saint of the Black Horseman'. This Saint, or his wraith perhaps, if duly propitiated, would ride in front of the robber on his raven-black steed and see that no harm befell him. If, however, the adventurer came back empty-handed it would be said at home that the Saint, for good and sufficient reason doubtless, had refused his aid. If, worse still, he fell into the hands of his intended victims and was, perhaps, even killed, people would attribute this in fear and trembling to the wrath of the Black-rider's Saint. Yet the way to propitiate the latter was simple enough. A woman of the household, wife or other, being warned of what was intended, had only to prepare certain very special little cakes and when they were ready take one of them in her hand, and casting her eyes up to Heaven, implore Sau-baredji Dzouar's favour for husband, son, or brother, as the case might be, to secure it—if only the raider himself proved not unworthy!

His abiding place was the cavern at Biso visible from the Mamisson road to this day—but not in a fog![1]—Why 'the saint of the Black Horseman' and not 'the Black Horseman Saint' I cannot quite understand, unless, as Pfaff thought, 'wraith' is meant. In the little church at Nouzal, Professor Bakradze, according to Countess Ouvároff, managed to make out, with difficulty, the name 'Souareg' under the fresco of St. George, and Professor Vs. Miller suggested an identification with Sau-Baredji.[2] St. George, of course, as a Christian saint, rode a white or grey horse, but in the above legend the colour of his mount may have been purposely changed to suit his calling. I well remember seeing Oscar Wilde in Rotten Row in the middle 'eighties, beautifully dressed from head to toe in hat, clothes, and boots of one uncommon shade of brown, *on a horse to match!* He, too, was a God,

[1] Shanayeff, 'Ossetine Popular Tales', *Gor.*, vol. iii, p. 29.
[2] *Poutevuia Zamietki*, vol. i, p. 44.

or hierophant at least—of Aestheticism. In Morocco[1] the Sultan rode a milk-white horse when his temper was unruffled, a black one when displeased. The most famous breeds of the Greeks were the Thessalian, mainly white, and the Thracian, wholly so, the coursers of King Rhesos being 'whiter than snow and for speed like the winds'.[2] Yet Virgil, in a well-known passage, calls white and dun the worst colours for horses;[3] and the black horse, in later times at least, had many virtues, above all that of averting the Evil Eye.[4] The Abkhazians, by the way, have a special god to care for their dogs, called 'Alishkinte'. 'Evil spirits fear dogs, especially black dogs, and the Ossetines will call an ailing child "black dog" so that such spirits may cease to trouble it.'[5] That the 'Black Horseman' of Biso really represented St. George will I think be apparent from a further identification I make later on.[6]

Emerging from the first narrows—as Ourousbi told me: I could see nothing myself—our nostrils had been assailed by the unmistakable stench of sulphuretted hydrogen. A little farther on, riding near the river's brink, I could just make out where a greenish-yellow torrent of sulphur water, coming in on the opposite—eastern—bank, ran some little way in a parallel channel, then mingled its turbid waters with those of the Ar-don. Reading, subsequently, Pliny's description of the 'Caucasian Gates' I was struck by its applicability to the Ar-don. I do not suggest that he meant that river, or anything but the Terek, but I do think that the accounts of the two had in his time become mixed. This is what he writes: 'Beyond them [the Sodii] are the Caucasian Gates which many, mistakenly, call Caspian —an astonishing natural feature, resulting from a sudden cleavage of the mountains. The passage itself is barred by beams sheathed in iron; below, in the midst runs a stinking river, and on one cliff, on

[1] Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief*, &c., vol. ii, p. 18, quoting Mrs. Banks, *A Memoir of Sir John Drummond Hay*, p. 216 sq. [2] *Iliad*, x. [3] *Georgics*, bk. iii, l. 81.

[4] Westermarck, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 98. Yet a very great authority attributes to him one unpardonable fault—he cannot be depended upon to win a race! *The Times*, 'Racing', Apr. 29th, 1931. But he was wrong as to Hyperion's four white feet! At the time of Timur's extravagant grief at the death of his favourite grandson, Mirza Muhammad Sultan, his men abstained, unbidden, from mounting white or grey horses. *Petis de la Croix*, vol. iv, p. 71.

[5] *Bulletin Kavk. Ist.-Arkh. Instituta*, No. 5, p. 19. [6] See vol. ii, p. 133.

this side of the gates, is the small fort called Cumania, built to bar the way to innumerable nations. So that, here, exactly opposite the Iberian town of Harmastis one whole portion of the world is separated from the other by gates.'[1]

Now, the nearest 'gates' to my sulphur-water are those known in Russian as *Batskia-voróta*, 'gates of Bat', from a neighbouring village 'Bat'. They are situated 27 versts upstream from Alaghir, 17 versts above the sulphur stream. Ten versts higher still are the better-known 'crooked gates' (in *Oss.* Zilin-douar—note the identity of the latter word with the 'Dar' in Dariel, 'Der' in Derbend, our 'door'), of which Vakhusht in the eighteenth century wrote: 'Here there is a gate [*dour*] of cemented stones with a great arch spanning the river, and built by the Kings of Georgia to prevent the Ossetines coming to this [Georgian] side of the country [or mountains] without permission.'[2] It is probable, at least, that these narrows of the Ar-don were gated and guarded from time immemorial, though, in the nature of things, this route was less liable to be chosen by invaders from the North than the Dariel and one or two others.

At Ounal the Ar-don is spanned by a wooden bridge leading to the three *aouls* of that name and on over the Korá Pass, eastward, through Ossetia proper, to Sanibá and the Georgian road. We lunched in the open, 2 versts above the bridge, keeping—as we did all the way from Alaghir to Nouzal—to the left bank of the river. It was now, as we sat and smoked after eating, that Ourousbi first mooted his great idea of a ride from the Caspian to the Black Sea between the Black Mountains and the White, so called; that is to say between the dark schistose rocks flanking the Central granites, or in Daghestan completely covering them, and the great wall of the Jurassic limestones which on the northern side forms in the centre of the Range perhaps its most remarkable—though not, of course, most beautiful

[1] *Hist. Nat.* vi. 12 (11). As to Harmastis, 'the ancient town of Armaz (2nd-1st cent. B.C.) was situated on the narrow, flat strip of land on the right bank of the river Koura, where are now the railway station of Mtskhet and the summer-residential (*datchnoe*) quarter SW. of it. This district extends eastward approximately to the old bridge of Mtskhet and westward to the little river Armazis-Khev-i.' *Bulletin, Kavk. Ist.-Arkh. Inst.*, Nos. 1–3, p. 7 (referring to a Report dated July 13th, 1927). Mr. W. E. D. Allen writes that 'Harmastis' is derived from Ormuzd (Georgian 'Armazi'). It has been wrongly located by European writers near Akhaltsikh and elsewhere. 'Opposite' here equals, accidentally, 'on the same meridian as'.

[2] *Description géographique de la Géorgie*, &c. (Brosset), 1842.

—feature. For a line of snowy mountains, however superb, is less rare than a battlemented wall from 9,000 to 12,000 feet high, decked lavishly with turret, keep, and bastion, abrupt on one side—the south—for its upper 4,000 feet or so, steeply sloping on the other, with chasms through it at long intervals only wherein the few rivers or torrents fed by the snows of the Central or Side Chains flow northward to turn eventually left or right to the Black Sea or the Caspian. The *tour* and the 'Eternal' snows were, so Ourousbi said, confined to the schists, granites, and eruptive rocks. On the limestones there were neither *tour* nor, in summer, a patch of snow. The limestones were forested, chiefly on the north side, with deciduous trees—beech predominating; the higher ranges, up to the snow-line or near it, with, for the most part, stunted birch and conifers. The flora was differentiated in like manner and not less strikingly. As to colour I should, perhaps, have said sooner that 'Black' in this connexion includes all the darker tints of brown and green, 'White' the light greens, yellow and reddish greys, and even a fairly deep red, all these of the Jurassic limestones, which, indeed, in some places are known as 'The Red Mountains'. Between these lines of 'Black' and 'White' is a narrow trough, or succession of transverse valleys—divided from each other by cols or passes—the hollows ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 feet above sea-level, the passes from 5,000 to 8,000 feet. Along all these from the Assá, at least, to west of Kazbek, and some say as far as the Astouli pass, runs a still narrower belt of (?) palaeozoic schists, giving increased fertility.[1] It is these valleys that, for the most part, the mountain tribes inhabit. Here, through the ages, safeguarded no less by the poverty of the soil—or rather the exiguous amount of good soil available—and harshness of the climate than by the natural inaccessibility of the country, countless remnants of vanquished nations, as we used to say, or people of one or two great races as now appears more probable, found refuge or grew up in comparative security. Here, as innumerable archaeological remains attest, heathen peoples dwelt from the Late Bronze Age, at least,[2] till

[1] See the maps in *Tchrez glavni Kavkazski khrebet* ('Across the Caucasian Main Chain, &c.'), A. A. Inostrantseff, St. Petersburg, 1896; and in *Recherches géologiques dans la partie centrale de la chaîne du Caucase*, par Ernest Favre, in *Neue Denkschriften* (see Bibliography for full title), Zürich, 1876.

[2] Of Stone Age man little is known. The dolmen culture of the northern Caucasus is of the Early Bronze Age (A. M. Tallgren, *Antiquity*, June 1933, p. 196).

the introduction of Christianity in the thirteenth century or possibly much earlier, to be overrun yet not overwhelmed by successive waves of Khazar and Arab, Persian and Turk, Mongol and Tartar—Islam in Daghestan being permanently established as early as the ninth century. The mountain tribes were none of these, and who they were and are we know not—with one exception, the Ossetines, to whom may confidently be ascribed, though in matters of race nothing is absolutely certain, a Median descent; they alone being racially, so far as we can tell, what we call, or used to call, Indo-Europeans or Aryans. For the rest, Professor Marr propounds a theory of 'Japhetic' origin which, in western Europe at least, has so far met with scant approval—though since none other holds the field or even challenges attention, it should, surely, be given a patient hearing.

I speak of the northern Caucasus only, for that is all that I have undertaken to deal with; and it will I think be acknowledged that the human interest there, and not least in the valleys and defiles of Ourousbi's 'line', is great indeed. Much has been written about the tribes from various points of view, much more, undoubtedly, will be written; and some day, perhaps, the varied problems they present will be elucidated more or less satisfactorily. Meantime my own modest contribution may serve to attract attention in a greater degree than heretofore to countries and peoples beyond all question worthy of it. That, at least, is my hope and desire.

I adopted Ourousbi's idea with enthusiasm. From this first mention of it on the roadside above the bridge of Ounal it was seldom, I may say, altogether out of my thoughts; but my time was not my own to dispose of save now and again for not many days in succession. The whole project included a final plunge down the Kodor valley to Soukhoum on the Euxine, and this remains, and must remain, a dream—my one attempt was baffled by unusually early snow—yet but for the War and Revolution it might and I think would have been accomplished. As it is, I rode on, bit by bit, from the Caspian Sea to the Tcheghem river, besides covering much of the country north and south of our chosen line, and, excepting only on the Ami expedition in the spring of 1901, Ourousbi went with me all the way. A better companion I could not have had, I could not, indeed, have wished for.

We drove on, and, presently, where there was barely room for the road between rock and river, we met—the only time on this journey of 150 miles from Alaghir to Koutaïs—another *troika*, an empty one; and, as four horses at most could be squeezed together abreast without risk of disaster, each driver unharnessed his near *pristiazhka* or 'galloper', talking volubly and impartially the while to each other, to us, and to their teams, for, were they not Russians? We heard no good news of the pass, but, as the newcomer hailed from Sadon only, his information was not of much account.

Of Ounal and neighbouring places, such as Kholst, Djimee, Arkhon and Mizour, I shall have more to say later, as also of the beautiful defile between the Sadon torrent and Nouzal, of Nouzal itself, and of the Tsei valley and Rekom shrine, not omitting the Kasára gorge with its 'crooked gates' and up as far as Lower Zramag;[1] for I passed this way again three years later and stopped longer on the road. From Zramag to the pass the scenery is comparatively dull and colourless. We reached the SE. shelter (*kazarma*, 'barrack'), 9 versts short of the summit, at 6 p.m. by the light of a nearly full moon, the weather being perfect, to learn that not far beyond this point the road was blocked with avalanche snow; horses might get through, but assuredly nothing on wheels. So, at the village just below us—Lisri—we arranged for three horses to come next day at 5 a.m., one each for Ourousbi and myself, the other, with pack-saddle, for our luggage. The owners, or other persons responsible for the animals, would walk, our Alaghir *troika* go home. This settled, we took possession of the shelter which contained one good room, 30 by 20 ft., with a 7-foot sleeping-bench or counter running all along two of the walls, much as I found usual in Manchurian inns a dozen years later, but without the excellent heating system of the Chinese. However, there was a Russian stove in one corner and the room was warm enough. There was also a *samovar*, so with our own tea, bread, and tinned provisions we made a sufficient meal, gathering information meantime from our new friends of Lisri, or perhaps Kalaki. Two of these with Ourousbi and myself had a 30-foot bench between us, and with my own blanket and pillow, and plenty of clean hay, I slept very well, untroubled by the many mice that ran about all over us.

[1] Or Zaramag as on Map I. See pp. 168–72.

We were up at five o'clock next morning and set off by brilliant starlight, with several degrees of frost, Ourousbi on one horse, I on another, the baggage on a third, and the owners on foot, as arranged; but the horses were miserable creatures, and the saddles excruciating, so, after a few minutes only, I dismounted and took to my own legs, trudging knee-deep through the snow. A notice-board at the top of the pass gave the height as 9,400 feet, but it should have been 9,282. The distances were given as 73 versts from Alaghir, 153 on to Koutaïs, and these, no doubt, were correct. I spent some time admiring and photographing the southern peaks and glaciers of the Adai-khokh group, of which Tchantchakhi-khokh (14,600 ft.) from our view-point hid Adai-khokh itself (Uilpata, 15,244 ft.).[1]

Having now brought my readers to the summit of the pass with Ratcha spread before them, I will profit by the occasion to correct an historical error of some magnitude, and explain a topographical puzzle, both concerning the Mamisson road, though in 1898 I knew nothing of either.

Dubois de Montpéreux, usually a careful writer, says, 'Le célèbre Heraclius, roi de Géorgie, avait obtenu des secours de la Russie contre les Turcs; le général Totleben, traversant les Alpes caucasiennes du Ratcha, &c.'[2] And again, 'On sait que déjà en 1771 le général Totleben y passa (par le Ratcha) avec le corps de troupe Russe que Catherine II envoyait au secours du roi Salamon'.[3]

The 'Mamisson' is not mentioned but was probably intended, all other passes over 'the Caucasian Alps of Ratcha' being glacier passes. This, however, does not trouble Countess Ouvároff, a much less careful writer, who in her *Travel Notes* says, 'General Todleben's expeditionary force sent by Catherine II to the assistance of Tsar Solomon I of Imeréti went by the road through Ghebi to Digoria in 1771.'[4] Now, to say nothing of the route being reversed—a slip of

[1] First climbed by Holder and Cockin with Ulrich Almer in 1890 from the Karagom *névé* on the west. Again by M. Kovtoradze, of the Russian survey, in 1891, and a third time by Ronchetti's party July 13th, 1913, from the Tseya valley. Signor Ronchetti on this occasion slept on the summit of the mountain, with consequent frost-bite and loss of part of one foot.

[2] Vol. ii, p. 332, of *Voyage autour du Caucase*, 6 vols., Paris, 1839–43; *Atlas*, Neuchâtel, 1840–3.

[3] *Ibid.* ii. 417.

[4] *Poutevuia Zamietki*, vol. iii, p. 22. The statement is repeated in vol. iv, p. 110, of

the pen perhaps—what are we to think of a considerable military force *with guns* crossing, not the Mamisson, but one of the glacier passes to Ghebi? As a matter of fact, Todleben took the Dariel or Cross Pass, as we should expect, his route being certified for us by no less an authority than the Marquis Paulucci, who became Commander-in-Chief in the Caucasus in 1811 after beating 10,000 Turks and Persians at Akhalkalaki with only two Russian battalions. He says: 'Todleben went up the Terek to Kaitchaour and down the Aragva. He had nothing but the beds of those rivers for road and to have got his artillery over them was an astonishing feat.'[1] Paulucci himself in 1812, marching on Akhaltsikh, had by luck the same guide as Todleben and at his instigation built a bridge over the Koura at the very spot where his predecessor had crossed that river.

Todleben's expedition took place in 1769, and Countess Ouvároff's repetition of the date 1771 shows that she took her information from Dubois.

So much for the error; now for the puzzle. I—and doubtless other inquirers—had wondered why in old days the Mamisson route was never mentioned, as were the Dariel, the Resi, and the Khiliak (Kolóta) routes on one side of it, the Digor and Balkar on the other. Thus, when I came to read the *Tagebuch* of 1781, I found the 'Anonymous' writing 'there are three ways . . . that of the Terek, the best known and most used; the middle way [the Khiliak], the least known and longest, but capable of being made the best; and the third, over Digoria, the most dangerous and difficult, but the shortest way of all to Imeréti. None of these is, so far, passable on wheels, but there can be no doubt as to the possibility of making them so, especially the middle one.'[2] Not a word of the Mamisson! But farther on we are let into the secret. 'The Usdon', he tells us, 'comes in two branches from the high rocky mountains that stretch like a wall from the Aradon westward to the Ouroukh [i.e. the limestones]. By a second path across the eastern branch of that river you come to the Walaghir villages Khodo and Nural . . . The

Materiali po Arkheologhii Kavkaza (Archaeological Materials for the Caucasus, collected by the Moscow Arch. Society at Government expense), Moscow, vol. i, 1888–vol. xiv, 1916. Referred to in future as *Mat. po Arkh.*

[1] 'Mémoire sur la frontière de la Russie avec la Perse et la Turquie d'Asie', in vol. v of *Akti sobranniye Kavkazskoyu Arkheographitcheskoyu Kommissieyu*, 12 vols. in 13, Tiflis, 1866–1904. Referred to in future as *Akti.*

[2] *Tagebuch*, p. 73.

way lies over the Rocky wall where the horses can be dragged up after one. Riding part of the way one can get through in half a day. This is the only possible way with horses when the swollen river [the Ar-don] has temporarily closed the narrow valleys.'[1] Now, the first road up the Ar-don was built much later than this, to serve the Sadon mines. Beyond the Sadon turning there was no road at all until many years later still. Even in 1869, as Pfaff tells us, it had only reached the top of the pass and was about to be continued on the other (south) side.[2] It follows that the Ar-don valley with its narrow, steep-sided gorges and defiles was impracticable even for pack animals in former times, except when the water was so low as to allow the use of the river-bed itself as a bridle-path. When the water rose the route was closed altogether, and in such a country it would be apt to rise often, and with dangerous rapidity. The way through Digoria was bad enough, for the passes thence to Imeréti, including the Edena, were all of them glacier passes, but men and pack-animals, sheep and cattle are supposed to have crossed two of them, at least, in summer from time immemorial, and so, too, it was with the Khiliak pass and the Dariel. These three routes, then, are mentioned, but the Mamisson, as a through route from the North, ignored.[3]

Earlier than this there was another reason for not using the Mamisson. In Tolotchanoff's embassy (A.D. 1650) we learn that even the Gourdzivsek Pass, farther west, was closed owing to the hostility of Aristop Svansky, i.e. the Eristoff (*Eris*, in Georgian, 'people's'; *tavi*, 'head') of the Ksan-river district who was the nominee of Rustem, Mussulman (Bagratid) ruler of Kartli from 1634, and of Kakheti also from 1653 till his death in 1658, under the Shah of Persia.[4]

However, in 1688 we find, apparently, the Mamisson in use, for Witsen gives us, on the authority of Dr. Dresschler, a German

[1] *Tagebuch*, p. 93. In the above for Usdon, Aradon, Walaghir, Nural—read Ours-don, Ar-don, Alaghir, Nouzal.

[2] *Sbornik Svedenii o Kavkazie*, vol. i, p. 133; referred to in future as *S.S.o.K.*

[3] Later on (*Tagebuch*, p. 89) when describing the Khiliak route he adds 'another road runs SSW. to northern Imerete *via* Maminson [*sic*] to Chlobi [Ghebi], the most northerly village of the Province of Radsch [Ratcha].' See p. 166.

[4] *Posolstvo stolnika Tolotchanova i diaka Iyevleva v Imeretiu*, 1650–2, M. Poliyevktoff, Tiflis, 1926, pp. 57 and 119. Rustem was no fanatical Islamite, perhaps one under compulsion only, if, as Dubois tells us (i. 424), he rebuilt the dome of the cathedral at Mtskhet which had fallen in 1656. He was, in truth, a legitimate scion of the Kartlian Bagratids, and on his death was succeeded by Wakhtang, Prince of Mukhran.

physician, all the distances the latter travelled in attendance on Artschil[1] that year, between Moscow and Imeréti, and the last section is from Saramago (Zramag) to Meletyn (Imeréti) and on to 'the first town in that country, called Ratziva' (?Ratcha), a distance of 95 versts. This I think might be Nikortsminda, the route lying over the Mamisson. The previous stage is 70 versts, from Degon (?), which on the same assumption would be at the junction of the Ar-don and Terek, say Darg-kokh; but I am guessing, for once, and guessing is always dangerous![2]

A Great Adventure.

Centuries ago, many centuries, a vastly more important personage than Todleben, though he, indeed, had captured Berlin by a *coup de main* in 1762 and five years later, as we have seen, was the first in all history, unless Shah Abbas preceded him,[3] to take guns over the Caucasus, spent years, apparently, in the neighbourhood of the Mamisson Pass or in Digoria, or possibly farther north. This was Leo III, the Isaurian, so called,[4] who was sent on a perilous mission —to incite the Alans against Abkhazia, Lazica, and Iberia—by Justinian II 'cut-nose', who—as Pelias Jason—meant he should never return. He made good friends, however, with the mountaineers, presumably Ossetines, and after hazardous adventures reached home at last, to save Byzantium and Europe from the Saracens, and to become the first great Iconoclast. He was brought down the snow-covered mountains in winter by his native friends on circular snow-shoes, such, probably, as Chardin figures in his frontispiece[5] and Sjögren's Ossetine companions used on the Gezevzek Pass in 1837, 'espèce de raquette' he calls them,[6] and escaped so many perils and

[1] Son of Wakhtang V of Kartli, who was himself for a short time king in Kakheti and Imeréti.

[2] *Noord en Oost Tartarye*, vol. ii, p. 531, of the 1785 enlarged reissue of the rare 2nd edition (1705), the *rarissima* 1st edition being of 1692. [3] See p. 156.

[4] Krumbacher (Karl, *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur*, München, 1891–2, p. 960) writes: 'I use the appellative consecrated by the error of centuries, i.e. Isaurian, although Leo derived from Germankeia, and is therefore a Syrian'—a doubtful correction; see Vasiliev, *Byz. Emp.*, Engl. trs., 1928, vol. i, p. 286.

[5] Ed. 'Londres, 1685'.

[6] *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages*, 1848, vol. ii, p. 292. In N. Marr's *Journal* in Adjaria (see Bibliography), p. 71, is a photograph shown me by Mr. W. E. D. Allen of, *inter alia*, shoe-shaped racquets in present-day use.

so miraculously that, doubtless, the fanatics—who always flourish at either extremity of every great movement or corporate institution, whether social, political, or religious—must have attributed, perhaps even now attribute, his safety, according to their particular leanings, to God or the Devil.

Leo began his great adventure in A.D. 710; how long he remained in the mountains is uncertain—Bury suggests three years—in any case he became Emperor in 717 at the age of 37. The Saracen siege occupied the first year of his reign, ending, as did two subsequent attempts (726, 739), in the enemy's defeat and withdrawal. 'The final blow to this first unfortunate expedition [718] was struck by the Bulgarians, who came from the North and slew, it is said, 22,000 Saracens.'[1]

It is Theophanes the Confessor who tells the story of Leo's escape. 'The Spathary, therefore, with a company of fifty Alani and with the aid of "cyclopes", having overcome the snows of the Caucasian range in the month of May, fell in with the Romans and, filled with joy, cried "Where is the army . . . ?" '.[2]

This mention of Leo III, the Image-breaker, must serve as my excuse, however far-fetched and transparent, for dragging in here

A Gourian Legend of St. George.

Lanchkhouti is a village about 30 versts ESE. of Poti. In the seventeenth century the Lesghians (Daghestanis) whose relations with the Pasha of Akhaltsikh greatly widened their range, raided it and destroyed its only church, which, as usual, was dedicated to St. George.[3] For a long time the people remained churchless, but after

[1] Bury, *Later Roman Empire* (1889 edition only), vol. ii, pp. 376 n., 404.

[2] Stritter (Alan. Cap. iii. 34, p. 349—see Bibliography) has a note 'μετὰ κυκλοποδῶν, Anast. cum cyclopedibus. Cangius in Glossar. "Calcei circulis ferreis [Index vocum mixobarb. Theophani praefixus; uncis ferr.] in soleis muniti, quibus nives montium calcare licet" '. 'Iron hooks' would be more useful for climbing than 'iron circles'. We get away from the racquet form and perhaps nearer to what Theophanes meant in Strabo (xi. 5. 6) where he tells us of the mountaineers who came down to Dioskurias, chiefly to obtain salt, that in summer 'they climbed up over the snow and ice with the help of raw ox-hide soles studded with iron nails and shaped like tambourines. Downhill they glissaded, seated on skins', or perhaps on *bourkas* (see p. 258).

[3] The connexion between the Lesghians and the Turks of Akhaltsikh—to the great detriment of the Georgians—lasted until the capture of that stronghold by Prince Paskiévitch in 1830. See Appendix D.

some years a miraculous occurrence led to the building of a small chapel—they could afford nothing more—not far from the ruins of the church, and consecrated as that was to the Warrior-saint. What happened was this. From time immemorial a huge oak-tree had stood and flourished near that spot, and one day when several of the villagers were gathered, as their custom was, to gossip and rest in its noon-tide shade, they were astonished to hear high up overhead a noise such as none of them had ever heard before—a chittering sound of which the chief characteristic was its rapid and uninterrupted repetition. Now some one, surely, must be there to make it, away up amongst the topmost branches? So, at least, thought the villagers, and, their curiosity being roused, they determined to probe the mystery to the bottom—to the top, rather—and to that end deputed one of their number to climb the tree. Then another strange thing happened. Man after man made the attempt, but not one could get more than half-way up, though the abundance of branches should have made climbing easy. *An unknown Power hindered them!* So they applied to a very holy monk of the Tsintsadze family, who, having first made prayer to God, climbed the tree without difficulty and there found, hidden in the leafage, a silver icon of St. George with which he soon reached ground in safety. Then, in honour of the Saint, a chapel was built, as stated, and the icon lodged within it. The villagers rejoiced, but next day their complacency suffered a shock. The icon had disappeared and only after long searching was it found again in its former resting-place, the oak. The monk brought it down a second time, another and finer chapel was built, but again the same thing happened. There was evidently only one way out of it—the tree must be felled and the chapel re-erected on its site. This was done, the Saint seemed satisfied at last, and this third shrine endured until replaced not long since by a larger and finer one still—but, alas, minus what should have been its chief boast and glory. For, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a party of Abkhaz raiders sacked Lanchkhouti as the Lesghians had done before them, but being pious men though robbers, and Christians to boot, carried off the precious icon to their own famous shrine Ilori, some 50 miles NNW. on the Black Sea coast, where it should be, but I fear is not, to-day. It must not be thought, however, that the people of Lanchkhouti forgot their treasure. Each year without fail, as St. George's

Day came round, they made pilgrimage to Ilori, venerated there the holy image, and sacrificed a fat ox to it![1]

The points of resemblance between this story and that of Lampedusa, near San Remo, are obvious; but it was a certain quaint instance of present-day superstition told me at my brother's house in Painswick that suggested a meaning for the sound heard in Gouria centuries back. With that in mind I sent him my story and had this in reply:

'Yes, L— J—, our Pembrokeshire parlour-maid, regarded the smaller-spotted-woodpecker as "the old gentleman" himself, and feared he might come down the chimney into her pantry from the *Robinia pseudacacia* in whose boughs the bird produced his weird crunchings. Your story of the icon, however, strongly suggests the tricks of the magpie and jackdaw, who carry all manner of things to their nests, especially the former, which has also a queer rattle-like note and is captivated by any shining object.[2] I seem to recollect that the Della Quercia family took name from a sacred oak-tree in which, according to one tradition, was found, or as they put it "appeared", the Madonna, or a picture of her. And you will recollect how Don Garcia Ximenes when urged to free Navarre from the Moorish yoke saw a luminous Cross above an oak-tree, adored by little angels, and took it as a presage of victory.[3] Quite possibly yours had been a pagan-oak, adored by local natives, that the priests had exorcised by placing in its boughs an icon of St. George.'

[1] Paraphrased somewhat freely from D. Kereselidze's version in *Mat.* xxii, pp. 226–7, 1897.

[2] Chaucer, indeed, speaks of the magpie's 'chitteryng', but I prefer to think our bird a woodpecker. The 'drumming' of the greater-spotted-woodpecker (chiefly) was the subject of much controversy in the columns of *The Times* in 1929, some writers maintaining that the sound was produced by the beak only, others by the beak and the vocal chords combined. 'Drumming' is too heavy a word for the noise produced, which I have imitated successfully by dragging a sheaf of paper, with the points of a largish-sized brass fastener projecting, across a hard-grained wooden table. I hit upon this method accidentally half an hour after hearing the bird in the Parks at Oxford, and the paper contained the above story of Lanchkhouti, to perfect which, the tree should evidently have been an *Ailanthus*, specimens of which grow in those same Parks. The dispute has since been renewed with vigour by Prof. Huxley, Mr. Eric Parker, and others in the columns of *The Times*, but so far without definite result.

[3] A very similar story is that of a miraculous icon of the Virgin of Pechora which when sent for to cure the blindness of Prince Roman Mikhailovitch of Tchernigoff disappeared, and was found up an oak-tree near the Tower of Briansk. In this case, too, trees were cut down and a church built with them to contain the icon. Novikoff, *Drev. Russk. Vivlioteka*, vol. xix, pp. 284–92.

To those who object to having their miracles explained away I would point out that if St. George did, on this occasion, make use of a weird *natural* sound for his purpose instead of some *super*-natural tromboning or trumpeting, the performance was in reality no less miraculous and certainly much less alarming. It is a chief merit of Caucasian saints that, often enough, they are so ready to meet their humblest votaries on their own merely human level.

The cutting down of the tree, which rather shocks one in the story, was in all probability reminiscent of an actual occurrence. Tree-worship was widely spread in the Caucasus, and the readiest way to put an end to the cult, when it could safely be applied, was to demolish its object. There are many instances on record. The Cross was first set up in the Caucasus by St. Andrew, where, between Koutaïs and Zugdidi, the Martvili Monastery now stands, on the very spot where he had just with his own hands cut down a huge old oak he had found the natives worshipping—the two occasions bridge, between them, seventeen centuries or more! And in my own time Hadji Abayeff cut down a sacred tree in Balkaria.

The sacrifice of an ox in the church of St. George at Ilori was a miraculous affair in which, we may suppose, the pilgrims from Lanchkhouti played but a subordinate part; for both Lamberti and Zampi have the story, the latter in greater detail—likewise Chardin—long before the supposed date of the Abkhaz raid on Lanchkhouti. Ilori was then in Mingrelia, and Zampi tells us that on the eve of St. George's Day (Oct. 21st, o.s.) the Prince of that country, accompanied by the Catholicos, the bishops, and all the nobility, came to Ilori, entered the church to see that no beast was hidden there, then left it, closed the door, and affixed his seal. Next day, with the whole of his company, he revisited the church, made sure that the seal was intact, opened the door—and found within, unfailingly, a fine fat ox which had been stolen in the night from some neighbouring farmer by no less a personage (said the priests) than St. George himself, and miraculously introduced by him into the sacred building. The creature thus highly honoured having been led outside the church and slaughtered, the first helping of flesh went to the Prince, the second and third by express couriers to the King of Imeréti and the Prince of Gouria. Then came the turn of the nobles, Crown ministers and others, many of whom ate their portions on the spot *as*

if it were the bread of the Communion, which maybe, indeed, it grossly represented. Others salted and preserved their share for use in time of sickness.[1] Here, as so often in the Caucasus, we have pagan perversions of Christian beliefs and rites which themselves derived from paganism. Sir James Frazer has told us how if a certain custom 'is correctly reported (and analogy is all in its favour) the Christian communion has absorbed within itself a sacrament which is doubtless far older than Christianity.'[2]

I have been unable to verify the existence of an icon of St. George at Ilori directly connected either with Lanchkhouti or the ox-legend, though one scene in the large icon (1647) at Ilori of the miracles of that Saint shows him 'bringing to life again the bull or ox of Matchimentioz'.[3] And in the old church at Zugdidi there is (or was) a silver triptych, the middle compartment of which has 'St. George of Ilori standing, in Roman dress, drawing his sword from its scabbard preparatory to slaying an ox' which is shown in small at his feet, the date of the work, which is wholly Georgian, being *c.* 1572–82.[4]

The Mamisson, or Ossetine Military Road, taking Alaghir as the starting-point, has a general direction SW. by W., though from Zramag to Glola, where it meets the Rion, it runs from E. to W. with

[1] *Relation de la Colchide et de la Mingrellie*, par le Dom Joseph Marie Zampi, Missionaire en la Colchide, *Recueil de Voyages au Nord* &c., t. vii, p. 294; Amsterdam, 1725. This is preceded immediately by *Relation de la Colchide ou Mingrellie*, par le P. Archange Lamberti. Miss Durham tells of a pagan rite [swearing blood-brotherhood] transformed into a parody of the Communion (*Some Tribal Origins*, &c., 1928, p. 157). The Theatines had, of course, Christian observance in mind, but the conjunction of a communion service with bull-slaughter is infallibly reminiscent of Mithras; and Reineggs (*Description of Mount Caucasus*, Engl. trans., 1807, vol. i, pp. 331, 332; Germ. original, vol. ii, p. 12) tells of an Abkhasian festival the chief feature of which was the ceremonial slaughter of a white ox called Ogginn *in a cavern* of the same name. The italics are mine; the cavern was, of course, a main feature in Mithraic worship.

There is a whole chapter (xv, pp. 475–560) on the Theatine Mission, with many seventeenth-century drawings by one of them, Castelli, reproduced, in Tamarati (Michel), *L'Église Géorgienne des origines jusqu'à nos jours*, Rome, 1910. See, too, W. E. D. Allen's *Hist. of the Georgian People* and for many reproductions.

[2] *G.B.* (abr. ed.), p. 481.

[3] *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. iii, p. 20 and Pl. X.

[4] Takaishvili, in *Izv. Kavk. Istor.-Arkh. Instit.*, t. ii, 1917–25, Leningrad, 1927. He suggests that this sacrifice of a bull or ox derives from a pagan cult reflected in the bull's head on the coins of Colchis. There is a small cut of this triptych in Mourier's *La Mingrélie*, 1883, a larger one in his *L'Art au Caucase*, 1912, p. 176. According to Doubrovin (*Ist. voini*, &c., vol. i, 2, p. 17) the Ilori miracle last occurred in 1851.

a bend N. at the Pass; the whole Range of the Caucasus from Anapa to Baku runs ESE., so that, roughly, the Mamisson lies at right angles to it, whereas the Georgian road from Vladikavkaz to Mtskhet near Tiflis, where it strikes the Koura, runs due S. In general terms, one side of the whole Range faces NE., the other SW. and, as many people think, or thought, if one side is in Europe, the other is in Asia.

The Asian Boundary.

Now, it was on the Mamisson that I first began to be troubled by the question—where, in those meridians, did Europe end and Asia begin, and this for a purely practical reason. My insurance policy, an American one, contained a clause barring Asia absolutely from its field of operations. If I died in Europe my heirs would benefit to the amount of the policy, if I died in Asia they would get not one penny. Obviously, it would be well to know, if possible, in geographical terms, precisely what this meant. I thought at first that there could be no difficulty about it, but I was very much mistaken. The ancients, I knew, held the Tanais (Don) to be the boundary between the two continents, but as they had no precise idea of where that river rose or in what direction it flowed, in its upper course at least, the limit was a vague one. Nor did Aeschylus help much, who, as 'the learned Dr. Falconer' tells us, 'in the tragedy of *Prometheus Delivered*, makes the Phasis the boundary between Europe and Asia.[1] He there introduces the Titans speaking thus to Prometheus: "Hither are we come to see thy labours, O Prometheus! and the sufferings which thou undergoest in consequence of thy bonds": and in specifying how large a space of ground they had passed over in their journey, they speak of the Phasis—here, no doubt, the Araxes—as "the twin-born offspring of the Earth, and the great boundary of Europe and Asia"'.

Coming to modern times there was the line of the Manitch depression, running eastward from the head of the Sea of Azov, through which the Black Sea and Caspian once joined waters. This put the whole of the Caucasus, administratively as well as geographically, in Asia, and I should enter it at my peril. South of the mountains the line of the Rion (Phasis) and Koura, though it looked well enough on the map and would, if adopted, suit my own predicament admirably, had little else to recommend it. In between was the physically

[1] *Arrian's Voyage*, Oxford, 1805, p. 15.

perfect boundary offered by the watershed of the Main Range, which runs, as stated, ESE. in, practically, one straight line all the way from opposite Kertch to near Baku, a distance of 700 miles. But if this were accepted it might depend, when crossing a razor-edged pass and losing my foothold, upon whether I slipped down one side or the other, who would get or keep the sum insured! Conceivably, I might die straddling the watershed, and what then? But to be serious.

In our own day the Manitch as the dividing line between Europe and Asia, from the Sea of Azov to the Caspian, is adopted by, amongst others, the Royal Geographical Society, and in my opinion rightly. For them a line is a necessity, if only for cataloguing purposes, and the Manitch is the best line that offers. On the other hand, the watershed, in the days I write of, was, to the best of my belief, accepted in the Caucasus generally, and beyond doubt by the school authorities in the Transcaucasus.[1]

Personally, however, I would none of it! To be told that Novorossisk or Soukhoum Kalé was in Asia, Petrovsk or Derbend in Europe, was more than I could stomach; while to hear the Georgians assigned to Asia, the Tchetchens, Daghestanis, Koumuiks, &c., to Europe, seemed not less unnatural.

Dr. Freshfield, indeed, with whom no one, of course, could differ on such a matter without hesitation, declares that 'a wall is always preferable to a ditch', but it depends, surely, to some extent on circumstance, in this case on direction. If the Caucasus ran SW. from, say, Astrakhan on the Caspian to the mouth of the Rion, no question could ever have arisen. That it runs ESE. and a bit S. from opposite Kertch to Baku makes all the difference.

Admitting, then, the line of the Manitch as a useful convention, the question arises—need we do more? I think not, for on looking into the matter I find that not only does Eustathius, a twelfth-century commentator on Dionysius Periegetes, inform us that, contrary to the latter's opinion, 'Others maintain that the boundary between Asia and Europe is formed by a huge and wide isthmus between the Caspian and Euxine seas, where, amongst other things,

[1] See a narrative of the crossing of the Rok and Mamisson passes in *Mat.*, vol. xx, by a party including N. Dmitrieff, Inspector of Schools in the Government of Koutaïs, Professor C. von Hahn, five school-masters, and three pupils.

is the well-known Caucasus of Prometheus and the eastern territory of the Iberians, between Colchis and Albania', but that in this twentieth century of ours 'the official Russian geography, which is most immediately concerned in the matter, waiving all decision, counts the Caucasian territories as belonging neither to Asia nor to Europe'.[1] Wherefore, for my part, while accepting, officially, the Manitch as the best possible conventional line, privately and personally I look upon the whole of the Caucasus as an independent portion of the globe's land surface, belonging neither to this continent nor to that, and this agrees perfectly with the dictum contained in the last lines of one of the latest books on the Caucasus I have come across: 'The Mountain-men are not Europeans, not Asiatics—they are Caucasians.'[2]

To come back to the Mamisson; the direction of the road for the 5 versts or so from Kalaki to a little short of the summit is due north and that of the pass itself nearly so. Then come zigzags for a verst and a half (1 mile) due west as the crow flies, or 4 versts by the road, to another shelter which had been done up on the occasion of the Empress Marie's visit with her son George, in what year I forget, but they were said to have slept there. I ran down so far on crusted snow, that just took the impress of my heels. Here we procured a small *arba* to which, after paying off the other two horses, we harnessed the pack-horse, putting the luggage inside. Walking was Ourousbi's weak point—he had suffered much from malaria—so he drove, but I, except on the rare occasions when we came to a level bit of road, walked all the way to Oni, just 30 miles. The weather continued perfect, the autumn tints, gold and russet and scarlet, with the burnished copper of the beeches and the silver of birch trunks in between, made a glory of the deciduous trees that succeeded the dark forests of spruce and pine, through which the snows above still gleamed as we followed on down the foaming Tchantchakhi torrent to its junction with the Rion.

The scenery was indeed beautiful; but having set the Main Chain as the Southern limit of this work I must resist all temptation to write of my journeys on the far side of the watershed. Suffice it to say that we slept well at Oni and next day (Oct. 28th) went on to

[1] Merzbacher, in a learned note on the subject, *Kaukasus*, vol. i, pp. 593, 594.
[2] Essad-bey, *Zwölf Geheimnisse im Kaukasus*, Berlin/Zurich, 1930.

the capital of Imeréti through an enchanting country, driving some stages post, some with horses privately hired, all without exception being most miserable creatures, the only blot, but a dark one, on an otherwise wholly pleasurable experience.

It was a wonderful relief next morning (Oct. 29th) to be drawn at racing pace, almost, by four splendid horses, harnessed abreast to a luxurious phaeton, over the 8 versts or so separating Koutaïs from the celebrated monastery of Ghelati, more properly Gaënat; where, unfortunately, I was unable to examine the treasures it contained, and, above all, the Khakhouli Madonna,[1] because of a thanksgiving service of inordinate length that was being held in commemoration of the Borki accident already mentioned.[2] We went on to Tiflis the same day, and the following morning I had the delightful experience of introducing Ourousbi to Dr. Radde's Museum, where we spent two very profitable hours, in spite of the progressive deterioration of the exhibits. They were now in a far worse state than ten years previously, and in 1901 I had to write regretfully:

'Reaching Tiflis by train from Vladikavkaz on October 31st, early, I put up at the Hotel Orient and spent the morning in Radde's museum. I found the state of things very much worse than in 1888, and even than in 1898. Most of the stuffed birds and beasts were horrible mockeries; all those in the open were covered with dust and in a decaying condition—most lamentable! Those in glass-cases were better, but they had been badly stuffed to begin with and the names were often invisible or illegible. Again, the very interesting ethnological groups were as bad as the birds and beasts; and why have specimen carpets on the floor for every one to walk upon?'

At midnight I took train for Baku, leaving Ourousbi to make his way home over the Georgian road.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.—*The Khakhouli Madonna*, a work of marvellous richness and beauty, was, until recently—perhaps still is—the chief treasure of the Gaënat (Ghelati) Monastery, some 8 versts NE. of Koutaïs, which was founded probably by David II (1089–1125).[3] Richly endowed from the first, the wealth of this foundation was

[1] See Supplementary Note. [2] See *ante*, p. 2.

[3] *Gaënatski Monastir*, &c., D. V. Gambashidze, 3rd ed., Koutaïs, 1896. The author declares that Ghelati is a word without meaning, while Brosset rejects, equally,

increased as years went by and more and more icons, crosses, reliquaries and such-like works of religious art were donated anew, or transferred to it for safety's sake, as from Abkhazia on the occasion of the abolition of the Pitsounda patriarchate, or from other parts of the Georgian kingdom in days when invasion threatened from Persia or Turkey. Thus in the first half of the sixteenth century Bagrat III of Imeréti brought this Khakhouli Madonna to Gaënat from the shrine and monastery built to contain it (?) by that same 'Restorer' David near Tortoum on the river of that name, a tributary of the Tchorokh, what time Akhaltsikh with its whole district was in Turkish possession until the Russians took it in 1829.

The icon is in form a triptych, 1·45 m. high by exactly 2 m. wide. As seen and described by Tolotchanoff in A.D. 1650 it included the original picture of the Virgin attributed to St. Luke, but this disappeared in comparatively modern times, and was replaced by a copy made in Moscow. The precious stones adorning it that had excited the Russian envoy's admiration were stolen in 1859. Its more precious enamels, on gold, Byzantine work of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, survived—many of them at least—until the recent troubles and it may be hoped do still. Kondakóff in his book on Georgian Church antiquities[1] gives a full description of the triptych, with many illustrations, but omits one historical fact connected with it of very great interest, namely, that, as stated in a contemporary verse inscription, Queen Tamára, in A.D. 1203, made offerings to it of certain ear-rings together with the standard captured by her second husband, David Soslan, from the Seljuk Sultan Abubekr at the battle of Shamkhor.

Mourier tells us that the inscriptions on it prove that it continued to be adorned and embellished during many centuries. 'Parmi les pierreries qui ornent les fonds et qui avaient des noms spéciaux, il y a seize sceaux royaux différents, avec légendes arabes, coufiques et géorgiennes. Des trente-deux anciens émaux cloisonnés qui garnissent le panneau central et les vantaux (les cinquante-huit autres sont plus modernes et ont remplacé ceux qui ont été perdus ou volés), il

Gaënat (Gaénath), in favour of Génath. In any case, the derivation is from γενεθλιακόν, the monastery being consecrated to the Nativity of the Virgin.

[1] *Opis pamiatnikoff drevnosti v niekotorikh khramakh i monastiriakh Grouzii*, St. Petersburg, 1890. By N. Kondakóff (the Inscriptions interpreted by D. Bakradze).

y a un remarquable. On y voit un Christ en croix vêtu de la robe sans couture, le χιτών. Il y a une quinzaine d'années le revêtement en or de la vierge du cadre intérieur, qui avait des miniatures historiques fort intéressantes et était constellé de pierres précieuses, a été volé, et c'est à Moscou qu'on a fait refaire le nouveau qui ne peut être comparé à l'ancien. Ce grand triptyque, en argent doré, repoussé et ciselé, mesurant 2 m. de large sur 1 m. 50 c. de haut, est, comme finesse de dessin et de travail, un veritable chef-d'œuvre.' *Guide au Caucase*, Paris, 1894, 2nd part, p. 84. In his *L'art au Caucase*, 3rd ed., Mourier gives illustrations, in small, of the whole icon and of various details of it.[1] My plates (I, II) show two of the jewelled crosses taken from enlargements made from illustrations in M. Kondakóff's book.

Who built the Khakhouli monastery has always been matter of dispute. It was attributed in turn to David I of Kartli (876–81); to David Curopalates, ruler of Tao, or Southern Georgia (d. 1001); and to David II (1089–1125), of whom the last named is by far the most probable. His place among the Georgian royalties will be seen in the following list—for which I am indebted to my friend A. Gugushvili, a learned Georgian, long resident in England—of the kings or sovereigns of United Georgia, from the first to the last of those rightly so called, viz. Bagrat III (980–1014 or 1015); his son George I (1014 or 1015–27); his son Bagrat IV (1027–72); his son George II (1072–89); his son David II (1089–1125); his son Dimitri I (1125–54-5); his son David III, who reigned only 6 months; his brother George III (1155-6–84); his daughter Tamára (1184–1213-14); her son George IV (1213-14–23); her daughter Rousoudani (1223–47).

[1] His first ed., folio, published at Odessa in 1883, contained, perhaps, the whole icon in large, but incessant efforts have failed to procure me even a sight of that volume, far less a copy of it. According to Vakhousht (Brosset, vol. iii, p. 406) in 1752 Alexander, King of Imerethi, having robbed the icon of its ornaments died soon afterwards '*par un effet de sa puissance*'.

Detail from the Khakhouli Icon

III

IN QUEST OF OIL

Over the pass — Fine feathers, fine birds — Shoeing a buffalo — Ararat larks — St. Jacob's Well — A modern Ariadne — Gipsy murderers — Berekei — The Tartar waiter — Hot coffee — Brigandage — Grozny oil — The Fair — Kalmuck scruples — Prince Taimasheff — Khasaff-yourt — Akhtash-aoukh — Pleasant quarters — The Evil Eye — Two strings to a bow — A luckless robber.

I LEFT Vladikavkaz in 1899 on May 20th at 6.30 a.m., spent the night at Mleti, and reached Tiflis at 3.15 p.m. next day. What pleased me most on this journey, my first crossing of the mountains in spring, was the great number of rollers and bee-eaters everywhere about. They kept company willingly, or at least peaceably, and when half a dozen or more sitting side by side on a telegraph wire took late alarm at our approach and flew off with a great splash of colour it was a sight worth seeing. Half-way down from the pass to Mleti, going slowly round a bend, I came upon a ring-ousel sitting in a tree by the roadside, piping most melodiously.

It was on this trip, I think, that I took a successful photograph of a buffalo being shod—thrown on the ground (at Doushet or Ananour), with all four legs in air and tied up over a wooden cross-bar, the head drawn very forcibly to one side. It looked very uncomfortable for the poor beast, but safe and practical for the human beings concerned. Oxen were once shod in England,[1] but I have not come across any description or picture of the procedure.

From Tiflis I went on to Baku, and amongst other things paid a visit with my friend Parker of 'Oleum'[2] to a new oil-field at Hidersindi on the Caspian, between Baku and Derbend.

We left Baku at 3.25 a.m. (May 27th) in a phaeton, drove to Baladjari, the junction for the new Baku-Petrovsk railway, and there took train to our destination, where saddle-horses awaited us. At Hidersindi I particularly noticed, not having seen them before, flocks of Ararat larks (*Pastor roseus*, the Rose-coloured Pastor), a species of starling with the whole of the body bright rose-colour, the

[1] *Notes and Queries*, March 1920 (No. 9) and *The Times*, 12 June 1937 and 17 Aug. 1938.

[2] Short for The Russian Petroleum and Liquid-fuel Co., Ltd., of which I afterwards became a Director.

head, wings, and tail black. My note-book reads: 'They are busily engaged in catching and devouring locusts, of which they are said to destroy incredible numbers, on the strip of flat land along the Caspian shore. They appear, indeed, to be killing, killing, killing, as fast as they can for a time, then off they fly to the water (perhaps to rinse their beaks?) and back again to kill, kill, kill.'

So I wrote at the time. I should have observed them much more closely and written about them at greater length had I known then what I know now. Barbaro writes: 'In this town [Cuerch, ESE. of Tabriz] there is a pit of water, as it were a fountain, the which is guarded by its *Thalassemani*, that is to say priests. This water, they say, is of great virtue against leprosy and against locusts, both which cases I have seen evidenced, I will not say by actual experience but by some people's credulity; for at that time there passed that way a Frenchman with certain servants and guides, who were Moors, he being afflicted with leprosy, and, as we were told, was on his way to bathe in that water. What followed I know not, but it was commonly reported that many were healed there. While I was still in that country there came an Armenian who had been sent by the King of Cyprus long before I took my way to those parts to procure some of that water, and returning while I was still in that country, two months after my arrival in Tabriz, brought with him some of that water in a tin flask. He stayed with me two days, then resumed his journey and returned to Cyprus, where on my way home I saw that same flask of water suspended from a pole set up outside a certain tower. And I learned from the people of the place that by virtue of that water they had had no more locusts.

'There, too, I saw some red and black birds, called "the birds of Mahomet", which fly in flocks like starlings and, as I understood, being in Cyprus on my return journey, when the locusts arrive kill them all. And wheresoever they perceive that water to be they fly towards it, so, at least, all the people of the place declare.'[1]

Gamba, to whom we owe that amusing blunder 'Mont St. Christophe' for 'Krestovaya gora (Cross mountain)', has a long descrip-

[1] Ramusio, ii, f. 107. From 'While' to the end of this extract is omitted in Thomas's translation of Barbaro (MS. of A.D. 1550–1 B.M.), but is supplied from Ramusio in the Hakluyt Society's version (1873). It forms part of the original text in the Aldine 1st ed. of Barbaro, 1543, a copy of which is in the London Library, as also one of the 2nd ed. (1545). I use the Hakluyt Society's transcript of Thomas.

tion, partly from his personal observation, in which he explains the bathing habit of the bird as necessitated by the liquid that sprinkles their feathers as they crunch up the locusts, and would soon, if allowed to coagulate, put a stop to their activity. Armenians, Greeks, and Tartars, he tells us, are convinced that to secure the coming of the *Tarbys*[1] a jar of water must be brought from a well near the monastery of Etchmiadzin. This water is blessed by the monks; the bearer must never put the jar down on the ground during the whole journey, but hang it, when he stops to rest, on a tree or a wall. On arrival it is again blessed by a priest; some ravaged field is sprinkled with it and within 48 hours the *Tarbys* come flying up in clouds. 'In 1823 we saw the Archbishop Narses receive the miraculous water and the birds were not long in coming.' All previous evidence had led to the conclusion that the Rose-starlings destroyed but did not devour the locusts; Gamba himself, however, saw the birds feeding their young assiduously on them.[2]

Radde, in turn, writes: 'In some years, only, are certain localities invaded by swarms of Rose-starlings, which arrive in pursuit of the locusts and, if the latter then lay their eggs, remain, sometimes, until their next year's brood is ready for flight. Such, however, is not always the case. Of the last twenty years the most remarkable, in this respect, was 1865, when on the 22nd May (June 3rd) these pretty birds invaded Tiflis in numbers that one might well call "hundreds of thousands". They settled at first most densely on the stony banks of the Koura, near the Maidan and the prison, at eventide came to roost in huge numbers on the rocks of the Salalaki ridge, and dispersed by day over the gardens and fields where they destroyed the young locusts and attacked also with zest the early-flowering cherry trees. They nested freely even in the midst of the city, in the Oriental part of it, at least; for the bird is held in highest regard by Mussulman and Christian alike, so much so that to shoot one might lead to trouble. If many locusts make their appearance in Tiflis in spring and are not soon followed by their winged

[1] The Georgian name, as Radde confirms.

[2] *Voyage dans la Russie*, &c., Paris, 1826, vol. ii, pp. 299 sqq. According to B. P. Uvaroff, *Locusts and Grasshoppers*, London, 1928, p. 134, 'Portchinsky (1894) even suggested that the pink starling (*Pastor Roseus*), one of the best-known beneficial birds, kills locusts especially to obtain the fly larvae from them: this suggestion is based on the fact that the starlings kill many more locusts than they can eat'.

destroyers, a Deputation is sent to fetch water from St. Jacob's Spring or Well. The returning Deputation is met and the water taken over with much religious ceremony, the object being to induce the coming of the Rose-starlings to start their campaign against the locusts. Such a Deputation was sent in 1865. In 1825, Yermóloff, as the locusts attacked the Salalaki division of Tiflis and the starlings had much to do, caused large pans of water to be set up for them to bathe in, a proceeding their dirty work makes them inordinately fond of.'[1]

The spring is, or was, 7,250 feet above sea-level on the NE. slope of Ararat. The last notice I have found of the water being sent for is of 1879, but I should not be surprised to learn that the custom still holds. The saint in question, by the way, was an Armenian bishop, not the Hebrew patriarch. In the late Lord Bryce's excellent book, *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, there is a charming description of the Kurds watering their flocks at St. Jacob's Well, a scene truly biblical.[2]

In Smyrna, it seems, the Rose-starling is called the Holy-bird in May when it kills locusts, the Devil-bird in July when it makes havoc in orchards and vineyards. If the locusts could speak they would, doubtless, reverse the order.

According to Ghulam Risa Khan, Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, there are 'starling-springs' at Shiraz and Qazvin, while Colonel E. W. Noel speaks of one at Kashan. Villages, he says, found as much as £150 by public subscription to pay the expenses of a party to fetch a flask of the water from Kashan, while pamphlets, which he had had translated into Persian, describing scientific methods of locust destruction, as practised in Baluchistan, received no attention whatever.[3]

[1] *Ornis Caucasica*, parts 2–9, p. 152. He adds: 'The descriptions by Betta, from the neighbourhood of Villafranca, in Brehm's *Thierleben*, 5. Bd., p. 395, are excellent and agree with my own observations in Tiflis.' Dr. Radde supplies us, too, with names of the bird in various languages: Russ., *Rozovui skvaretz* (rose-coloured starling); Persian, *S'ar*; Tartar, *Kuschung, Muhamedung* (? the 'Birds of Mahomet' of Barbaro); Daghestani, *Svrdshik*; Georgian, *Tarbi*; Armenian, *Torm*. For the breeding habits of the bird see *Brutinvasion des Rosenstares in Ungarn im Jahre 1925*, von Jakob Schenk, Budapest (*Verhandlungen des VI Int. Ornitholog. Kongresses in Kopenhagen*, 1926, Berlin, Feb. 1929). See, too, *The Chronicle of Makhairas*, R. M. Dawkins, Oxford, 1932, vol. ii, pp. 69–72.

[2] Macmillan, 1877, pp. 253–6.

[3] *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, vol. xvi, 1929, part iii, pp. 350 sqq., 'A noble Persian author', by C. J. Edmonds.

Zem-Zem water from Mecca has been used at Aleppo for the same purpose.[1] Pliny has an obvious allusion to the *Pastor roseus*, 'Those birds are called seleucides, which are sent by Jupiter at the prayers offered up to him by the inhabitants of Mount Casius, when the locusts are ravaging their crops of corn. Whence they come, or whither they go, has never yet been ascertained, as, in fact, they are never to be seen but when the people stand in need of their aid.'[2]

On the whole it seems evident that the Holy Water legend derives from the bird's habit of cleansing itself, which gives it a somewhat unusual interest—cleanliness and godliness for once coming together quite naturally.

We were told at Hidirsindi a story of the famous robber Stenka Razine and a strong-armed, strong-minded Ariadne of Besh-Bermak, 'the five fingers', a cliff that rose nearly 2,000 feet above us with peaks to that number, who when Stenka, Theseus-like, abandoned her, instead of weeping and languishing after the manner of her Greek prototype, hurled great rocks, Polyphemus-fashion, at him and his ship—'and it *must* be true', said our informant, 'for there they are to this day', pointing to some small rocky islands off shore.

Another story was that of a Molokani maiden who, when crossing by a mere plank a narrow chasm in the cliffs, slipped and fell. A brave man, her lover no doubt, was let down by a rope, and on a ledge 200 feet below the surface found the body and thence brought it up. How much deeper the chasm went was unknown. This took place only four years before the date of our visit.

We started back by train at 7 p.m. after riding about inspecting oil-plots for three or four hours, and reached Baladjari at 11 p.m., and Baku, by road, at midnight, a performance not without risk.

Parker and I left Baku again on June 3rd in the paddle-steamer *Alexei* and anchored off Derbend next morning at 8 o'clock, having slept on the wet deck from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. in default of better accommodation. The sea being calm, large open boats, each with a huge lug-sail, came off to meet us, and in one of them we got safely ashore; the brand-new railway station was ready, though the line was not, and there we broke our fast. A local Armenian, Paroniants,

[1] Hasluck, F. W., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 1929, pp. 203–5.

[2] *Nat. Hist.* (Bostock and Riley), book x, chap. 39. See Suppl. Note, p. 64.

was greatly distressed at the idea of our driving to Berekei, a most foolhardy proceeding, according to him, and implored us not to do so. Rushing out excitedly into the street he came back soon with a youth who declared that his two companions had been murdered on the road we were to take only the day before by Persian gipsies, and that he owed his own life solely to the fact that he spoke Persian and was able to move their pity. But it struck us that if the story were true, as it seemed to be, the gipsies would in all probability be a long way by now from the scene of their crime. In any case the steamer had left, there was no train, and we simply had not the courage to abandon our journey of a few miles on the strength of this unconfirmed story; so, procuring a comfortable phaeton drawn by four horses harnessed abreast, we set out gallantly and at 3.15 p.m. after a pleasant and wholly unadventurous drive reached Kozliakovsky's derrick, the first in that direction on the new oil-fields.

We had passed several fishing-stations on the way and learnt that the only important fish hereabouts was a species of herring, of which vast quantities were caught.[1] Of birds I noted with eager delight numbers of rollers, bee-eaters, eagles, hawks of various kinds, Ararat larks, herons, and many other running, wading, and swimming birds. It was late for flowers, but a sweet-scented wild iris grew in purple masses bordering the rice-fields where sowing had just begun and water was being let in—to result before long, as far as I was concerned, in another bout of malaria. A little higher, where the ground was dry, luxuriant crops of barley waved emerald-green in the wind, yellowing as yet in places only. Having made our inspection and extracted what information we could from the very few drillers at work, we drove on round the village to the railway-platform—newly opened—and caught the 7 p.m. train to Petrovsk, meeting on the way a man on horseback carrying three or four fish, averaging twelve pounds in weight at a guess, and costing 25 *kopeks* (6*d.*) apiece. They came, he told us, at this time of year, up the small shallow streams from the sea, and were easily seen and speared.[2] He expressed his regret that he could carry no more, for in Petrovsk they would be worth at least a rouble (2*s.*) each. Along the railway,

[1] *Cyprinus chalcoides*, Güld. 'Fatter, much larger, and of finer flavour than the Dutch herring', Güldenstädt, I. A., *Reise*, ed. Pallas, 1787, vol. i, p. 174.

[2] *Ousatchee* (barbel), so called from their long moustachios—'ousi'. *Ibid.*

as is usual in all the damper parts of the Caucasus, platforms 30 to 40 feet high were built up on poles for the employees to sleep on, in the hope of baffling the mosquitoes. Without them life would be difficult.

In regard to oil I will only say here that the Berekei venture proved a failure. Many of the Baku oil-magnates took plots, a few spent money on trial borings, the Rothschild firm, known as the 'Standard', a good deal. Oil there was and probably in quantity, but unfortunately there was also a vast amount of hot water, and, as occasionally happens, the water overpowered the oil, so that after a time the field was abandoned.[1] But as scenery there was something to be said for Berekei. Even as late as June the place was wonderfully green: the oak-coppices already mentioned covered the dryer uncultivated ground between the railway and the sea; on one side the shining waters of the Caspian broke gently on the sand; on the other a rich and smiling country, dotted with many picturesque villages and isolated farm-houses, led gradually up to the not-distant mountains of Daghestan, which, on either side, at Derbend and Petrovsk, slope down to the sea. As to the past, volumes would be needed to recount the history of this narrow strip of shore-land, the only level passage, be it always remembered, north and south, between the Black Sea and the Caspian; the route therefore by which alone invaders throughout the ages passed in any considerable numbers in either direction between the south of Russia, or what became Russia, and Persia or Asia Minor.[2]

We found Daïd-bek on the train, and he explained to us that the malaria danger, which some were inclined to magnify, was not a very serious one, for if once oil were found in paying quantities, the rice-fields could be bought up for a comparatively trifling sum and drained.

We reached Petrovsk at 11 o'clock at night and, as it was raining heavily, spent a very miserable two hours waiting for the so-called 'express' in a station crowded to suffocation, where pandemonium reigned. Finally we were able to secure *kresla* (sleeping-chairs) in the only first-class carriage, which soon filled up till there was hardly standing room; though even then a *tchinovnik*, who, of course, had no ticket—very few passengers had in those days, and no officials—

[1] Samoursky (*Daghestan*, 1925, p. 143) describes the Berekei oil-field much as I last saw it some thirty years ago. But he puts down the failure to the wicked policy of the capitalist Nobel!

[2] See further p. 191.

forced his way in with wife and child, followed by a Tartar servant carrying a large box and hung round with other impedimenta including a kettle of vast dimensions. However, eventually all settled down, and at 12.50 a.m. we started, not more than an hour or two late, and reached Grozny at the comparatively comfortable hour of 5.40 a.m. (June 5th).

Thanks to the railway and to increasing prosperity there was now a new hotel here—new and therefore clean. There was also a waiter, new and—being a Mussulman—not unclean, one of those admirable Tartars of Riazan or Kazan to whom frequenters of hotels and restaurants in St. Petersburg and Moscow owed so much of their comfort in bygone days. He was sleepy, indeed, but characteristically obliging and cheerful. My first expressed wish, after securing rooms, was for coffee, plenty of it and as soon as possible. '*Sei-tchas!*' 'This hour'—which is Russian for 'directly', but often enough may be taken literally—'*seeyou-minoutou!*' 'this minute', which, in turn, might mean an hour. But our new friend bustled away to the kitchen, knocked up the cook or scullery-man, and in a surprisingly short space of time came back with the coffee. I sampled it; it was pale, stale, weak, and lukewarm. I was hardly annoyed—one could expect nothing better in the time, but, taking him in friendly fashion by the ear, I explained that what we wanted was coffee 'fresh, black, hot, and strong', stressing the sonorous Russian adjectives emphatically, *krepky*, *sveyzhy*, *tchorny*, *goryatchy!* ('strong, fresh, black, boiling'!). He took it all in, round-eyed, open-mouthed, and went off repeating the words once and again, committing them to memory. As soon as was reasonably possible he came back, his moon-face beaming, with a jorum of coffee that fulfilled handsomely all my requirements. He repeated the magic words, one by one, *crescendo*, as he set down the tray—*krepky! sveyzhy!! tchorny!!! goryatchy!!!!* and ever afterwards when I visited Grozny, no sooner had he set eyes on me than his face wreathed itself in smiles and out came the magic formula indissolubly associated in his mind with Iván Ivánovitch, the Englishman.

And to think that the author of *A Relation of a Journey begun in the year 1610*, when, at Constantinople, he 'discovered' coffee, had nothing better to say of it than that the 'colour thereof is that of soot and the taste not much other'![1]

[1] Sandys, Geo., London, 1615. So, too, Thomas Herbert, a little later, tells us that

We lunched and dined with M. Maresch, Spiess & Stucken's friendly agent, and spent next day at the oil-fields, driving along the flat in his *troika*, but climbing, first ankle-deep in mud, then waist high in rain-wet flowers, the ridge where in those days the not very numerous derricks stretched westward in single file like a line of telegraph poles. Even here we could never get away from brigand tales and alarms. At lunch we heard that there had been several attempts lately to wreck trains, with a view to robbery, of course, and at last, by removing some of the rails, success so far had been achieved. The robbers, however, when the train left the line, were so much alarmed at the unwonted sight that they galloped off to their forest refuges. No one was hurt in person or in pocket, but martial law was proclaimed and, soon afterwards, four *abreks* were caught and hanged. Disarmament, too, was once more resorted to, but, as usual, ended in a farce—none but old pistols and inferior blades being surrendered, while serious loss on either side was restricted to that incurred by the troops employed, who lost their tempers. With all this there was much corruption amongst the minor and even some of the major officials, as I often heard both here and elsewhere. To this, indeed, my friend General Vereshtchaghin and others bore emphatic testimony, and to this they attributed most of the discontent and consequent lawlessness of the Ingooshee and Tchetchens. So it was then; so it had been ever since the surrender of Shamil in 1859; what it may be under the Bolsheviks I cannot say, but as human nature changes slowly if at all, and Russian officials are said still to be underpaid, I fear that little improvement can have taken place.

From Novorossisk on the Black Sea to Petrovsk on the Caspian, thence to Baku, and again from Baku to Batoum, there are many places—in sandy deserts, on grassy plains and uplands, deep even in primeval forests—where naphtha, that mysterious product of nature variously attributed by the learned to an animal, a vegetable, or a purely chemical (inorganic) origin, betrays its presence underground by gaseous emanations or surface oozings. On the Apsheron Peninsula for many centuries the 'sacred' fire was kept alight by devout

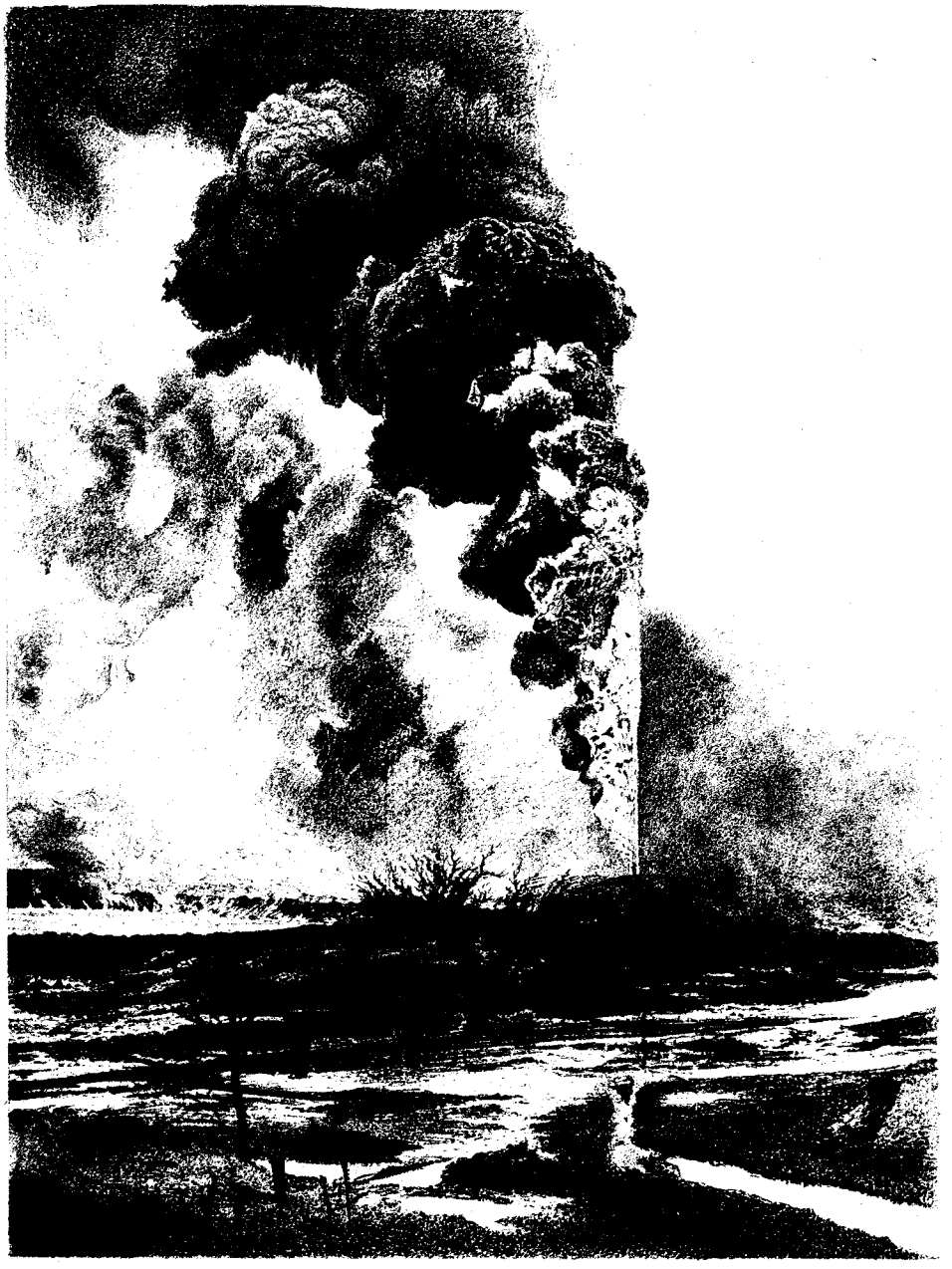
'choava-berry is much drunk though it please neither the eye nor taste, being black as soot and somewhat bitter, or rather relished like burnt crusts'. *Travels*, &c., 'The Broadway Travellers' Series, 1928. For quaint variations see early editions.

worshippers from Persia and India, and neighbouring Baku had already become the centre of Russia's gigantic oil-industry. At Novorossisk and elsewhere serious efforts had been made to open out other fields, but with little success, except near Grozny, where, oil having been obtained in small quantities by digging since 1823, the first two drilled wells were completed in 1893, and both gave considerable amounts of oil, the second of them not less than 2,000,000 poods (*c.* 32,000 tons) in the first 24 hours, and nearly half a million poods (*c.* 8,000 tons) daily for the next 5 or 6 days. In 1895 'one of the largest fountains ever struck was reported, the flow from which was stated to be so prolific that in a month it had formed the neighbouring valley into a vast lake, in which steamers could easily float', but as the author omits to specify the size or the draft of the steamers he has in mind, and as in any case none can get nearer to Grozny than the Caspian Sea, the statement, coming though it does from a notable man of science, can hardly be considered informative.[1] Since then, with interminable slowness compared to Texas methods, a considerable development had taken place; a line of derricks stretched from east to west along the hills for a distance of a dozen versts, and quite recently the oil-bearing belt had been proved to be of some breadth.[2] It follows that Grozny had acquired an importance Yermóloff, its founder, could not have dreamt of, and was destined to become a centre of industrial as it formerly was of military activity.[3] A Cossack *stanitsa* had grown up in old days under protection of the fortress, and in course of time 'peaceable' Tchetchens had been allowed to build an *aoul* on the opposite right bank of the Soundja. Since oil had been struck a considerable town had sprung up, and, as Grozny had the additional good fortune to be on the main line of

[1] *Petroleum*, by Sir Boverton Redwood, Bart., 3rd ed., London, 1913, p. 11.

[2] The production in 1901 was 34,852,271 poods (562,133 tons). British capital had been largely invested, and amongst the most successful boring-masters were Americans.

[3] To be accurate—Yermóloff in A.D. 1818 founded the fortress, 'krepost' (fem.) *Groznaya* ('menacing'). Had he been content with a mere fort, 'oukreplenie' (neut.), the qualifying adjective would have been *Groznoye*. When a town grew up, 'gorod' (masc.), and the fortress was dismantled, the name changed accordingly, but if ever 'Grozny' develops into a capital city, 'stolitsa' (fem.), it will perforce revert to *Groznaya*. Meantime, in the days I write of, a (feminine) *stanitsa* stood cheek by jowl with the (masculine) town on the site of a vanished (neuter) fort, to the confusion of more than one European traveller—all of which goes to prove how much more interesting Russian grammar is than English!



Oil-spouter on Fire at Baku

railway from Rostoff-on-the-Don and the North to Petrovsk and Baku, there could be little doubt that it would one day be a considerable city. At this time, however, it was chiefly remarkable for streets which without exaggeration might be set down as among the worst in the world. In dry weather they were ankle-deep in dust, in wet they were quagmires of mud, with ponds of green filth here and there in which ducks and geese paddled, pigs wallowed, and frogs swam. Attempts had recently been made to pave them, but as the method employed consisted in putting down huge cobble stones without any foundation, a month or two saw them reduced to a worse state than before.

Nor is the country immediately round Grozny specially attractive, consisting as it does of a grassy plain with the Terek range rising from it to the north, 7 miles away, the parallel range of the Soundja, where the oil is found, commencing a mile or so due west of the town. Both these are formed of rounded hills, bare of trees, though covered with luxuriant herbage to their summits; the direction east and west, the height, in either case, 2,000 feet, more or less, above sea-level and half that above the valley bottom between them. To the south, across the Soundja, one or two spurs, likewise denuded of trees, form a prelude to the vast succession of forest-clad hills rising wave behind wave to the mighty walls and bastions of the Jurassic limestone topped by the great mountains of the 'Side' (*Bokovoi*) or 'Advanced' (*Peredovoi*) northern ranges, affording in fine weather a glorious panorama of snowy peaks and rocky ridges rising from a sea of verdure, with Teboulos (14,771 ft.) in the middle, and the cone of Kazbek (16,546 ft.) far away on the right.

In ordinary times Grozny was a dull place enough, work and bustle being concentrated at the oil-fields 10 miles off; but twice a year, in June and September, a Fair was held—I visited it on June 8th, 1899—and for a week any one interested in questions of race or language could find congenial employment to his heart's content, for the men of the forests and mountains came down from their wild abodes, the Koumuiks and Cossacks and Tartars gathered from the lowlands and the steppes, and all mingled on the plain outside the town with German colonists, Persian and Russian merchants, and the inevitable leaven of Jew and Armenian without which trade anywhere in the Caucasus would have been at a standstill. The Tchetchens, of course,

predominated amongst the natives, and many of them with wives and children settled themselves in small permanent huts, which were closed during the rest of the year. But large numbers of natives of all tribes, and Cossacks, too, bivouacked on the plain, those who had carts, whether four-wheeled *telyégas* or two-wheeled *arbas*, being the best off for shelter, day or night.

Moreover, the shopkeepers of Grozny in pursuit of their faithless customers set up their stalls at the Fair, and for the time it lasted little or nothing was bought or sold in the town itself. I doubt if Nizhni Novgorod, even in its palmiest days, could have shown a greater variety of races than Grozny, and if Chinamen were wanting, Kalmuks from the Great Derbetovsky *oulouss* stepped in to fill the gap. These nomads of the desolate plains between Lake Manitch and the rivers Great Yegorlik and Kalaous were presumably Derbets, the tribe of that name forming one of the four divisions of the Kalmuks. It was another division, the Torguts, that fled to China in 1771 with Oubashee their khan. The Derbets were a very dirty people and their tolerance of vermin was attributed to belief in the transmigration of souls, for where should one's deceased relatives in such form seek warmth and protection, to say nothing of nourishment, if not on one's person?[1] In religion they were Buddhists of the 'Yellowcap' sect, having their chief temple at a place called Baitanga, where the services were conducted in the language of Tibet.

Of the wares exposed for sale at Grozny Fair there was very little to tempt the European traveller and nothing he could not buy equally well and probably cheaper at Vladikavkaz, Tiflis, or Baku, unless it were Andee *bourkas*; but there was an abundant store of all that was likely to attract the native buyer whether for use or for ornament, while at the same time he could find a ready sale for his own surplus produce or rude manufactures. Thus the Fair was always a scene of great animation, and, to enliven it still more, the usual concomitants, such as raree-shows, merry-go-rounds, and acrobatic performances, were not wanting. But the most interesting quarter to my mind was that where horses were bought and sold, for there not only were hundreds of animals gathered together, but native horsemen representing half the tribes of the Caucasus might be seen buying and

[1] So in Morocco: 'Many holy men avoid killing lice altogether', and partial abstention in this matter varies according to circumstances. Westermarck, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 238.

selling, cheapening and chaffering, with all the superlative mastery of depreciation and the reverse so characteristic of horse-copers the world over. The majority of the horses were poor-looking enough, but looks were no very safe criterion in this case, and many an animal that would have excited derision at Tattersall's might be capable of carrying you mile after mile from dawn to dark on food that an English horse would not touch, and of passing the night patiently and unharmed in pelting rain or with the thermometer below zero, Fahrenheit. With knowledge and patience very good bargains might be picked up, 200 roubles (£20) being a long price for a saddle-horse. Perhaps a majority of the horses at the Fair were brought in by the Karanogais,[1] who afforded the spectators many an exciting scene—cutting out, lassoing, throwing, and mounting bare-backed animals that had never before been ridden—feats in which they could probably hold their own with any cow-boy alive.

On the 11th of June I left Vladikavkaz, whither I had gone to transact business with lawyers and Government officials, by train at 7 p.m. and had to wait three hours at Beslan junction, 20 versts away. This was not unusual, the trains from the north being almost invariably late, and, as Ourousbi and Nitabukh were with me and the buffet notoriously a good one, we dined and smoked and talked oil, brigands, and such-like things and people in perfect good humour all the time of waiting. When the train did arrive I found Mr. Spiess in it (originator of 'Spiess, Stucken', afterwards the 'Spiess Petroleum Co.') coming from Moscow, and talked with him, mostly, till we reached Grozny at 1.30 a.m. That morning (June 12th), by previous arrangement, I drove out with Ourousbi, Nitabukh, and a prince Taimásheff[2] to land owned by the last named and his family some 20 miles ENE. of Grozny. We had three rifles besides revolvers and *kinjals*, between us, the country being 'doubtful'. Here, on a steep hill-side thickly covered with oak-scrub, thorn, and other bushes, lush with bindweed, we saw at about 50 feet above the river-level a naphtha-spring which had recently gushed out spontaneously. There

[1] A small tribe of Mussulman nomads inhabiting the Steppe some way north of the Terek, between Mozdok and Kizliar. With the rest of the Nogais they derive from the Blue Horde, which sought the protection of Russia after Ivan IV's capture of Astrakhan in 1554. Samoursky in *Daghestan*, p. 145, says: 'the Nogais, utterly ruined, are literally dying out.'

[2] Or Taimazoff; see vol. ii, pp. 186, 201.

were a few reeds near by on a moist patch where, rather incongruously, 'noon-day nightingales' sang lustily under the blazing June sun; many old and disused oil-wells were visible around us and in one place men were digging and preparing asphalte. Fronting us, to the north, was the Terek, a mile away; to our right, at twice that distance, the Argoun, just about to join it. Slight as our elevation was, the flatness of the plain beyond the Terek made the view in that direction seem endless. On the river itself, to right and to left were Cossack *stanitsas*, famous in song and in story.

We moved up a little, and at the prince's order a bucket was lowered into an oil-well rather more than 100 feet deep and came up brimming with good-quality naphtha. Some way farther on blacker and thicker oil was baled for us from 15 feet, out of one of the abandoned wells.

All questions having been put and answers noted, we drove on another mile eastward, to a hot-water spring where two Kabardán gentlemen, well dressed, well armed, from the Baksan, were boiling eggs in the water as it bubbled out of the ground. This water was potable when cool, with only a slight taste of sulphur. Near by were some native baths, a 'cure' establishment, primitive but practical and of unknown antiquity.[1] Having finished our inspection and lunched off the good things we had taken with us from Grozny, we drove on to Prince Taimásheff's farm-house, and later, having bidden him good-bye there, to the Tchetchen *aoul* of Oumakhan-yourt, where we rested and drank tea till midnight; then on again to the station of Goudermess, where we took train at 1.50 a.m. (June 13th) to the town of Khasaf-yourt, 25 versts nearer to Petrovsk, getting to bed in a very third-rate hostelry at about 4 o'clock in the morning. For some reason unknown the trains in these parts nearly always managed to leave or arrive at the places we had to start from or stop at with the least possible regard to our personal comfort. Broken nights were almost inevitable and made disagreeable beginnings and endings to journeys that, however delightful, were, to say the least of it, rough and, sometimes, as on this occasion, painful.

We had now changed from a 'doubtful' country to one that was distinctly 'dangerous'. We had been joined at Khasaf-yourt by another Hebrew land-broker, Mr. Feldmann, his servant—a Mountain

[1] Peter the Great in 1717 sent the academician Shober to examine and report upon the waters. See Müller's *Sammlung Russischer Geschichte*, Band iv.

Jew—and a fine black-bearded Tchetchen, the *starshiná* of Aktash-aoukh, our first stopping-place, who came with us by order of another Koumuik prince, a partner with Nitabukh and Feldmann in yet another newly discovered oil-field to inspect which was the object of our present excursion. We were thus a rather numerous party and all bristling with weapons of offence or defence. There being a metalled road some part of the way we started in a phaeton and on *droghi*—the latter just two pair of wheels far apart with double-seated planks, on which the passengers sat back to back between them. Riding horses were to be ready for us farther on.

We came after a time to the Aktash (White-stone) river at a bend a little above the ruins of Vnezapnaya (Fort 'Surprise'), of many notable memories, and followed on up the left bank to Aktash-aoukh, where the Sala-su joins the Aktash, a distance altogether of about 15 miles. Some way short of this we had been caught in a violent thunderstorm accompanied by a downpour of rain so heavy that, in no time, the road, here not metalled, was a sea of mud, and the confluent Sala-su overflowing its banks. We had, therefore, not only to halt at Aktash-aoukh, but to spend the night there, with our friend the *starshiná*, luckily in very pleasant quarters. The house, standing with others on a cliff high above the rivers, was, as usual in Tchetchnia, except in the mountains, built of wood with beamed and raftered ceiling and with walls painted rather than smeared inside with the finest and whitest clay. Stowed on deep shelves were soft wool mattresses, huge feather pillows, Daghestan carpets, and home-made *palliasses* (pileless carpets).[1] Against the walls were tin-lined copper dishes, flat, circular, and as much as two and a half feet in diameter; also water-jugs of brass two feet high. Outside, the scene was a busy one and wonderfully picturesque. Women, who here made no pretence at hiding their fairly good-looking faces, came up from the river with these huge jars on their backs; at the door of the *metchet* stood a portly *moullá* wearing a red fez; but life was most varied and attractive on the many flat roofs. Here were crops of grass with goats and sheep browsing; tall onion-patches gone to seed; children

[1] So called by the Russians, ignoring—as we do sometimes—its French derivation from *paille*, 'straw'. Dr. Georg Nioradze, writing of Khevsouria, uses the form 'Polas'. *Begräbnis- und Totenkultus bei den Chewssuren*, Strecker und Schröder, Verlag, Stuttgart, 1931.

playing; an old woman weaving a carpet. On the ground another old woman, bare legged, trampled clay to fit it for daubing the walls, while men stood idly by—one more of those many incidents showing the relative positions of the sexes, which I shall have to record from time to time, incidents which must always be deplored, but which have a definite origin in the history of the people and, therefore, to some extent, an excuse.[1] As a background to all this rose, near at hand, great undulating slopes on which fields and woods alternated, with the rushing rivers at their feet and mountains, dimly seen, beyond—a rich country that should be a happy one. In my note-book I find: 'It wouldn't take much to make a decent people of the Tchetchens, but, at present, brigandage, blood-feuds, dirt, and laziness reign supreme, and the Russian administration is too corrupt to do much good.'

It was soon whispered that there were actually three well-known *abreks* in the *aoul*. Our host and Soulai, formerly *starshiná* of Dilim, who accompanied us as a bodyguard, Feldmann and his servant, Nitabukh and myself were all more or less uneasy, though I happened to have such a racking headache that night that even brigands failed to interest me seriously. Ourousbi was unusually silent, but kept, I noticed, his rifle ready. Our host, I found later, was on guard all night, and when, gasping for a breath of fresh air in the early morning, I tried to open the door I found the Mountain Jew prone across the threshold. The idea was that others of a band might be within call, while in a considerable *aoul* such as this there would always be several bad or merely adventurous spirits ready to back them up and share the plunder; and we were obviously, from the 'brigand' point of view, worth attacking, though arms and numbers might give them pause. Nothing happened, however, and in the morning (June 14th) we drove on to Yourt-aoukh, where the Sala-su comes round in a sharp bend from the east, a distance of only 2 or 3 miles, and there got our horses. This *aoul* was a pleasant sight, being half smothered in walnut and mulberry trees. Mounting, we rode on to an oil-well on the bank of the Sala-su and drew a bucketful from a depth of 15 or

[1] For other instances see vol. i, pp. 93–5, vol. ii, pp. 55, 66, 72; and cf. Macaulay's account of the position of women in the Highlands (*Hist.*, chap. iii), which is confirmed by Canon MacLeod in *The Island Clans during Six Centuries*, Inverness, 1931, p. 42. The two cases seem to offer a singularly close parallel.

20 feet, after a man had been down the well, the sides of which were wattled, and removed and sent up successively, first large stones and then a huge wooden lid and some flat cross-beams, all of which were there by way of precaution against theft of the naphtha, which was prized as a remedy against rheumatism, and, taken internally, against consumption. I myself let down an empty wine-bottle by a string, and brought it up full, corked and sealed it. Later, on analysis, it proved to be naphtha of unusually good quality. Remounting, we rode on to Dilim, where more natives joined us, all in greater or less degree interested in the oil venture, and on nearly to Gounee. Crossing the river again, now very small and with banks of slimy mud, my horse foundered and off I came, to be helped up, none the worse for a very thorough mud-bath.

Possibly the saddle had something to do with it. I had not yet learnt wisdom in matters of saddlery, for my only rough riding so far had been in Peru, and to the native saddle there, though I seldom used one, it was not difficult to accustom oneself. I was young, too, in those days. On this occasion I soon made the unpleasant discovery that a Tchetchen saddle with high bow and cantle on a sorry steed gave promise of untold, untellable misery, a promise abundantly fulfilled. But one lesson was enough. I took good care in future never to be without an English, or at least European, saddle.

At our farthest point we found a small and very primitive Persian naphtha refinery, with a supply of oil which, though slight, seemed promising. But my friends in Russia and in England preferred, after reading my report, to put their money into less remote districts, and what, if anything, was afterwards done to develop these properties I never heard.

Nearing Yourt-aoukh on the way back I stopped to take a photograph of a pretty girl of twelve or so, standing on a roof in an onion-patch. Almost immediately a fierce-looking bearded man rushed out and expressed the gravest anxiety lest I should have cast an evil eye —through the lens—on his child! My companions managed to reassure him, but one of our drivers, an Armenian, then told us in perfect good faith that he had lost two horses lately from this cause, 'otherwise I, also, should be driving a phaeton, instead of *droghi*!'[1]

[1] *Re* fear of the camera see *Golden Bough*, abridged ed., 1925, p. 193, and Dr. Hamilton Rice's paper in *Journal R.G.S.*, Apr. 1928, p. 352.

I noticed Tchetchen boys shooting clay-bullets from a small bow with two strings and a leather cup between.[1] Also a little girl wearing handsome silver ornaments.

Having reached Khasaf-yourt again in safety we were taking tea in the hotel when we heard a commotion in the street just below us, and looking out saw an *arba* drawn by two oxen, in which upon straw lay a man with head and face terribly battered. It turned out that three days previously this fellow, a Koumuik, had inveigled a *Khokhol* (Little Russian) shepherd, serving a rich farmer, Mezentseff by name, out of a village to some distance and had then whipped out a revolver and 'held him up'. The *Khokhol* slowly got at his money and, scratching his head thoughtfully, handed it to the robber; but when the latter, off his guard for the moment, began counting it, his would-be victim struck him down suddenly with his iron-shod crook and proceeded to beat him nearly to death. He was now being brought in to the prison hospital with little if any chance of recovery. But that was not all. We next learned that only yesterday Mezentseff himself and an unfortunate Government surveyor, Voloshin, who chanced to be with him, had been attacked and killed and the farm and farm-stock looted. Baron Ungern-Sternberg, Governor of the district, had gone in pursuit with a squadron of mounted police; 'but', said our informant, 'what 's the good of that? They won't catch them,' and, for all I know to the contrary, they never did. What interested us most, however, was the fact that our own immunity was attributed to the fact that so many valiant 'adventurers' had been busily engaged elsewhere! Mezentseff's farm, it is true, was some 65 miles away, near the Caspian, but 65 miles and more was a day's ride only to Tchetchen or Ingoosh robbers.[2] A similar attack, though without loss of life, within 10 miles of Khasaf-yourt in November 1911 was attributed to Zelim-khan, most famous of Caucasian brigands,

[1] I have since seen very similar bows from much farther afield in the Pitt-Rivers Collection, Oxford; and Tchakh Akhreeyeff described something similar, but shooting leaden bullets, as in use among the Tchetchens up to the introduction of fire-arms. 'Tchetchen popular Tales', *Gor.*, vol. iv, p. 14 *n.* Slings were in actual use in the early years of the nineteenth century in Digoria and elsewhere. Weidenbaum, 'Use of stone and metals, &c.' *Izviestia Kavkazskavo Otdiela*, I.R.G.O., vol. iv, p. 138, henceforth referred to as *Izv.*

[2] Lutf Ali Khan rode 95 miles in 13 hours on his horse Karran. Chodzko, *Specimens*, &c., p. 420, and see Suppl. Note, p. 145.

whose band on that occasion numbered from fifty to sixty men, and drove off two-score head of horned cattle and eight horses. 'The pursuit of the bandits gave no results', said the local newspaper from which I take the account.[1]

We started for the station that night at 3 a.m. in pouring rain. Soon afterwards, feeling something hard at the back of the carriage, I put in my hand and drew out a Berdan rifle. I inquired of the driver what it meant, and he, poor fellow, a Russian, said, shrugging one shoulder: 'Well, I shall have to return alone'—half a mile or so—'and I fear to lose my horses.'

Next morning (June 15th) at 5.30 a.m. we reached Grozny, where Messrs. Spiess, Maresch, and Culbertson (an oil-well sinker of note) joined us and we went on together to Siernovodsk ('Sulphur waters'), where, leaving the train, we drove to 'Wolf's Gate', already mentioned, and inspected oil claims. Returning to the railway, Nitabukh, Ourousbi, and I drove on to Slieptsovskaya *stanitsa* and, after a short rest, on again to other oil-land, where we spent much time endeavouring from a blue-print to identify certain plots that were then in the market. Eventually we took the train at Karaboulak at 8 p.m. and reached Vladikavkaz at 11 in a deluge of rain; and if this journey as I have written it fails to give an idea of something fairly exhausting the fault must be mine.

One amusing episode occurred when we were resting in the open between Karaboulak *stanitsa* and the railway. A *telyéga* came past us driven by a small boy and filled with a bevy of Cossack women and girls, some of them quite good-looking. They stopped and began chaffing and laughing, especially with Ourousbi, whose gallant figure evidently pleased them. But presently they realized that I had turned the camera on them; then, indeed, there was a hullabaloo! They shrieked at me, at Ourousbi, at Nitabukh, all at once and at the top of their lusty voices; and meantime those nearest him cuffed and pummelled the unfortunate boy and forced him to drive off at a gallop. I had gone a little way back to focus them and failed to catch the meaning of it all. When I made inquiry Ourousbi shrugged his shoulders and said: 'Why, they wanted to be paid! So I offered them 20 *kopeks* (5*d.*) but they demanded a *rouble, a whole rouble!*' Said I:

[1] For Zelim-khan's other, more notable exploits and death see Suppl. Note, *Zelim-khan*, vol. ii, p. 90.

'Well, why not? I'd have given them a rouble *each* if necessary!' 'A rouble each!' and Ourousbi's face of dismay and astonishment was a sight worth seeing. 'Why, Iván Ivánovitch, for a rouble each—for a rouble each—for . . . well', with sudden confusion . . . 'oh, let's go on!'

I left Vladikavkaz either that night or the next and went straight to St. Petersburg, where I must have arrived, I think, on June 18th.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE. *Mount Casius.* There are, or were, two elevations so called, both at the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean and not very far apart, the duplication of the name arising from the fact that on each in classic times stood a shrine or temple dedicated to one and the same deity—Zeus Casius (Κάσιος), Ceraunius; later, Jupiter Ammon. Of the one we read[1] that 'the real boundary of Egypt and Syria is a sand dune of no great height—Pompey was killed at its foot'. His tomb was on its western flank and near by was

> *'that Serbonian bog*
> *Betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius old*
> *Where armies whole have sunk.'*
>
> Milton, *P.L.* ii. 592.

Of the other, General Chesney[2] tells us that it rises abruptly from the sea at the western extremity of the bay of Antioch, as a culminating peak of 5,318 feet, 'very different from the height implied in Pliny's remark that a spectator on the mountain, by simply turning his head from left to right could see both day and night.' Julian the Apostate tells us how when hastening from the temple of Zeus Casius to do honour to the Sun God, Apollo, at his shrine in the Daphne suburb of Antioch, on the day of his yearly festival, he found, to his great astonishment, instead of the looked-for procession, 'with beasts of sacrifice, libations, choruses in honour of the God, incense, and the youths of the city their souls adorned with all holiness and themselves attired in white and splendid raiment', one solitary priest with a single goose as offering.[3] Julian's death in battle took place

[1] *Comm. on Herodotus*, vol. i, p. 161 (How and Wells).

[2] *Euphrates and Tigris*, 1850, vol. i, p. 386.

[3] Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 94, quoting *Juliani Opera*, ii, p. 467; Wright, ii, 487–9.

some months later, but, evidently, 'the Galilean' had then already conquered!

Pocock in his *Travels*[1] relates how from the eastern point of Cyprus he saw plainly 'Mount Cassius near Antioch'.

I take the following from Petrie.[2] 'Bingham, the learned author of the *Origines Ecclesiasticae*, in his VIIth Book, Chap. ii, which treats "Of the several Sorts of Monks and their Ways of living in the Church." "Sect. 2—The first called Anchorets, 'Αναχωρηταὶ" . . . [writes]: Some of these lived in caves—ἐν σπηλαίοις—as Chrysostom (*Hom.* 17, ad. Pop. Antioch, p. 215) says the monks of Mt. Casius, near Antioch, did . . .'

That Chrysostom was venerated in the Caucasus for his sufferings in the service of Christ Jesus would appear from the fact that at Doushet, on the Georgian road, in the church of St. Nicholas, is a large icon in form of a cross, having in the middle panel St. Gregory Nazianzene, above him the Lord God of Sabaoth, St. Peter below; on one wing Basil the Great, on the other *St. John Chrysostom, as an exile at Pitsounda*, on the Caucasian Black Sea coast.[3]

In that very excellent work, *Le grand Larousse* (1867) I find a geographical 'howler' so remarkable as to be worth citing: 'Casius Mons, montagne célèbre dans l'antiquité . . . C'était aussi le nom d'un fleuve, l'Amour ou le Samur actuel d'après Mannert, fleuve qui se jette dans l'Océan Pacifique au S. de Derbend.'

I find in Professor Wainwright's article 'Letopolis', *J.E.A.*, xviii, p. 169:

'Zeus Casius accepted Hadrian's sacrifice on the summit of his holy mountain by a stroke of lightning, which took not only the victim but the priest also.'

[1] Pinkerton's *Voyages*, &c., 1811, vol. x, p. 581.
[2] George Petrie, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*, &c., 2nd ed., 1845, p. 422.
[3] Iosseliani, *Zap.*, vol. v, art. 'Doushet', p. 31.

IV

A VISIT TO SANIBÁ (1899)

An autumn landscape — An oil-spouter — Transformation — A limestone gorge — Sanibá — Ourousbi's house — The unburied dead — Up the Kavri-don — A hidden glacier — No luck — The beauty of the night — Water-mills — The Ganal-don — Sulphur baths — A night near the glacier — Ourousbi's line — Marriage custom — Christian survivals — The patrol.

IN the autumn I paid another visit to the Caucasus and reached Grozny on the night of October 3rd direct from St. Petersburg. Nearing Armavir, I jotted down: 'Steppes on both sides burnt up, all dull yellow or at best a greenish grey and that only in places. Not a flower to be seen with the solitary exception of a bloom here and there on the tough wild succory. *Kourgans* show the sweep of the scythe, the grass grows well over the dead—there are buried Caesars here, or Attilas, may be. Where the maize has been harvested some stalks are still standing, whose ragged leaves stream out like the battle-torn sails of a frigate from the stumps of her shattered masts. Still more desolate are the blackened sunflower stalks, their glory gone, their seedless disks like burnt-out worlds. Northwards a couple of miles away a long ridge of low hills shows yet more dull and bare than the lowland, their irregular folds marked by the dark lines of the gullies washed out by the rains and crossed diagonally by the thin yellow ribbon of a road, above which a column of dust shows where a *tarantass* or *telyéga*, ox-wain or troop of beasts, descends into the plain. At their foot a fringe of silvery willows here and there tells that they form one bank of a river, but from the train no water is visible; all is dry, parched even, and one envies the great hawks and eagles floating and flapping lazily overhead, in search of prey, for a few strokes of their powerful wings can take them within sight of running water, a few more within reach of it!

'In places, as we journey on, we see a stretch of plough on which oxen and buffaloes strain before their furrows. Haystacks, round, with conical tops, looking smaller than they really are in the vast expanse, stand scattered abroad in scores and in hundreds. Hobbled horses jump a pace or two and again crop the withered herbs. No hedge or ditch, no visible division of any kind exists except the

single furrows that show where one man's land ends and another's begins . . .'

Next day I met various 'oil' people of more or less importance, including an American, McGarvie, who, poor fellow, was subsequently murdered by natives. On the 5th I rode with Parker to the oil-fields and lunched with Culbertson, who took us to well No. 45, of his boring, belonging to a Belgian Company. It had 'fountained' on September 13th, at a depth of 623 feet, giving 2,500,000 poods of oil in three and a half days, and was still yielding 15,000 poods daily without baling. The rush of oil had smashed the derrick to pieces, as also a heavy pump, hurling the latter high in air. On the other hand I saw a long fid of sand the diameter of the bore—16 inches—which had been thrown out and had come down unbroken, though now quite friable. Altogether, thousands of tons of sand were thrown up with the oil, and it was interesting to see the combined effect of these two agents, working at high speed, on the hardest materials. Timbers, 12 inches thick, were sawn in two in 15 minutes, though sheathed in iron, and a pointed tool of tempered steel, standing in the shed, worn by the passing stream of oil and sand from one and one-quarter inch to a knife-edge in three days. Stones were thrown a thousand feet in air.

I rode more than 30 miles that day on a shockingly bad saddle, though not a native one, and that evening, dining at Maresch's, his little girl shrieked with laughter when, between the soup and the fish, I had to beg for a cushion to sit upon! Next morning Parker and I were up at 4 o'clock to catch the train to Vladikavkaz, whence he went on to Tiflis and I, after visits to various officials and lawyers, found that I had at least three days of enforced idleness before me, so far as business was concerned, while waiting for documents from St. Petersburg.

Now, it so happened that Ourousbi had a nephew, Salamon by name, a lad of twenty, serving as under-porter at the Hôtel de France, and when I spoke to him and inquired after his uncle he sprang upon me, 'Why not let me take you to him, Iván Ivánovitch? It is not far and he would be very glad to see you; you could shoot *tour* and stags, and mountain-turkeys, and, who knows? perhaps a bear!' I had long since given up shooting, but without making vows on the subject. If something in that line happened to attract me it was still quite

possible that I might try whether hand and eye had lost their cunning. As a matter of fact I never did shoot again, and sport is the one thing, or one of the things, that my readers must not expect to find in these pages, unless vicariously. But the idea of taking Ourousbi by surprise in his mountain-fastness pleased me greatly, and the necessary arrangements were soon made. His home was at Sanibá (4,759 ft.) an *aoul* some 30 versts (20 miles) NNW. of Vladikavkaz in the valley of the Kavri-don—a small tributary of the Ganal-don which flows to the Ghizel-don, and that into the Terek—and not much more than 6 miles, as the crow flies, due west of the Georgian road from the picturesque village of Tchmee, 2 versts south of which a bridle-path led up the *Vorovskaya Balka* (Robber's Gully) of the Souargom torrent, celebrated for the archaeological treasures found there,[1] and over the Khiakh pass (6,734 ft.) to Sanibá, with a rise of 3,698 feet and a drop of, roughly, 2,000 feet.

Another bridle-path left the road a little short of Balta, the first post-station on the way to Tiflis, and by a lower pass (*c.* 5,300 ft.?) reached the Ganal-don near its junction with the Ghizel-don, 8 miles by road below Sanibá. The only road or track, a rough one, available for wheeled traffic, led from Vladikavkaz westward to Ghizel-aoul, then nearly due north and up the river gorges to Sanibá. There were thus three routes to choose from, and I decided to go one way and come back another in order to see as much of the country as possible; and I elected to begin with the drive, so as to have the pleasure of Ourousbi's company riding back by one or other of the alternate routes at his choice. Salamon undertook to find a pair-horse *povozka* while I laid in a small stock of provisions. I also succeeded in borrowing an English saddle, much the worse for wear but still serviceable, from a friendly old Ossetine with whom I had scraped acquaintance in the hotel. Salamon came back with news that the *povozka* would be round in ten minutes' time, and begged permission to employ that interval in donning his native costume. This I gave willingly, but was hardly prepared for the result. My guide and companion to be made his appearance a little shamefacedly just as the horses drove up, resplendent in a *tcherkeska* of brightest chocolate-colour with *gazerei* (cartridge cases, across the breast) of silver gilt, a *beshmet* of pale blue silk, a gorgeously pommelled *kinjal*,

[1] See Appendix A.

also gilt, a tall *papakha* (sheepskin hat) white and woolly, a *bashlyk*, and a *bourka*.[1] It nearly took my breath away; but though a good deal overdone it was the native dress right enough and very much more to my liking than the under-porter's uniform reminiscent of Paris and Berlin for which it had been exchanged. Salamon's own satisfaction, in any case, was evident, and I was not going to dash it by even the slightest hint at disapproval.

We drove first (Oct. 8th) to Ghizel across the plain, then, painfully, up the widespread river-shingles over which the water flowed rapidly in two or three channels of moderate width but fairly deep, for, crossing them, we were twice up to the seat of the *povozka* in water, I getting very wet, while our huge loaf of bread broke adrift and went floating away downstream beyond recovery. We met many friendly Ossetines on the way, including one of Ourousbi's brothers, and all seemed genuinely pleased that I was going to Sanibá. The scenery was very fine; at first well-wooded foot-hills—cretaceous—but rising ever higher to the limestone range, forest-covered except where the cliffs rose sheer from the valley or nearly so, the stratification, as usual with this formation, contributing greatly to the effect. Wide ledges sloped upwards at an angle of 45°, bearing trees, mainly beeches, in all the glory of their autumn colouring; the gorge narrowed until there was barely room for road and river, but 5 versts short of Sanibá the limestones gave way to clay-slates and schists, the country opened out, trees disappeared, and a great snowy ridge came into view at the base of Kazbek. Soon we came through Lower to neighbouring Upper Sanibá, a picturesque medley of water-mills, towers, haystacks, and houses, of women working and men loafing, of horses and donkeys, ducks, geese, and children, many of the last-named with lovely velvety eyes, and persons not abnormally dirty. The *Starshiná*, who had met me once in Vladikavkaz, was the first to recognize me and called out to Ourousbi—who was about to succeed him in that office—'There's Iván Ivánovitch!' Just then Hatoo, a mighty hunter, clothed all in rags but a fine tall fellow, came swinging along downhill from the upper village, on his way to spend a week with friends elsewhere. The moment it was suggested that Iván Ivánovitch *must* shoot a *tour* he abandoned his journey and turned back with us to Sanibá. According to him *tour* were plentiful, as also were deer and

[1] See description of the Circassian dress, pp. 125–8.

the great *megaloperdix*. Arrived at Ourousbi's house we arranged plans for the morrow, made a light meal—at my particular request—and turned in early. The houses in Sanibá were much like the Tchetchen *saklias*, but Ourousbi had paper on his walls, framed photographs of friends, books, pictures, a bedstead, Vienna chairs, and other articles. On this occasion the ladies of the house did not appear.

I learned that the Ingooshee had driven off five bullocks belonging to Sanibá, including two of Ourousbi's, and four from Lower Sanibá yesterday. They were out to bring in hay on sledges and were stolen at night. Few of the men here could speak Russian. The majority were, nominally at least, of the Orthodox Faith, but some were Mussulmans. There was no *metchet*, but a well-built Orthodox church, and close by one of the ancient octagonal tombs with, alongside it, a quite modern upright Muhammadan tombstone garishly decorated in colours. There were other old tombs, rectangular in shape, and, looking through the usual openings, I saw in some of them rows of bones and skulls, in others mummified bodies laid close together. These buildings were about 6 feet wide inside by 12 feet in length. Some had two tiers above ground with bones or bodies on all three levels. These were said to have belonged to a former unknown race, but others were admittedly Ossetine, and in these I noticed bottles and jars once filled, Ourousbi told me, with water lest the dead should crave drink in vain. These tombs, though not ancient, belonged, likewise, to the past, for the dead were now buried.

Next day (Oct. 9th) we started early—Ourousbi, I, Tchernyavsky (a friendly, simple-minded Russian so devoted to sport that he was content to settle down for life in this Ossetine village), Hatoo, the ragged, grey-bearded Zarabee, and Murza, all three noted hunters. Salamon, too, was there, though not 'in all his glory'—and riding up nearly to the source of the Kavri-don we came to a semicircle of black, rocky mountains with snow upon them wherever it could lodge. Looking northward down the valley Sanibá lay visible in an irregular hollow backed by the turf-covered limestones, with, in places, a good deal of birch-scrub in which deer were said to harbour. Far in the distance a hill was visible, near Darg-kokh. We slept that night—or tried to—in a small cave, swarming with fleas, and next day (Oct. 10th) started on foot at 2 a.m., and after an easy climb of one hour lay down in wet grass to wait for dawn. We were apparently

Sanibá

on a terminal *moraine*, strewn with innumerable boulders under which, how far downhill we could not determine, went the glacier that fed the Kavri-don. It was possibly a case such as Dr. Freshfield speaks of as occurring above the Dykh-su Karaoulka and not rarely in the Arctic regions, where many of the glaciers in their retreat have left behind them buried tracts of ice, protected from dissolution by rocky debris.[1] The vegetation consisted mainly of clumps of low-growing rhododendron, a white-flowered species as one lingering blossom told me. The snowy ridge rose above us to the south, and on it Orion stood upright in all his glory. Northward we looked down the narrow valley of the Kavri-don, flanked by mighty brown ridges above which on our left shone Cassiopeia, on our right the Bear, while down the centre, overhead but inclining slightly to the west, streamed the Milky Way—all these glowing in unimaginable splendour. I have never anywhere, before or since, seen the major constellations so majestically, so magnificently *posed* in relation to the landscape.

When leaving the *aoul* some colts started to follow us; Ourousbi drove them back and corralled them. 'Surely', said I, 'there is no danger from the Ingooshee here?' 'Not much, but there are four-legged wolves!' It was still dark when we climbed higher amongst the boulders to a point commanding at not more than one hundred yard's distance a favourite trail of the *tour*. While seated there a *megaloperdix* swept down so close overhead that my cap was stirred by the beat of his wings. A little later, when the sun had risen, a covey of black game passed near by, then a fox came right up to Tchernyavsky, halted abruptly, stared a moment or two and slipped silently away, just as four *tour* came in sight out of range on our left. They disappeared behind boulders and when next seen were on the other side of the *moraine*, far away. Thrice before dawn a veil of white mist had crept up the valley, almost reaching us, but each time had retreated at a breath of air from the snow-fields above us, withdrawn as it seemed by invisible hands.

At our highest point there was evidently still a fine flora, but all was now withered. In the crevice of the rocks grew a plant which I took to be a holly-fern, but yellowed and with a white edge. Ourousbi said that if you crushed it and rubbed your eyes with the

[1] *The Exploration of the Caucasus*, by Douglas W. Freshfield, London, 1902—hereafter referred to as *Exploration*—vol. i. 154, vol. ii. 258, and see *post*, p. 136.

juice they would smart terribly, which I believed, but afterwards the sight would be much improved, which I doubted.

We saw no more game of any kind, and my companions were all more or less disappointed, chiefly, I think, on my account; but I had drunk deep of the beauty of the night and of the mountains, and their commiseration, though kind, was, unknown to them, completely out of place. Such things, however, are best left unexplained. I smiled and thanked them.

The river, in which trout were plentiful, ran babbling through Sanibá village, supplying numerous duck-ponds on the way through artificial channels. Lower down, the stream turned the turbines of many small flour-mills—throughout the mountains each household had its own, some all of stone, others of wood or of wattle and daub.[1]

Very similar but even ruder mills excited Walter Scott's curiosity and interest in the Shetland Islands. He writes: 'There is certainly something very extraordinary to a stranger in Zetland corn-mills. They are of the smallest possible size; the wheel which drives them is horizontal, and the cogs are turned diagonally to the water. The beam itself stands upright and is inserted in a stone quern of the old-fashioned construction, which it turns round, and thus performs its duty . . . These mills are thatched over in a little hovel, which has much the air of a pigsty. There may be 500 such mills on one island not capable, any one of them, of grinding above a sackful of corn at a time.'[2] Lord Bryce, having examined some of the Kazbek water-mills, exclaims: 'Civilization in the Caucasian countries has not got so far as a windmill: at any rate we never saw one.' But, where fast-

[1] Klaproth coming from Kobi and Lower Tchmee reached Sanibá on foot and thence made, it seems, a valiant attempt on Kazbek. As nearly as I can make out from his figures he reached a height of about 8,000 feet, say 3,150 feet above Sanibá, not quite half-way up the mountain. In his book (*Reise*, &c., 1812, vol. i, pp. 608–9) there is an excellent description of an Ingoosh water-mill, which is that of the mountains generally. It includes the personal statement: 'I know of no other people which with such poor materials and so little to help them has attained so simply and completely the end in view . . .' For more than a century the Prince of Plagiarists has had full credit for both the description and this generous appreciation of the Ingoosh achievement; but they are copied word for word, together with several more pages on the Inghooshee, and much else, without the slightest acknowledgement, from the anonymous volume I refer to as the *Tagebuch* of 1781, and shall quote from frequently throughout these pages. See Bibliography and Index.

[2] *Pirate*, Note 1. In chap. ii of the Waverley edition there is a drawing by W. Collins, R.A., of a Shetland corn-mill dating from his visit to the Islands in 1842.

running water is ever available, to rely upon capricious winds in mountain valleys and gorges would, surely, be the reverse of progressive![1]

Most of the houses in Sanibá were of stone, the flat roofs made of little slates, though one or two had roofs of iron.

After lunch and a rest at Sanibá we rode off again at 2 o'clock, crossed the ridge, some five or six hundred feet up, to the Ganal-don, the next river westward, and followed up on its left bank to the glacier whence it issues. This we reached at 5 o'clock—a rough ride with more than one troublesome stone-shoot to traverse, which we did on foot, leading our horses. The valley is very narrow and shut in, like its neighbour of the Kavri-don, by steep and lofty ridges. A path comes over the eastern ridge from our yesterday's shooting-place, but the descent on this western side was too dangerous to risk the horses on. From this glacier—Maili—Kazbek is ascended. From the right, a little higher, comes in the Kolka glacier, at the foot of which occurs, in summer at least, an ice-free ridge of grassland, rock, and clear running water, which apparently tunnels under the foot of the Maili to issue as the Ganal-don.[2] Close to the glacier's end, at a height of about 7,644 feet (Merzbacher), is a hot sulphur-spring, just cool enough for drinking or bathing in, and not too unpleasantly strong in taste or smell. Some very rough bathrooms and dwelling huts, with wooden benches to rest on, formed a primitive 'cure' establishment. We found no one there, but people were said to come in summer to be cured of all kinds of disorders. It struck me, however, that over such roads and paths patients must be fairly robust to reach the baths alive! Ourousbi's brother, ill with Derbend fever (from which I also had suffered), was brought to the sulphur spring, but only grew worse, and it was with much difficulty that they carried him back, unconscious, in an improvised horse-litter.

The *tour* were wont to cross either just below the glacier or above its first ridge some 50 or 60 feet higher. We bivouacked here sheltered by boulders, rose at 4 a.m. (Oct. 11th) to make coffee, and, after scrambling down to the bed of the river and up again, at 6.30 started back for Sanibá through Upper Tmeni-kau, a picturesque village perched high above the Ganal-don, with the usual tombs, of

[1] *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, 1877, p. 80.

[2] See vol. ii, p. 105 and note.

which one large one was crammed with human remains. The floors were broken down and all the poor mummies and skeletons heaped one on top of another, a foot sticking out close to the opening through which I took a photograph with little hope of success. From what I could gather the horrible condition of this tomb was due to the occurrence of plague—probably that mentioned by Klaproth in 1808—when the victims were thrust pell-mell into this and other ancient tombs which till then had remained inviolate through the centuries. Soon after leaving the glacier, when crossing a small side-stream, Ourousbi said: 'I nearly came to grief here! One of our hunters had fallen from the ridge opposite and we came in search of his body. It was winter and I cut steps down in the ice; but they froze over again and I slipped and should have been knocked to bits, but luckily was brought up by a boulder.' 'Did you find the body?' 'Yes, but not then; in spring when the snow melted.' 'Do such accidents often happen?' 'Not often, but in 1895 two of our people were overwhelmed by an avalanche.'

Leaving Sanibá the previous day, Ourousbi, when I rode up on his left, immediately reined in and came up on my other side, saying 'If I failed to give you the place of honour as a guest I should be laughed at!'

When up the hill that morning to catch the horses, close to the village, Ourousbi started twelve of the big partridges which ran some way before taking wing. In winter, when the snows are deep on the Central range, these birds come down in numbers to the limestones and are then easily killed. Lately one was caught alive; frightened by a hawk, it had hidden its head beneath a stone, like an ostrich. Bears keep very high up, close under the snows; they do not hibernate; we are said to have started one yesterday.

At Tmeni-kau one sees very well the line I have already spoken of between the so-called Black and White Mountains—westward away to the ridge beyond Ounal on the Mamisson road, and eastward to beyond Lars and through the Galgai hollow past the Table-mountain (Mat-khokh). We talked much of our proposed ride[1] from the Caspian to the Black Sea through these transverse valleys north of the Main Chain, and finally down beyond Elbrous to Soukhoum-Kalé—the whole of which, alas, we never succeeded in doing.

[1] See p. 26 *ante*.

Near Sanibá they sowed barley, wheat, and oats in rotation, and the fourth year the ground lay fallow, to be dressed with manure before the next sowing. Maize was grown only on the plain. Beer was brewed locally of barley and wild hops; it was slightly aperient.[1] Speaking of marriage customs Ourousbi enlarged on the burdensome *kalim*. A poor man could not marry on account of the 500 roubles (£50) wasted in this way, so carried off his bride in the old fashion.[2]

Trinity Sunday—Sanibá (in Georgian Sameba) means 'Trinity'—was celebrated at a certain place on a hill above the village, with eating, drinking, singing, and dancing. The pagan sacrifice of cattle, sheep, or goats continued; the meat was eaten and the horns were set up in honour of the gods, adorned with bits of white wool round which gold thread was twisted. This was the chief holiday here. That of St. George fell in November. In both cases, no doubt, heathen festivals had been transferred and adapted to Christianity, but the peculiarity in the Caucasus was that in many parts, as here, a reversion had taken place. Pagan remains in Christianity are well known in many countries and, indeed, are innumerable. Here we had them in plenty; but, in addition, Christian remains in full paganism, which is much less common. It was as though St. Bridget, for instance, had doffed her Christian cloak and become once more the heathen goddess.[3] St. George, who in one Ossetine story has two wives, and, in general, was far from content with that allowance, was said to have sojourned once and again in this neighbourhood. Formerly when a drought occurred the inhabitants made a pilgrimage to the source of the Kavri-don, where they prayed for rain. We shall hear more of all these matters on subsequent visits to Sanibá.

After a rest and food we rode on due east over the Khiakh Pass and came out on the Georgian road above Tchmee, where we found ourselves enveloped in mist and rain. Soon afterwards we met a solitary rider, an Ingoosh patrol; and after passing Balta were suddenly challenged by eight horsemen. It was already dark and I wondered. . . . !

[1] See vol. ii, p. 99.

[2] For abduction see vol. i, p. 265, and vol. ii, pp. 221–4; for *kalim* Ourousbi's own case, vol. i, p. 267. The money was not all wasted, by any means, but only that considerable part spent on entertaining the two families and the neighbours.

[3] *Golden Bough*, abr. ed. 1925, p. 135.

But Ourousbi, after exchanging a word or two with them, called out '*Svoyee*' ('Our own'). I was introduced, and after friendly conversation and a good deal of chaff on Ourousbi's part, for which he had a gift, we rode on to Vladikavkaz. He explained that these men were merely a newly formed body of road-guards. 'But why Ingooshee?' 'Oh, set a thief to catch a thief!'