THE RUGGED FLANKS OF CAUCASUS

By

JOHN F. BADDELEY

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

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Ouroushi

XXI

DIGORIA-BALKARIA (1902)

Khoussou — Stir-Digor, its origin — Digor families — A sacred tree — Picturesque place-names — A waterfall — Boulá — Asteuli-avtzekh — An English writer vindicated — Karaoulka — Gorge of the Dykh-su — Kousparti — Balkarian families — Their towers — Over seven passes — The red limestones — Tubenel — A much-abused giant — Tcheghem — The Balkarókoff tower — Christian remains — Gorge of the Djilki-su — Andromeda.

WE now crossed the Ouroukh to the left bank, Ourousbi snapshotting me on the bridge. We rode upstream with granite on either side to where Billaghi-kom-don came steeply down, in a cascade of foam, reminding me of the *Fiume latte* below Varenna—when it flows! But the surroundings were ugly—the sides of the gully bare, of light-coloured earth stuck, like a half-baked cake, with stones for plums, hardly relieved by a few small hazel and berberis bushes. The foam turns to clear blue water in the Ouroukh, but soon disappears in that turbid stream. Butterflies were very noticeable. Red-admirals, Camberwell Beauties, one fine Apollo, and, on a bare patch of earth, a group containing dozens of orangey Clouded-yellows surrounded by thirty or forty small Blues, just as though they knew and approved the theory of complementary colours. The valley here was certainly not beautiful to my eye, though I have since seen it so described. A slightly higher level would probably make all the difference. The *aoul* of Akhsaou was out of sight high above us. Pines were becoming numerous.

At 11.30, having an easy day before us with no pass to climb, we called a halt at Moska, a little above the infall of the Karagom-don, a very beautiful spot—green, terraced meadows strewn with huge, light-grey, gneiss-granite blocks and intersected by the two rushing torrents, glacier-fed both of them. Looking back north the view was still plain enough; westward the land rose high almost immediately above the Ouroukh; but south and south-west were wooded slopes and narrow defiles and great rock peaks backed by glittering mountains, with a ridge to the east so precipitous that it seemed almost a miracle that the snow could cling there. From Moska the granite

gave way to argillaceous schists—succeeded presently by the crystalline schists of the Main Chain.[1]

Riding on we reached Khoussou at 4.45 p.m., having taken it very easily owing to the great heat and the fact that we had not far to go. I was disappointed to find that the horses were already showing signs of exhaustion, for which there was hardly sufficient reason in the distances gone or the nature of the roads so far traversed—rough and steep they were, indeed, but they might have been worse. The truth is that grain was scarce and the system of hospitality made it difficult to find a remedy without giving offence. Barley—which in the Caucasus very commonly takes the place of oats for horses—was not yet cut at this elevation, though it looked ripe enough, especially on the left bank of the river some way above Moska, where its golden terraces contrasting with emerald-green meadows on the other bank, a forest-covered mountain beyond, and the great Tana glacier backed by mighty Laboda (14,173 ft.) ahead of us—all this under a blue sky flecked with clouds—made up a scene of uncommon beauty.

On the way Ourousbi had obtained the address of a man at Khoussou who would be certain to receive us hospitably. Soon after crossing the Ouroukh we had met him, as it turned out on inquiry. He was on his way north, but begged us to go on to his house where his brother would look after us meantime, and he himself would be back at night if only he could succeed in overtaking some Kabardán friends we had passed on the way and transfer to them the business he had in hand. On arrival we met the brother just a few yards from the house. He took our horses away with hardly a word and we stood on the road, rather forlornly, talking to an old blind man for seven or eight minutes, thinking ourselves for once rather badly treated. Then the brother came back and led us into the *kounakskaya* when, to our surprise, the blind man proved to be his father and the head of the family—which would of course account for the son's taciturnity in his presence. He told us that he remembered seeing Shamil when he crossed the Terek; he was then twelve years old, and that was in 1846; so that he was sixty-eight now.

Khoussou stands barely 2 versts above Stir-Digor (Great Digor),

[1] Favre, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

the chief place in Mountain Digoria, the origin of which according to Pfaff was as follows:

When Tsargos, a semi-mythical hero, who was searching for a suitable place to settle in, lay one day on the ground tired out and near to death from starvation, a black eagle flapped past overhead carrying a *megaloperdix* in its claws and—startled at the sight of him—dropped the bird at his feet. Giving thanks to God, Tsargos settled on that very spot and brought thither migrants from other *aouls*. His brother Shervash went to Abkhazia and became the founder of the princely family of the Shervashidze. Tsargos had three sons, Karaboug, Taimaz, and Kantemir, from whom were descended the existing families of the Karabougayeffs, Taimazoffs, and Kantemiroffs, the terminations, of course, being Russian.[1]

Later, probably in the sixteenth century at earliest, came a certain Badil from the famous city of Madjar near the junction of the Kouma with the Podkoumka on the northern plains, having with him a band of fighting men carrying firearms, which until then were unknown in Digoria. Badil succeeded in establishing a kind of suzerainty over the Digorians, conditional, says popular tradition, on his defending them against the raiding Kabardáns and Balkarians. The oppressive rule of the Badilati was put an end to in 1781 by our 'Anonymous', as related by him in his *Tagebuch* of that year;[2] but their descendants, at the time I write of, still claimed superior rank, though the Russian Government ignored their pretensions. The Digorians speak a dialect of their own, differing considerably from ordinary Ossetine, than which it is more primitive. The country—roughly the basins of the Ouroukh and Dourdour—stretches from the snows and glaciers of the Main Chain to the northern plains. To the west is Balkaria, to the east the valley of the Ar-don.

In agreement with the above our new friends told me that the 'privileged' families in Digoria were the Badilati and Sargashati, to the latter of which they themselves belonged. They were of Georgian origin, from the Saourasidze (i.e. Shervashidze) family of Letshora. This Digorian branch was entirely Mussulman; there

[1] 'Materials for the History of the Ossetines', in *Gor.*, vol. v, pp. 84, 85. Professor Barthold (*Encycl. of Islam*, art. 'Abkhazia') tells us that 'about the year 1325 the house of Shervashidze (alleged to be descended from the dynasty of Shirwan-Shah) was enfeoffed with Abkhazia', which it ruled until 1865. [2] Pp. 99, 103–21.

were five households of them—two Karabougayeffs dwelling at Ak-Sargheen, two Taimazoffs, and one Kantemiroff, these last three at Khoussou. The rest of the population was Christian with the exception of two Sousrayeff families and a few *koumags* (semi-serfs) equivalent to the *kavdasari* in Ossetia proper. The Taimaz-avtzekh (pass) was called after the founder of the family of that name who entered Digoria over it. The fine glacier in view was the Tana Tsiti —'Tsiti' and 'Tchete' meaning 'glacier,' said the old man, were one. Our pass to Balkaria was the Astouli-avtzekh, 'Astouli' being the place just beyond (west of) the pass so called by the Balkarians, but more of this presently. The Digorians, the Donifars people, and those of Walla-kom-don (Aigamughi-don), were formerly all mutually hostile. He could not say what 'Digor' meant, but he thought it had reference to their dialect. According to him 'Godi-avtzekh' should be 'Khobee-avtzekh'.

My eye was caught by the family gun, six feet five inches long with a flint lock and ivory stock, inlaid with silver as the barrel was with gold—very beautiful work, the fleur-de-lis being often repeated. The barrel was round save for a very slight rise in the middle and rifled inside with seven grooves. The stock was prolonged to the very end of the barrel.

We were told that the octagonal tombs we had passed belonged to the Koubateeyeffs, who owned the great tower with battlemented walls next it at—I think—Makhtchesk. One of them, Tazret, is buried there.

Here too, as at Djimee and elsewhere, they tell the time of year by the points where the sun peeps over the mountains or vanishes behind them. Some of the older men can tell the seasons better this way, it is said, than other people by the printed calendar.[1]

The *samovar* was brought in at 7 p.m. with tea of good quality and what the French call *petits fours*. At 10 p.m. supper followed, consisting mainly of roast chicken and chicken-broth. There were spoons for the soup, but fingers, as usual, took the place of forks—or, to put it more correctly, fingers, the natural implements, were not replaced by forks. Many excuses were made for the absence of mutton, though the first given was quite enough—the flocks were all away on the mountain pastures and the horses too, so it would have

[1] *Ante*, vol. i, pp. 168, 187; vol. ii, p. 63.

been a difficult job to get a sheep to the kitchen in time even for 10 o'clock supper. At tea I had inquired about certain sacred trees I had heard of and later I walked down to the river to see one which proved to be a large-sized maple, round which each year on the 1st of September the people of Khoussou, the hay-harvest ended, came together, killed a bull and one or more sheep with the usual ceremonies, and proceeded to feast and pray.[1] Beer, too, was brewed and freely imbibed. I drank a glass of it and found it good, though hardly up to the mark set by Tmeni-kau in spite of the fact that Digoria was famous for it—so at least Ourousbi said.

Next morning (Aug. 26th) we woke to brilliant sunshine and cloudless sky, favoured by which we set out on our way to Balkaria. The place-names were—as, of course, might be expected in such conditions—descriptive, and, almost necessarily, picturesque. Thus the first little stream we crossed was called *Khouisadi-don*, which Ourousbi translated 'angel-village-river'. A little beyond Khoussou I was shown a second sacred tree, a venerable beech this time, where a festival was held at the beginning of the hay-harvest. We next came to the *Hourri-komi-don* or 'stony-defile-river', looking back from which we had a good view of *Maskouta-tsiti*, 'the tower glacier', while nearer at hand was *Gastanti-zai-wayen*, 'the path-of-the-avalanche', where snow comes down in masses from the opposite Main-Chain ridge and forms a permanent viaduct over the Ouroukh, which here threads a very narrow cleft of the granite. The avalanches come crashing down the steep slopes of the mountain in summer leaving them bare and green, but in the cleft below snow never melts the year round. Riding on, we had below us *Boldorti-lakhsoran* ('lakhsoran' meaning a waterfall), a remarkable fall of the Ouroukh down a cleft from 50 to 150 feet beneath us, so narrow that at its commencement men jump across it. A little farther on, but to northward of both river and bridle-path, a very fine series of cascades, beginning high above us, plunged deeply down under the bridge we rode over. This rare feature in Caucasian scenery was called *Bairadi-lakhsoran*.

Presently we stopped at a shieling, of which there were many

[1] It is, perhaps, worthy of note that here, as at Kakadour, we find both sacred trees and calendars of stone, or rock alinements. I commend the fact to our Druid enthusiasts at home.

along our route, at the earnest request of some shepherds. We were now riding over alpine meadows delightfully fresh and green, with many small stacks of hay, and running water everywhere. The 'Stulevesk', more correctly the *Astouli-avtzekh* or 'Astouli-pass', was right ahead of us with a snow peak showing above it, perhaps Koshtan-tau. Dismounting, we found shelter from the sun's rays under a *bourka* stretched over some birch-tree branches supported by one great pole, forming a very effective and airy sunshade. We ate our own bread and tinned tunny,[1] to which a friendly shepherd soon added some boiled mutton-bones—we had refused his offer to kill a sheep for us—and an abundant supply of excellent *airan*. He was from Stir-Digor. When Ourousbi pointed out to him that our horses were eating his hay, he said gravely, 'Whatever guests do is a benefit, not an injury; my relations also travel at times and are hospitably entertained'.[2] He then disappeared for a while and came back presently with a lad or two bearing a small bench on which they set out for us the mutton, maize bread, and the usual sauce made up of garlic and soured milk. Having eaten our fill—making this our luncheon—we took to the usual profitless but amusing occupation of augury by shoulder-blade bone.

On our left, looking up the pass, was *Tsoukhpun-avtzekh*; just below it the valley of the Ouroukh widens out and is covered with stones except where marshes of considerable extent have presumably swallowed them up. We had crossed the river twice and found it, even here, a powerful stream, fed from three separate hollows or gullies; this at, I should say, rather less than 8,000 feet. By now great clouds were collecting all round us and I feared a change in the weather, but the natives declared that evening clouds were as guests who only stayed till morning; whereas morning clouds or mists were likely enough to outstay their welcome and might fairly be looked upon with, at least, grave suspicion. That being so we decided to bivouac where we were at the foot of the pass.

I have forgotten all this time to explain that at Khoussou we had made an addition to our party, in the person of Boulá, son of our host

[1] *The Times* in the autumn of 1931 printed panegyrics on tinned tunny, which had, evidently, never before been duly appreciated in England. I found it good food for a hungry man thirty years before that.

[2] It was, at bottom, this mutual convenience that conditioned old-time hospitality.

there and therefore a Sargashat, for the very good reason that none of us had any knowledge of the country we were about to enter—Balkaria—or of its language. Boulá was young and strong, well mannered and good tempered. He served us well the short time he was with us, but caused much delay at first owing to the fact that the horse he had started on was unshod and not his own property. He now went off to catch another, having no such disabilities, from the herds that were feeding on the mountains round about. He was away till 7 p.m. and came back wet through and horseless. Meantime we had tried to make the best of it in a rough stone shelter built up against a huge overhanging boulder, and here, not without misgiving, we proposed to pass the night. The owner of the dwelling was a horse-herd who set his boy to work without delay to prepare maize *tchourek* for us, which he contrived to do with skill and cleanliness. Boulá disappeared again—up a south gully this time—and came back an hour later empty-handed as before. But he carried us off promptly from our sorry shelter to a large *koutanie* or barn on the end of a spur stretching down from the centre of the pass. He told me that the Digortsi called the *tour* 'dzaboder' instead of 'dzabeeder' as the other Ossetines do. 'Nakhaschbita-khon' of Merzbacher's map was correct, the 'khon' being purely nasal as he pronounced it—French *on*.[1] The stream issuing from the Mosóta glacier was called Mosóta-don or Kharvese-don indifferently.

We slept very well on top of plenty of fresh hay on a staging raised a little above the ground. The barn was a vast, quite shapeless building of rough uncemented stones and huge tree-trunks—used in winter for cattle, which were kept here from November to April feeding on the hay which it was impossible to transport to the villages. Six feet of snow had fallen here the previous winter, but they said that the cold was never very great, which might well be the case, for much snow and great cold seldom go together. *Tour* were plentiful, and many paths used by hunters were pointed out, one of them up the Mosóta glacier. The rest of the year no one lived here except, as then, for hay-harvesting, which was at the moment—Aug. 27th—in full swing; to come to an end, however, by the 1st of September. There were women and children about, taking an active part in the work, otherwise we should have been lodged for the night

[1] I suppose it the equivalent of *khonkh* (mountain) which I heard often in Digoria.

in the adjoining room, the kitchen, with hearth in the middle, a bench or two, pots and pans, &c., and other conveniences.

There were other such *koutanie* lower down the mountain-side, this one being the highest in all the valley, and it was from this point that the pass proper might be said to begin. There were three ways up, right, left, and middle of the spur we were on, the last-named being the shortest but the most difficult to ride.

Boulá with his desperate and hitherto unavailing efforts to catch a horse threatened to become a nuisance—he delayed us, and the mist we had been enveloped in since dawn showed signs of clearing. I wanted to get, if possible, an unobstructed view at the top and feared the clouds would gather. We waited again for him at about 9,000 feet and at last he rejoined us well mounted and smiling—he had a pretty conceit of himself on horseback! All would now be well, he assured us, but it was already high noon, and our troubles, if any, before us. I took a photograph from this point of the beautiful Mosóta glacier, and one of Labóda which is identical with that of Mr. Woolley in Mr. Harold Raeburn's paper in the *Alpine Journal* of May 1915 (vol. xxix, no. 208). We reached the top (10,857 feet) at 3 p.m., the weather being fine though cloudy, not too much so to enjoy to the full the marvellous beauty of the scene but too cloudy to get really satisfactory photographs. None of the great peaks stood out quite clearly, or if they did so it was but momentarily, and with less and less frequency; yet one after the other if not all at one time I did manage to identify Ailama and Shkara, Dykh-tau and Koshtan-tau, Sugan, Doppakh, Nakhashbita, and others of the Northern Chain—with, on the south, Labóda and Ziteli—before the clouds obliterated them all. Von Déchy's very fine series of photographs includes panoramas and single views taken from the Astouli Pass in which the peaks just enumerated, and many more, may be seen.

Leading our horses down—I had led Poti most of the way up, for the narrow final ridge was too steep even for such a reckless *djighit* as Boulá to ride it either way—we passed first some ferruginous springs and then a small marshy lake or tarn, Astouli Tsa, or in Digorian dialect 'Tsad' (Lake). The drainage from the pass westward, increased by torrents coming from glaciers north and south, forms a stream which swells, or is swollen by, the Ak-su torrent fed by the

glaciers of Sugan-bashi and Ghiultshi. Eight versts or so from the pass the stream thus augmented joins the Kara-su, which flows from the Shtoulou and Sharivtsekh-tau glaciers, and is really the Upper Tcherek. A little lower comes in a torrent from the Fytnarghin glacier and, a verst farther on, the Dykh-su, just below the lower of the two Karaoulkas. The Tcherek is only so called on the maps from this point, but with the exception of Dykh-su these names are applied very confusedly even by the natives, as Dinnik tells us.[1]

Speaking generally they are the 'upper waters of the Tcherek', or, briefly, the 'Upper Tcherek'. Thus Grove in 1874, coming over the Sharivtsekh ('Svan', 'Svanetian') Pass in fog and snow, could see nothing at all on the divide; but a little lower down it began to clear and he describes 'the head of the Tcherek valley' as a scene 'of wonderful wildness and grandeur'. Coming next to what we now call the Upper Karaoulka he writes, 'on the western slope a mighty glacier descended; to the East opened a noble lateral valley, thick forest on its southern side, on its northern a great stretch of upland pasture where herds of horses and oxen were grazing. It was a beautiful and striking pastoral scene suggestive of a primitive life . . .' On the way to the Lower Karaoulka (5,338 ft.) 'we sped down the valley of the Upper Tcherek and were able to admire a grandeur surpassing that of the Alps. The vale is of huge size, the wide base often well-nigh level, and the sides very lofty and steep. Above these immense grass walls rise mountains of the greatest majesty and beauty; vast cliffs on which the snow may not rest; white pinnacles jutting far up against the sky, more abrupt than the Alps, seeming to tower far higher, and girding the fair valley with defences mightier even than the noble peaks which rise by the waters of the Visp and the Arne.

'For naked grandeur of mountain form the Tcherek valley is probably unequalled in Europe. In the far recesses of the Himalayas or Andes, perhaps in the Caucasus itself, though it seems little likely, some vale may be found of yet more sublime and commanding beauty; but in the Alps there is nothing so great to behold.'[2] I have quoted these eloquent passages because mist and darkness came about

[1] In a note to V. Teptsoff's article, 'Po istokam Koubani i Tereka', in *Mat.*, vol. xiv, p. 203.

[2] *The Frosty Caucasus*, pp. 95–6.

us as we rode down from the pass and the vision of all this beauty was denied me. I count myself lucky to have seen what I did at the top and on the way up. Astouli-avtzekh, Labóda, Mosóta are names that recall beauty of mountain scenery hardly to be surpassed.

A Russian writer, by the way, brought a charge against our countrymen, not unpleasantly, but in deep ignorance, of which I take this opportunity to clear them, though indeed it is hardly necessary. 'Some resemblance in sound between Tcherek and Terek', writes Teptsoff, 'led astray the English Alpinists. Grove, in his *Frosty Caucasus*, took the sources of the Tcherek for those of the Terek and changed the name of the river accordingly.'[1] Now, Freshfield before him and Grove himself both wrote Tcherek correctly and neither of them could possibly have confounded the sources of the two rivers, as readers of their books will allow. The question arose, therefore, how did the Russian come to formulate a charge absurd in itself and utterly without foundation in fact? I could think of but one solution and taking down my copy of the Russian version of Grove—miscalled 'The Cold Caucasus' (*Kholodny*—it should be *Morozny*—*Kavkaz*)—I found, as expected, that the translator or printer had turned Tcherek into Terek wherever the former river was mentioned! Strange to say, in the account of Vsevolod Miller and Maxim Kovalevsky's 'Journey to the Mountain Communities of Kabardá'[2] the same mistake occurs. These authors, of course, cannot be suspected of ignorance. Either, for some reason unknown, they deliberately adopted that form or, as I confidently assume, their printer, too, betrayed them.

It would seem that we were fortunate to have come westward over the pass instead of the reverse way. Professor C. von Hahn at least found the passage of the Astouli-avtzekh from the west in 1896 nearly as formidable as others might an attempt on Everest. Nearing the top 'we had slight attacks of giddiness, our hearts beat as though they would burst, the rate of breathing increased to an incredible degree, the chest could not find room for sufficient air—but lo! the Pass before us, at a height of 10,857 feet! For a long time no one had been over it.' The guides explained that a descent to the Ouroukh was possible, but only with the utmost caution. 'Leading

[1] V. Teptsoff's article above quoted, in *Mat.*, vol. xiv, p. 189.
[2] In *Viestnik Evropui*, April 1884.

our horses by the bridles we slowly made our way down and reached the Koutan in safety, experiencing many strong emotions meantime. The Digorian shepherds were amazed at the risk we had run.'[1] This author succeeded in locating Dykh-tau *south* of the Karaoulka, Fytnarghin *west* of it,[2] and seeing a ferruginous marsh exuding an oily substance he exclaims, 'If the place were more easy of access some enterprising capitalist would obtain vast profits from this mineral wealth', a large and rapid conclusion from so slight a premiss.

We reached the Karaoulka at 7.30 p.m., hungry rather than tired, and were decidedly in luck's way there, for a *tour* (*C. cauc.* Güld.) had been brought in an hour or two earlier, neither too young nor too old, big enough, that is, to provide meat for all the party yet young enough, and fresh enough, to be tender. We were made very welcome and before long were seated with our Balkarian hosts round an open hearth in the centre of the room enjoying the most tasty of *shashlyks*, sizzling hot from the pine and birchwood fire. Supper eaten and much information exchanged to mutual satisfaction, native songs were sung, one concerning an *abrek* who had come to a fitting end only three years back. His host, it seems, had traitorously hidden his arms—this could not have happened farther east—and the militia then tried to take him. But he still had, literally, a stone up his sleeve, and with it killed two of his assailants before succumbing. Sympathy was, of course, all on the side of the outlaw. The song was evidently a favourite.

The Karaoulka owed its origin to the legitimate and illegitimate traffic in cattle, sheep, and horses that from time immemorial had been carried on between Balkaria and Imeréti over the two passes at the head of the Tcherek valley. At first, no doubt, the one and only object was to check as far as possible the disposal across the frontier of lifted live-stock; later on the Russian Government awoke to the desirability of establishing a quarantine against cattle-plague. Owing to the physical conditions of the surrounding country the bridge across the Dykh-su was obviously the right and proper place for a barrier, and the Balkar village communities having established there a watch-place against marauders, seeking to escape with their

[1] 'Along the valleys of the Tchorok [Tcherek], Ouroukh, and Ar-don,' in *Mat.*, vol. xxv, p. 17.

[2] Instead of *c.* WNW. and SW.

booty over one or other of the glacier-passes, the Government added their trained veterinary inspectors. 'Over the Sharivtsek, cattle are driven from Balkaria, Bezinghi, and Tcheghem to the fair of Tsagherakh in Letchgoum; over the Ghezevtsik to Ratcha and Koutaïs. Each drove is carefully verified by the guard in accordance with the certificates of the respective village councils, in which are set down the names of drover or buyer, the number of beasts driven, and their brands or marks. This being done each animal is passed separately through the narrow gates on the Dykh-su bridge, which it is impossible to avoid, for no other crossing exists. The guards are maintained by the communities at their own charge to check cattle-lifting.'[1] This was written in 1892, just ten years before my visit. In the interval cattle-plague had, I fancy, come to be more feared—by the authorities at least—than cattle-lifting. They insisted, at any rate, in my time, on sanitary inspection no less than on identification.

The splendidly wild gorge and glacier of the Dykh-su has been described by Freshfield, by Grove, and by Dinnik. I photographed what could be seen of it from the Karaoulka before leaving next morning (Aug. 28th) and talking of it to our hosts noticed that the vowel sound in what we write 'Dykh' was pronounced, as nearly as my ear could catch it, like our *u* in *duck*. The people here seemed not to know the name Astouli-avtzekh, but called the area below the pass on this side *Ak-su-wash*, and the mountain range above *Kaya-lar*. They called the pass simply Avtzekh, my Ossetines Avtzegh. The district, and chief village, was called Malkar, not Balkar, as the Ossetines have it.[2] I was shown the gun with which yesterday's *tour* had been killed; it had a very long barrel, and, tied to the lock, a triangular leather case containing, so I was told, a verse from the Koran—a common form of amulet, the equilateral triangle being a favourite mystic sign.[3]

[1] Teptsoff, *op. cit.*, p. 204 (*Mat.*, vol. xiv). For Letchgoum *see* Index.

[2] So Dinnik, 'The Balkarians or, as they call themselves, Malkarians', *Zap.*, vol. xiv, pt. i, p. 119. Yet the Ossetines call 'Mary' *Mairem*, the Balkarians *Bairem*. See vol. i, p. 158, and Dinnik himself says elsewhere, 'The Russian word Malka is the equivalent of the Tartar Balk', *Izv.*, vol. vi, p. 270 n. Güldenstädt (vol. i, p. 460) gives Balkar and Malkar as two adjoining districts of Tartar 'Bassian'.

[3] 'Sentences from the Koran and other written charms are used universally in the Muhammadan world against the evil eye.' Westermarck, *R. and B. in Morocco*, vol. i, p. 444 n., where many further references are given.

Leaving the Karaoulka we made our way slowly along the left bank of the Tcherek as far as the inflow of the Tiutiun torrent, where, at Boulá's suggestion, we called a halt to pasture our horses. Of this spot Dr. Freshfield writes: 'The scenery is more Alpine in its character than is common in this region: it may remind an Oberlander of the approach to the Grimsel: the fine snow-crest of Fytnargyn, used as a panoramic point by Signor Sella, closes the vista. A roaring glacier stream, the Tiutiunsu ('smoking water', we were told, the word means), bursts out of a wooded gorge on the right. It comes from the very heart of Koshtan-tau and from a glacier which has now a tragic fame in the annals of the Caucasus.'[1] There is a quaint misunderstanding here. Tiutiun means not 'smoking' but something that comes very near to it, *tobacco*, the name given to the torrent owing to the colour of its water!

Very noticeable here were the innumerable blocks of a very light grey—nearly white—formation, Freshfield's 'pale granite brought from Koshtantau', the whiter by contrast with the neighbouring dark schists. Gneiss-granite is perhaps the proper term: my notes say 'some blocks are slightly greenish, with mica shining in them; some are very finely grained, others faintly striated, with masses of quartz between'. And again, 'rode on down the gorge, steep-sided and with terrific stone-falls—gigantic blocks of granite piled one on top of another, in places old, dark, weather-worn; elsewhere white and freshly fallen, thousands of tons of it'. The going, consequently, was very troublesome and even difficult, so that, including a second halt for lunch, we took no less than seven hours doing the 20 versts between the Karaoulka and Kousparti, the Balkar *aoul* to which we climbed some hundreds of feet above the river by steep stony zigzags, arriving at 5.30 p.m. Here, thanks to Boulá, we were the guests of Amzor Aideboloff, in whose absence his son, Koumuik, bowed us into a very clean newly built *kounakskaya* furnished in semi-European fashion, for it contained a table, half a dozen bent-wood chairs, and an iron bedstead. In one corner stood the 'hospitality-stick', as I christened it, a stout staff, namely, with a convenient crook for the host to lean upon when the laws of hospitality put too severe a strain on his muscular system—for he might not sit with us, his guests.

[1] *Expl.*, vol. i, p. 169. The allusion, of course, is to the fate of Donkin and Fox with their two Swiss guides in 1888.

The room, which was one story up, had two windows opening on to a balcony, whence we enjoyed a grand view—SW. to SE.—to Ailama (14,854 ft.) on the Main Chain, Ghiultshi (14,680 ft.),[1] Sugan-tau (14,730 ft.) with its glacier, and others of the very fine Northern Chain, as well as Vaza-khokh, already mentioned, ESE., with beyond it the pass to Donifars on the Ouroukh, furnishing an alternative to the route we had come by from Digoria. The limestones, whether seen from the balcony or from other points of view near by, showed deep, rosy red in the light of the setting sun, vast walls with battlements and towers just as at the Sgheed, Korá, and other passes, echeloned line beyond line against a pure blue sky, with horizontal cloud-streaks a little below their summits. Inside the room two of the walls were hung with fine deer-skins, of a reddish-fawn colour, spotted with white, and a black line down the back, very strongly marked on the neck. These were of hinds, killed in spring. In autumn and winter the colour becomes less and less red, while the spots disappear. Stags killed in, say, February have very long hair and in colour are much like elk; I measured the biggest of these skins and found it to be just as high as I could reach, standing with my hand upstretched, to where the head had been cut off, the scut just touching the ground—say 7 feet 6 inches. The room had an open hearth, a chimney, and an immensely strong wooden roof. The construction of the houses was quite new to me—walls of uncemented stones so large one wondered how they were placed there; roofs covered to a depth of 2 feet with earth trampled solid, on which, in every case, grew a fine crop of green grass; so that looking down on the village from our point of vantage, the balcony, we saw, apparently, only grass terraces curiously cut by lines of stones—the roof-edgings. But the chimneys betrayed human occupancy, for they were large and round, wattled and daubed with clay, their purpose hardly mistakable, strange as they were in form. In the courtyard, instead of the usual wooden bridle-post, was a square stone pillar, pierced with holes across the angles at a convenient height to pass the reins through, as in Solomon's stables (Garstang's *Heritage*, p. 378).

[1] Ghiultshi of all the lesser peaks seems to have excited the greatest admiration amongst mountaineers. It was first ascended by Count di Valle Piana and his companions in 1929. He compares the climb 'to that of Mt. Blanc by way of Mt. Maudit or, perhaps, Monte Rosa, by the Macugnaga face'. *A.J.*, Nov. 1930, p. 284.

Balkaria, as Vs. Miller remarked long ago, is particularly rich in old towers. One I sketched at Kounim, the first of the Balkar villages we passed, pyramidal from the ground for three-fourths of its height, had an upright top story, and in that respect was unlike any other I saw. A little below this upper portion on each face was a pierced rectangular cross with arms of equal length.[1] On the hill just above was one of the octagonal tombs, an uncouth specimen, with the usual openings, as at Fasnal. Koumuik told us that tomb and cemetery (all the rest being in ruins) were said by old people to be Russian, perhaps merely because they were Christian. The chief families in the valley were the Aideboloffs, Abayeffs, Djankhotos, and Sakhanoffs. At the *aoul* Zilghee, half a verst north of Kousparti, are towers of the Borzeeyeff family of which, 'in order to give some idea of the Balkarian *aouls* which with other towers present the appearance of fortresses', Miller supplies an illustration.[2] Still farther north, some 20 versts, is Kashka-tau, of which that author tells us, 'Not far from Kashka-tau is also the *Keshenĕ* of the founder of the Misakoff family, which enjoys the same privileges as the descendants of Basiat. The legend says that Misaka at first dwelt on the Koumuik plain with the princes Taimazoff. Having quarrelled with them he stole a bald-faced nag (*kashka*) and on it came to Balkar, where he halted at the mountain called in memory of his horse Kashka-tau. This *Keshenĕ* reminds me of the Abayeff tombs at Shkanti.'[3]

There were several old towers in Kousparti itself, in one of which, opposite our *kounakskaya*, people still dwelt. Our host said that Aideboloff and Abay were brothers who came from the East with Tchenghis Khan. Their sons were Shakhan and Djankhot. They were related to Tchenghis but had killed some influential person, so had fled to these mountains. The pass we were to take next day to

[1] *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. i, Pl. XVIII.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 78, Pl. XVIII b.

[3] Professor A. A. Miller in *Soöbshtchenia* of the G.A.I.M.K., Leningrad, 1926, giving an account of the North Caucasus Expedition of 1924–5, has good illustrations of one Abayeff tomb (the other had fallen) and of a ruined church, both at Shkanti. Also, one of a ruined church at Kashka-tau, called Kurnoyat. This has lines of stone slabs outside it for the congregation to sit upon, as at the Tamára church near Goliat. Dinnik, who writes it 'Koshka', derives that name from the notable bareness of the mountain, which may be more probable but is certainly far less picturesque. (*Zap.*, vol. xiv, pt. i, p. 114). Besides, many a mountain in that region now bare was densely forested in former times.

Tubenel (Bezinghi) on the western branch of the Tcherek was called *Kafir-àvtzekh* ('Infidel's Pass', a compound of Tartar and Ossetine) because the Russians (?) fought a battle there. 'Over seven passes' in Ossetine means 'very far away'; to cross seven passes and return alive was rather like 'going round the world' was a century or so back to Western Europeans. As it happened, this would be our seventh pass since leaving Vladikavkaz.

As a detail of etiquette and custom, Boulá was allowed to stand for his portrait with the ladies of our host's family, which neither husband, father, nor brother might do.

We left Kousparti (*c.* 3,630 ft.) next morning (Friday, Aug. 29th) for Tubenel, the chief village of the Bezinghi valley, keeping as one must, unless on foot, to our line between the granites and the limestones. The ascent to the pass was steep indeed, but the going easy, at first over fine black schists with neither rocks nor stones; later, upon grass. We stopped to rest the horses at about 7,500 feet, Koumuik, who had insisted on coming with us, and Boulá having ridden all the way, Ourousbi a large part of it, Islam and I hardly any. The view from here of the Northern Chain, south and south-east of us, was again very fine, with Ghiultshi, locally called Ertzi-washki, in the foreground. Merzbacher has this name without initial E for two of the Ghiultshi glaciers, Freshfield has 'Ptysvatchki' for one of them—both writers, doubtless, being led astray by the lettering of the 1 verst map. In *The Central Caucasus and Bashan*, p. 411, there is a very clear woodcut entitled 'Peak in the Tcherek Valley'. From Grove we learn[1] that this is 'Tsatchartikomi-khonkh' 'a noble pinnacle of steepest crag rising to a height of some 16,000 feet', which on Grove's map is undoubtedly Ghiultshi (14,680 ft.).[2] Unluckily, Koshtan-tau (SW.) and Dykh-tau (WSW.) became clouded over at the very moment of arrival at our resting-place, which, we were now told, bore the name of Zouroust Khala, meaning 'where the enemies fought', though who the enemies were was, seemingly, unknown. We reached the summit of the pass (10,111 ft., Freshfield, *c.* 10,170 ft., von Déchy) at 3 p.m., and again the twin giants of the Central Chain gleamed white a moment to be veiled immediately by driving mist. It was very exasperating!

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

[2] Dr. Freshfield in after years referred to this drawing, himself, as of Ghiultshi.

We were here quite close to the red limestones, the nearest crag being, as my notes have it, *Likoran-bashi.* Beyond the pass was another summit, *Tchau Khala Dorbun-bashi*, and between them *Souk Aouz* ('Dry Defile'), a gully leading to the plains. North-west I got yet another name for the limestones, *Ak-kaya-bashi* ('White-ridge summit'), while the long, narrow ridge running south and south-west from the pass to the great divide between Tektinghen and Gestola bore the name *Korgashiti-tau*, meaning, I believe, 'Lead-mine-mountain'.[1]

The panorama all round us was a remarkable one; partly on account of the clouds, of which there were more by far below than above us, especially at a level of about 8,000 feet, the sky overhead being speckless azure. Far and near, on every side, snow-field and glacier, hill and valley, peak and precipice, bastioned tower and craggy pinnacle, lay spread below us or 'thrust up themselves for shows', while Dykh-tau and Koshtan-tau were still jealously hidden save only for a most tantalizing, evanescent glimmer now and then through the mist.

We rode or walked down to Tubenel (4,760 ft.) in the valley of the Western Tcherek, known in Alpine literature as the Bezinghi Valley, and found quarters for the night with the old giant Tenghi Sounsheff so much abused by Alpinists, who gratuitously dubbed him 'prince', then trounced him without mercy for 'unprincely' behaviour. Freshfield's remarks on this subject are both true and humorous. Of English climbers Dent was too severe on Bezinghi and its chieftain; Mummery, on the other hand, got on famously with him, and Grove and his party were very well treated in the chief's absence by the younger members of his family. Von Déchy makes little complaint. Merzbacher, on the other hand, gives utterance to his very bitter feelings against Sounsheff for merely negative discourtesy in a tirade no less than one thousand words long, while Tubenel itself, though in less degree, incurs his displeasure for not affording him, as he had hoped, a view of the great mountains.[2]

Teptsoff, again, can hardly find language bad enough for Sounsheff,

[1] I give the names as they stand in my note-book; but only 'Ak-kaya' and 'Souk Aouz' are on my maps, and both for mountains. I do not guarantee accuracy.

[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 696 sq. Yet the learned doctor complains elsewhere of want of room in his two 8vo vols. weighing together 13 lb.!

his village, or, indeed, the whole population of Bezinghi—the truth being that they were quite poverty-stricken, could offer but the poorest accommodation, and little or no food. From this to being 'rude and savage, worthy descendants of the hordes of Tchenghis-khan or Tamerlane—inhospitable', &c., is a long way. He quotes with approval the dictum of a young Balkar guide who 'spoke but a few words of Russian' that 'the people of Bezinghi were very bad men, robbers and devils . . .' and that among the Balkars all robbery, murder, and insubordination must be put to the account of a part of the population recruited from Bezinghi! However, this author's animadversions on the inhabitants form a very suitable pendant to the topographical inexactitude of his descriptions of the valley.[1]

There was a sad break in the weather that night; wind and rain began after sunset and lasted till morning, when we said good-bye to Sounsheff and set out (Aug. 30th) for Tcheghem, an easy ride all the way over a pass only 8,113 feet high (von Déchy). The rain continued and we saw nothing at all of the scenery, but the view from the top, including Dykh-tau and Koshtan-tau, will be found in von Déchy's book (vol. i, p. 230). It is not a very striking one in the photograph, and in his text he merely mentions the sudden appearance of the great mountains through a gap at the summit of the pass; but Merzbacher goes into such raptures that, even allowing for that writer's exuberance, I regret to this hour my bad luck with the weather that day.[2] The pass is called Tuben-avtsekh or Tcheghem-avtsekh according to which side it is approached from. We reached Noumala at 1.45 p.m. and rested awhile in the well-built, two-storied house with iron roof of a friend of Boulá's, a carpenter and silversmith by trade, named Tebo Koudayeff. He told us that the place-names here were mostly Ossetine and, he thought, his own family-name likewise; but of this he was not certain. Riding on, the rain never ceasing, we arrived at Tcheghem (4,852 ft.) at 5.15 p.m. and took up our quarters with the head of the Borisbeeyeff

[1] *Op. cit.*, chap. iv, *passim.*

[2] 'Ein hochgewaltiges, im ersten Augenblicke geradezu verblüffendes Bild! Niemand, der nur die europäischen Alpen gesehen hat, vermag sich eine zutreffende Vorstellung von der Grossartigkeit des Anblickes dieser höchsten, eisbedeckten Mauer des gesamten Kaukasus zu machen . . . stumm vor Erstaunen hielt ich stille. Der Eindruck war übermächtig . . .' *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 694.

family which shared such feudal privileges as yet survived with the Balkarókoffs.

Our host had built himself a new house in Russian style, more or less, on the foundations of an ancestral tower that had fallen of old age not long since. 'Just such another as that', said he, pointing to one near by that had already excited my curiosity; for its complete resemblance to the towers of Svanetia, though these I had only seen in photographs, was unmistakable. I asked if the Svanetians had ever inhabited Tcheghem; he said no, but Svanetian builders had been called in by his ancestors when first they settled here, and the reason for this will soon be apparent. Now, the descent of the privileged families in all these valleys, from the Ouroukh with its affluents to the Baksan inclusive, was the subject of traditions which varied to some extent with the narrators, each one of whom, as a rule, sought to glorify himself at the expense of his neighbours. We have heard of Tsargos,[1] who with his black eagle and *megaloperdix* sounds slightly mythical, and my friend Aideboloff's claim to blood-relationship with Tchenghis-khan may be held doubtful—though by no means incredible—but the main fact, that the founders of the privileged families of Mountain Kabardá, as well as of Digoria and Ossetia, came from elsewhere is beyond any reasonable doubt. The Sargashati at Koussou, as they told me, came from Georgia; the Taimazoffs from Imeréti—which would involve Tsargos in the same provenance; the Tagaours were said to derive from Armenia; and so on; while the Basaiti, Badilati, and others claimed descent from Tartar or, to use a wider word, Mongol ancestors settled at Madjar on the Podkoumka or elsewhere north of the Caucasus, a derivation against which there is really nothing to be said.

Reverting to the Balkarókoff tower at Tcheghem, Vs. Miller tells us that the first of that family was Anfakho, an Abadzekh[2] who had settled on the Upper Baksan, at that time inhabited by Svans. A son or descendant of his, the first known as Balkaróko, had in turn a

[1] *Ante*, p. 185.

[2] The Abadzekhs were an important branch of the Adighe or Tcherkess dwelling on the north side of the Main Chain in the valleys of the Bielaya, Laba, Pshish, Psekupse, Vonobat, and Sup, which last divided them from the Shapsougs. *Zap.*, vol. iv, p. 175.

son and successor named Akhtougan, who realized that, to consolidate his position and power, the best way open to him was to ally himself matrimonially with some ruling house of influence. Greatly daring, he rode off to Tarkee, the capital of the Koumuiks, and carried off the Shamkhal's daughter from a circle of dancers at a festival in her father's court. So well were things managed that two years elapsed before the identity of the ravisher became known, by which time the latter had realized that marriage without recognition helped but little. So once more he took the road to Tarkee, made a sudden reappearance at court, and openly sought a reconciliation. He was treated with contempt; derogatory, not to say insulting, conditions were laid down; his life was threatened. Wherefore, drawing his sword and slashing with it right and left, he cut his way out through the armed guards that beset him, leapt on his horse, and again reached home in safety. But the enemy now knew whence he came—Tcheghem—and would assuredly follow him there in force. So Akhtougan, remembering perhaps the Svani of the Baksan, his own people being naturally, as Professor Miller suggests, of little account as architects or stone-masons—they had been tent-dwelling nomads not long before—sent in haste over the high mountains to Svanetia for builders, to whose mastery this tower still bore witness. The chief difficulty, that of getting the heavy stones into place, they overcame in a very ingenious manner. A site having been chosen separate from but near the mountain side, oxen were trained to walk up a narrow path to the quarry. There the blocks of stone were tied to their horns; they carried them in this way over a plank-bridge to the masons, who relieved them of their burden; after which the slow-moving, docile creatures, having no room in which to turn, made the reverse journey to the quarry backwards. As the tower rose higher the bridge went up with it; no time was lost; and when the Shamkhal at the head of his army drew near all was ready. Akhtougan, still mindful of the reconciliation he so ardently desired, told his men to shoot down the enemy's horses one by one as they came up the narrow defile, but to beware of killing even one of their riders. This had the desired effect. The attack failed, the Shamkhal gave in, a treaty of offence and defence was concluded, and now, centuries later, the Balkarókoffs, his own descendants through his daughter, still held pride of place, though with somewhat attenuated impor-

tance, in Tcheghem—still inhabited their Svanetian tower, or at least still owned it.[1]

As elsewhere in these valleys, and indeed throughout the Northern Caucasus, questions of race and religion met one in Tcheghem at every turn and could only in part be answered. The actual inhabitants were all Tartars, Mussulmans with a recent drift towards fanaticism. But at one time or other, previous no doubt to the Tartar invasion or influx, Christianity had certainly prevailed. The village, a considerable one, was built on both sides of the Tcheghem river, more largely perhaps on the left bank. On the right, as shown in one of Dr. Merzbacher's sketches, a torrent, the Kardan, joins the larger stream through a narrow defile. On the left bank a similar torrent, the Djilki-su,[2] enters the Tcheghem through a gorge of the utmost wildness and grandeur, its most remarkable feature being the contrast, in the huge and perpendicular rock-walls that close it in, between the purely horizontal stratification of the nearer and lower Jurassic limestones and the absolutely vertical lines of the higher dolomitic mass immediately behind them, this contrast being intensified by the deep red colour of the latter compared to the grey, or, where freshly broken, yellow-ochrish tints of the former. Geologically, the interest is heightened by the fact that—according to Dr. Merzbacher—the dolomitic upheaval was due to the action of eruptive rocks functioning as a lever.[3]

Now, various travellers have described this wonderful gorge and I shall presently quote one of them. Meantime, as to religion, Firkovitch in 1849 found in the Tcheghem *aoul* Iskilti two small churches, both quite empty and used as farmyards, one on each side of the river. Miller, who was at Tcheghem itself in 1881 and 1883, writes, 'Near the *aoul*, on the hill Dongat, could be seen a whole collection of upright tombstones with the cross upon them. They had been removed from a neighbouring cemetery and served as a

[1] From the article already quoted (p. 192), by Miller and Kovalevsky, in the *Viestnik Evropui* of April 1884, pp. 563–5.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 559. Djilki = *Oss.* Zilga, 'whirling'.

[3] 'Am Eingange dieser Dchilki-Schlucht liegt der Kalk in Horizontalschichten, erscheint aber weiter im Hintergrund, wo er in Dolomit umgewandelt ist, in ungeheuren Verticalschichten zu kolossaler Höhe emporgerissen, eine Folge der nahen Durchbrüche der Eruptivgesteine, welche als Hebel wirkten'. *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 686 n. It was Abich who first identified the volcanic rocks. See his *Reisebriefe*, vol. ii, p. 297.

containing-wall round a small cattle-pen. The crosses were equal-sided and of very rude make. Another such stone and cross lies on the bank of the Djilki-su near the spot still called the priest's dwelling babasovuim zheelyom . . . At the foot of the mountains are traces of structures built up against the rock-foundations, niches, walls, &c., and, higher up along the mountain side, a parapet artificially built of cemented stones. . . . This path leads to the cavern in which it is said books were found.'[1] Klaproth, as previously in regard to Tkhaba-erdá, states that he obtained possession of portions of these books and that they were fragments of a Greek manuscript New Testament and a Church Service, both dating from the second half of the fourteenth century—full of errors.[2]

Miller tells us, further, that on the right bank of the Djilki-su, a little before his time, there was a small stone house called *Navt-tsiug*. Therein was kept an ox called *Khitch-awag-oghiuz*, of which name the first two words mean in Ossetine 'god-dedicated', the last, in Tartar, 'an ox'. This animal was fed at the charge of all the village up to Easter, when it was led out into the field and if it lowed with upturned muzzle the best crop would come from the higher terraces, if the contrary, from the lower.[3] Then the animal was slaughtered and the sacrificial feast began.[4]

Apart from the one or two houses and towers of the privileged families, the dwellings in Tcheghem were the dirtiest Ourousbi and I had come across since leaving Akhieli, and, just as at Goliat we had been struck by a resemblance to the houses of Mountain Daghestan, so here we were less pleasantly reminded of the miserable hovels of the Khevsours. These Tcheghem houses, however, differed little externally from those we had already seen in Balkaria, having the same grass-grown roofs, wattled chimneys, and side-walls of uncemented stones, their backs being formed of the mountain-side out of which they had been dug. Yet these people were incomparably better off than the Khevsours, inasmuch as they were in easy communication

[1] *Mat. po Arkh. Kavkaza*, vol. i, p. 77.

[2] Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps* [*sic*] *d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, Paris, 1829, vol. ii, p. 152 (Klaproth's notes). Pallas, before this, had procured fragments of these same MSS. 'at great hazard'.

[3] So 'with quaint simplicity, the German cottager declares that if a dog howls looking downward it portends a death; but if upward, then a recovery from sickness'. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i, p. 107.

[4] Miller and Kovalevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 561.

with the plains, and they were, in fact, more civilized; their fields were more carefully kept, fenced round with stones and with a gate here and there. Roads and bridges were fairly good. But it is time to return to the Djilki-su.

One knew, of course, that some of the old classical myths and legends were to be found in the Caucasus. Prometheus belongs there, of right; the Golden Fleece no less; Polyphemus, not impossibly. The first and last of these I had found in my Tiflis Annuals of one sort or another, but it is not, I believe, over fanciful to suggest a connexion, however blurred, between the following legend, told me here at Tcheghem on the night of our arrival by a village ancient, and the story of

Andromeda.

There was once a valiant hunter, by name Khomayeff, who had less luck in the pursuit he earned his living by than could be wished, or, indeed, than he thought his due. But one day he learnt that Afsati's beautiful daughter had been carried off to an almost inaccessible defile by a horrible man-eating monster and that her father was in despair. So Khomayeff set off to the rescue, and, after incredible difficulties, gained access to the innermost depths of the gorge and there found the maiden seated on a rock weeping bitterly. He spoke to her and sought to comfort her, but had hardly said two words when up came the monster, demanded his name and business, asked whence he had come, and how he dared to address the captive maiden. Khomayeff, by way of answer, defied him to mortal combat, whereupon the monster told him in scorn that he might fire the first shot —'*tirez les premiers*' as the Frenchman said at Fontenoy; but there was not much chivalry intended in this case, as we shall very soon see. Khomayeff, taking the enemy at his word, fired a shot which broke his right arm above the elbow. The monster showed neither alarm nor anger; he even begged him to fire again. But Khomayeff knew better! His folklore education had not been neglected, and he was fully aware that a second shot would make the monster whole again, sealing his own fate, and that of the maiden, irretrievably.[1] So taking

[1] This superstition is explained by Gateeyeff. One blow may hopefully be struck at a demon or demons in the name of St. Elias—any further blows would only multiply their number. *Gor.*, vol. ix, p. 30. Thus, when Batraz has cut off one of the seven heads of a giant the latter politely begs him to repeat the blow; but 'No!' says Batraz, 'I am like

the girl by the hand he marched her off, leaving the monster to curse his own folly and shift for himself as best he could. I should like to end the story with wedding-bells in orthodox fashion; but have no warrant so to do. Afsati was as grateful as possible; perhaps marriage with a mere mortal was not in the nature of things—though Perseus himself, to be sure, was the son of Zeus by Danaë, a very mortal maiden—but he gave our hero what in all probability so wise and knowledgeable a man as Khomayeff valued more—unlimited hunting and shooting rights over bird and beast of forest, plain, and mountain.

Not a word was said as to the whereabouts of this wonderful gorge, and there are many such in the Caucasus, but Grove's description of the Djilki-su will, I feel sure, satisfy my readers that we need look no farther than Tcheghem itself for the scene of Khomayeff's exploit. This is what he writes: 'There was on the farther side of this valley a great opening in its side, a vast portal of tremendous cliffs, beyond which lay a deep, mysterious gorge, very sombre from its narrowness and from the great height of its precipitous sides. We could trace this vast gloomy ravine far back among the hills. Anything so strange as the entrance to it no man of us had ever seen, and I can only compare it to one of those weird mountain recesses which Doré has imagined; indeed, looking at that strange gateway, it seemed easy for once to believe in the supernatural. Those huge portals might have been opened by some mighty spell, and in that gloomy gorge running into the heart of the mountains surely there might be dragons or great serpents crawling in dark recesses where the sun never came; some unholy mystery at the end; an enchanted castle, or a warlock's haunt. At the foot of this great opening in the valley-side lies the village of Tcheghem. . . .'[1] Could anything fit better? and I will venture to add, what a fine imagination had F. C. Grove!

St. Elias, I can only strike once', and the giant dies. Again, the wife of Wastyrdji (St. George) by the stroke of a whip had turned Ourysmag into a mangy bitch, for attempting her honour. After various adventures he dips his tail into the soup, whereupon, as anticipated, she strikes him again, he recovers his human form and compels her to his will. Dumézil, *Légendes*, &c., pp. 61 and 27. And Hartland tells us that 'the power of a second blow to restore life, or heal a mortal wound, inflicted by the same instrument, is well known in folk-tales'. *Perseus*, vol. iii, p. 109 n. Since the above was written Mr. Bertram Thomas has reported the same belief as obtaining amongst the Qara mountaineers of Southern Arabia in regard to the Jinn. *Arabia Felix*, p. 279. *Similia similibus curantur!* See too *J.R.A.S.*, Oct. 1934, p. 721.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 144–5.

XXII

BALKARIA

Tcheghem tombs — Khoulam — Mongol and Ossetine types — Feudal rights — Land-value — Ossetine place-names — A notable gorge — Djighitovka — Ill treatment of horses — An English saddle — Barbarous Cossacks — A Russian family — A guest by night — Sorbus domestica — The last of Boulá — Kogolkin, of that ilk — Mountain etiquette — The hospitality-stick — A robber's horse — Rape of the Princess — The Shaulokh breed — Water-melons — The Minaret — The Sheaf — Prometheus — Iron and bronze — Argo's anchor — Elbrous legends — Hammer-strokes — Blue-eyed witchery — An Armenian version — Abreks — Zilghee — Farewell to Ourousbi.

NEXT morning (Sunday, Aug. 31st) we began the day by visiting the old tombs conspicuous on a slope outside the village sufficiently high above the river to lift some part of the snowy range between Tektingen and Adyr-su-bashi into view. Nothing is known as to the builders of these sepulchres beyond the obvious fact that they preceded in point of time the present inhabitants. Many of the tombs resembled others in Digoria and Ossetia, as far east even as Sanibá—those, for instance, of an octagonal shape. Yet there were structural differences, and notably—for want, presumably, of suitable slate-schists—there was no distinct and definite step-roofing, as seen farther east. Instead, there was a narrow, slightly outstanding string-course above which the eight-sided pyramid continued very much as before, but narrowing, with a slight convexity, to a blunt apex on which stood a stone knob.

Some of these Tcheghem tombs were larger and more uncouth than any others I had seen, unless perhaps at Fasnal. The majority were octagonal; some, however, oblong, with upright walls and gable-roofs. These latter had round-headed openings above ground-level at their eastern faces or ends. The octagons had, on the other hand, according to Dr. Merzbacher, pointed windows, invariably on their southern faces. I have a note confirming this generally, but stating also, categorically, that 'the octagon next the biggest oblong has an opening to the NE.' and this is confirmed by my photograph. No doubt this was an exception. In this tomb I sketched the remains of an oblong stone cist, 6 feet long and lidless. All these tombs, apparently, had been rifled; only in the largest oblong were there scattered bones and rags of clothing. Our host said that the 'young people'

had broken up the graves and pulled the dead about. What with Christian—archaeological—example and Mussulman religious zeal, reverence for the dead of unknown races and bygone days could hardly be expected to survive. This tomb was 16 feet long by 12 feet broad and as many high. The walls in most cases were 2 feet thick or thereabouts; the stones were some large, some small, the cementing heavy, the construction irregular and clumsy.

In the above-mentioned octagon, at the spring of the quasi-roof, there were sockets in the masonry-work with scant remains of wooden beams or rafters. The sides of this building were 6 feet wide at 5 feet from the ground. Inside, the octagon form was nearly obliterated by plastering. In the thickness of the wall at the opening was a niche with rounded top but square base, 1 foot each way, with sockets on either side evidently for a wooden door. The biggest oblong was 35 feet high at the east end, rather less at the west owing to the slope of the ground it was built on. The roof sprang at 10 feet from the ground. This tomb was empty save for the few bones and rags already mentioned, nor were there any signs that the floor had been disturbed—perhaps it had never been used for interments. Three feet or so above the ground there were remains of small timbers in the wall, that once, no doubt, carried shelves for bodies, as in Ossetia. From the highest part of this cemetery we caught glimpses of the snow mountains up two defiles, from the house we had slept in up one only, I think that of the Gara-auz. Earlier travellers speak of woods, or forests, on the limestones above the Djilki-su. There were none there now, but our host told us that a house, known to have been 200 years old, and only recently demolished, had been built entirely of local timber. Near the tombs were scores and hundreds of marmots,[1] and overhead many birds of prey, Imperial eagles conspicuous among them. A flower that caught my eye was a fine *Delphinium* with blue petals, not black like the one I had seen and sketched at Karma-don.

Having inspected the tombs and photographed some of them we

[1] The earless marmot, *Spermophilus citillus* (*Cent. Dict.*). Nearly always called Suslik (*Spermophilus musicus*) by writers on the Caucasus; but Dinnik (*Zap.*, vol. xiii, p. 18 n.), speaking of Tcheghem, says, 'I call this animal not a *Suslik* but a *Surok* because the round pupils and absence of pouches behind the cheeks indicate that it belongs to the latter genus. More correctly it should be called *Arctomys musicus*.'

took leave of our hosts and at 9.20 a.m. started for Khoulam, the lowest of the Bezinghi villages. There was blue sky overhead, but south and east all was hidden in impenetrable mist. We could see the limestones above Tcheghem, and in front of us the steep slope up to our pass—that was all; but it was easy riding and we reached the top at 11.35 a.m. at a height of 8,310 feet (v. Déchy) a rise of 3,458 feet. Some way down on the other side I stopped and waited awhile in the hope that the fog might lift. I should, probably, never be so near Koshtan-tau again and I was most desirous of obtaining a clear view and a good photograph of that most noble mountain. There were gleams and glimpses of rock and glacier in that direction, enough to tantalize one but nothing more. I waited and waited, wasting a plate once and again, as a sharp, jagged edge of rock or the sheen of a glacier broke for a moment the monotony of whirling, drifting vapour that seemed intent on hiding all of the view that it was worth my while to photograph. Two hours thus passed, we rode on down, and at 2.40 p.m. I again drew rein and again snapped a plate at a mere mockery of mountain scenery. At 3.45 we reached Khoulam (5,420 ft., a descent of 2,890 ft.) and there I soon forgot my disappointment in the varied interests afforded by the place and its inhabitants.

We were now back on the Western Tcherek in the Bezinghi valley, some 10 versts below Tubenel. Here, on an open space surrounded by mountains, a mile or so west of the river, a small affluent of which runs past it, a conical hill stands up topped at a considerable elevation by the remains of what must once have been an impregnable castle, and was still imposing by position and structure, if not by extent. It could never, indeed, have been large—Vs. Miller[1] gives the dimensions as 42 by more than 14 feet—but it was stoutly built, of local stone, cut and cemented; and the rock on which it stood fell precipitously below it on all sides, the hill itself dropping sheer for a large part of its circumference. Who the builders were is unknown. Miller and Kovalevsky, twenty years before me, could hear of no traditions; nor can even an approximate date be assigned with any confidence, though we shall hardly go wrong in harking back some centuries, at least, for its foundation. A photograph I took gives a good idea of the position. Outlying houses of the *aoul* are to be seen

[1] *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. i, p. 77.

to the left, while on the right, below the haystack, women brightly dressed make a happily effective group as they winnow the golden barley. Firkovitch, who was here in 1849, tells of a church having been destroyed and tombs rifled not long before his visit, thanks, apparently, to Mussulman fanaticism. The only evidences of Christianity Miller could find in 1883 were one of the Bairam or Mairan stones (for *Mairem*, *Maidi-Mairem*, in Ossetine 'Mother Mary'), to which the women still prayed for offspring and safe delivery, and the name Totur borne by a neighbouring small village, though St. Theodore's shrine there no longer existed.[1] Doubtless many different peoples inhabited Khoulam in turn, as indeed all other *aouls* in these valleys. Klaproth declared that in his time the inhabitants were 'Souanes' (Svanetians) who were called 'Soni' and 'were dressed entirely in the Imeritian manner', but Klaproth unsupported is a broken reed to lean upon.[2] Teptsoff heard that the people of Khoulam were nearly all Kabardáns, but with a sprinkling of Tartarized Mountain Jews.[3] Miller found here—and elsewhere in these valleys—'two main types, one Mongol, but considerably modified, the other Ossetine, more or less; the first with projecting ears, narrow eyes, prominent cheek-bones, and beardless chins; the second with regular features, Caucasian nose, thick beard, brown, often blue, eyes, merry and intelligent. The mountaineers are distinguished by swiftness of movement; they are tall, well made, with much grace and freedom of action. Speech flows from them in a rapid and uncontrollable stream; their loquacity is apt to degenerate into mere childish chattering. Witticisms, mostly innocuous, abound whenever three or four gather together.' Nothing, it will be noticed, about 'Svans' or 'Mountain Jews' or Kabardáns; the main facts being, of course, beyond all doubt—that the present inhabitants of all these 'Mountain Communities of Kabardá' are Tartars whose immediate predecessors were Ossetines. Professor Miller found that Ossetine topographical and other names were prevalent from Digoria to Elbrous. He gives many examples, to which my readers if interested

[1] *Viestnik Evropui*, p. 551; *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. i, p. 75. There is a Totur-bashi on Freshfield's and Merzbacher's maps, the Tutur of the 5 v. map, *c.* 12 v. east by north of Ourousbievo; and in Mountain Tartar one of the months—I know not which—is called Totur. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[2] *Reise*, vol. i, p. 536.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

in this matter will refer.[1] My own rough notes at Khoulam say, 'There is only one "privileged" family here, that of our host, the Shakhmanoffs, who consider themselves Ossetines of one stock with the Doudároffs on the Georgian road,[2] the two families still resembling one another physically. It is difficult to see how this could be; but intermarriage there may well have been. The feudal rights were formerly very great: life and death, the first night, &c.; there were outdoor and indoor slaves or serfs as in Russia.' As to this again I must refer to the same source, merely remarking that while the article was written by Professor Miller, the feudal and other customs were, as he tells us, the special subject of study by his companion, Professor Kovalevsky. We learn that 'the Mountain Tartars call a slave Kasak, which is the "Kasag" of the Ossetines ("Kasog" of the Russian Chronicles), the name they applied to their mortal enemies, the Tcherkess. So that slavery was due to war and prisoners of war. Old documents of the Naltchik Courts of Justice give much evidence of the claims and pretensions of the Kabardán princes, especially the Atazhukins, to tribute in the form of slaves, cattle, and sheep, though the Mountain Tartars protest that this is a misrepresentation, the "tribute" being voluntary. 'The feudalism of these people was, in essentials, identical with that of Western Europe. . . .[3] As in Russia there was a difference between outdoor and indoor serfs: the Kasaks belonged to the land and could only be sold with it, while the Karavesh were bought and sold like cattle. The prohibition of selling members of a family apart applied to the Kasaks, not at all to the Karavesh, for whom marriage did not exist. If a man and a woman

[1] *Izv.*, vol. viii, p. i, 1883; *Viestnik Evropui*, April 1884, pp. 550–3; *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. i, p. 70; *ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 110 sqq.

[2] Of Mountain Tchetchen (*Kii*) or even Nogai origin according to one story, but a doubtful one. *Izviestia* (Ing.), vol. i, p. 204; and see the Doudároff legend in Suppl. Note, vol. i, p. 194.

[3] *Viestnik Evropui*, *ibid.*, p. 572. But race-difference between rulers and ruled must not be forgotten. The Badilati were, presumably, of one race with the Balkarians and other Mountain Tartars; but the Kabardán princes were not; nor, of course, were either of these, or the Shervashidzes farther west, of the same blood as the Ossetines. South of the Range conditions were quite other. There 'The Georgians had an aristocracy of their own blood, and kings the same, a political fact not common over all the variegated mosaic of Europe of the 12th century', but one, of course, of the greatest importance, as exemplified in the case of Scotland. The quotation is from W. E. D. Allen's *A History of the Georgian People*, p. 332.

servant were allowed to cohabit it was only for so long as their master chose; the children, if any, were his property and he could sell them separately at will. If one was killed, the blood-money came to the master. If "marriage" were allowed, the *kalim* was his, and he was no more responsible for the killing of one of his "Kasaks" or "Karaveshes" than of one of his cows or horses.'[1] Serfdom was abolished in the Caucasus in 1867, six years, that is, after the great Emancipation in Russia proper. We should not forget to put this and much else in the Caucasus to the credit of the Russian autocrats, whatever their faults. The same writer tells us that approaching Khoulam 'every suitable scrap of land is carefully manured, ploughed, and irrigated through a ditch. Land here is more highly valued even than in Mountain Ossetia, where the ground an ox can stand on is worth—an ox! We were shown plots of not more than 1 dessiatine (2·702 acres) in extent which had been sold for Rs. 2,000 (£200).'[2]

Shakhmanoff said there were Ossetine place-names all round us, as *Lazger* (*Lasg* in Oss. = path) a cattle-track; *Souar-don*, a mineral spring; *Shau-don*, 'Black-water', or a small bog; *Sag-don* (the stream in Khoulam itself), 'Deer-water'. *Tsarak* was an Ossetine proper name and the Ossetines called the Tcherek *Tsaratchi-don*. Between this and Tcheghem we had passed a big stone column called *Ghil-dour-tash*.[3] Another stone we saw, capping an earthen pillar washed out by water, was called *don-wat*, with just that meaning.[4] We heard also of a stone called *Kizghe Tsirt*, 'the maiden's monument'.[5] Dinnik applies this to the gorge of the Western Tcherek integrally, but *Tsirt* in Ossetine is a memorial stone. Ossetine names,

[1] *Viestnik Evropui*, pp. 580–1.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 548. See, too, vol. i, p. 220, vol. ii, pp. 69–70.

[3] Ghil is Oss. for *penis*, dour, for a stone. The 'tash' is, of course, Tartar and in this case redundant.

[4] The making of such stone-capped pillars or 'mushrooms' on a vaster scale is well explained in *Deserts Idle*, by M. Mason (undated), p. 58. See, too, Douglas Carruthers, *Arabian Adventure*, p. 69, and fine illustration facing p. 78.

[5] 'Upon the hills to the south of Laodicea is a remarkable piece of rock, designated as the Kiz Kayá sí, or "Girl's stone", a word used figuratively by the easterns, as in the rock near Kal'eh jik, in Galatia, and also frequently applied throughout the same countries to bridges and castles.' Ainsworth, W. F., *Travels in the Track of the Ten Thousand Greeks*, &c., 1844, p. 37. So, too, at Baku and innumerable other places; even Edinburgh Castle, if we accept for a moment a woman-hater's witticism, 'was called the Maiden Castle [otherwise *castrum puellarum*] *quasi lucus a non lucendo*, because it resisted every attack, and women never do'. (*Antiquary*, Edinburgh, 1831, vol. i, p. 84.)

said our informant, could be traced right away to the Kouban province. The customs and superstitions in Khoulam were those of Ossetia, not Kabardá, but many had been done away with recently owing to Islamic zeal. The privileged families of all these valleys intermarried freely with the Ossetines, especially of Digoria; thus Boulá was related to the Shakhmanoffs and to many others. I quoted Merzbacher's strictures on the waste of good grassland in these parts —my host indignantly denied it. 'There 's not a square foot unused and even so we have to drive some of our sheep to pasture in the lowlands!' As to arable land, irrigation was indispensable, far more so than in Ossetia, where there was more humidity and a better soil; where, also, there were more trees. The Ossetines were content to manure their fields by penning sheep on them for a few nights— here more serious treatment was called for.

We left Khoulam next morning (Monday, Sept. 1st), Boulá still with us, and rode down the gorge of the Western Tcherek between the *Ak-kaya*, 'White-ridge', and the *It-kaya*, 'Dog-ridge',[1] at first, with grand, grassy slopes, topped by these limestones, on either hand. After awhile the slopes became covered more and more densely with deciduous trees and bushes, while the jutting crags and bastions were crowned or fringed with conifers. The older road, low down along one bank of the river, had been washed away in places, so we kept to an alternate one carried for the most part some hundreds of feet higher upon the other bank,[2] affording us, as we turned and looked back towards Bezinghi, enchanting views of perhaps the most beautiful gorge in all the Central Caucasus. I have no proper description of it; indeed, I am afraid that on the whole I took insufficient notes of mere scenic beauty throughout my travels, much as I appreciate it; nor will my wellnigh morbid love of accuracy allow me to trust to memory only, in such cases as this; Dinnik, however, speaks of it with enthusiasm, and there are excellent descriptions of the very similar gorge of the Eastern Tcherek, running parallel to it less than

[1] Dinnik, who should know, makes the Kara-kaya (Black-ridge), which is marked on the 5 v. map at the western extremity of the Ak-kaya, part of the It-kaya, *Zap.*, vol. xiii, p. 4.

[2] Which was which, right and left, my notes do not say, and at this distance of time memory fails me.

ten miles away, by Grove[1] and, especially, by Freshfield,[2] authors whose books my readers should not fail to consult even though not Alpine climbers.

No sooner were we on moderately easy ground, downland studded with oaks, some old and of considerable size, than Boulá commenced *djighiting*, a process which evidently gave him much pleasure though sadly at the cost of his gallant horse, which was time after time urged to utmost speed by the cruel *nagaika* and frantic joggings of knee and heel—fortunately spurless—accompanied by barbaric shoutings, to be reined in on its haunches, again and again, with savage violence. Thrice he insisted on Ourousbi pegging down a small sheet of paper to the ground which each time he pierced, stooping low, with a pistol-bullet fired as he passed at full gallop. I was sorry for the horse and made some remonstrance, but I fear without effect; 'men's evil manners live in brass' and are hard indeed to change. Doubrovin, writing of the Daghestanis, says 'nearly all the horses have their legs unsound, thanks to the crazy galloping and *djighitovka* beloved of the mountaineers',[3] and Vs. Miller speaks of the ill treatment of horses near Naltchik, more especially of a trick the natives have of mounting and, immediately, without the least provocation, administering to their poor beasts three or more tremendous thwacks with the *nagaika*,[4] as who should say, 'I'm your master and a brutal one; don't you forget it!' The going now became very bad, a thunderstorm breaking over us accompanied by some of the heaviest rain I had ever known. Not long afterwards, happening to be ahead of the rest, I followed the path down a steepish bank to what was evidently a ford. The stream (of the Western Tcherek), wide at this point and already swollen by the tropical downpour, ran furiously and was obviously far from shallow. But I had made it a rule, whatever I felt, never to show what the natives might possibly take for fear, so I rode on without check. Hardly, however, were Poti's hind feet in the water when Ourousbi dashed down, seized my bridle and forced him round; then with profuse and abject apologies, he explained that the crossing was

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 112 sqq.

[2] *Expl.*, vol. i, p. 162 sqq. (quoting *The Central Causasus and Bashan*, pp. 402 sqq.).

[3] *Istoria voinee*, vol. i, pt. i, p. 512. But this was an exaggeration. Veliameenoff, a better authority, laid stress on the fact that the Tchetchens possessed many more good horses than their Cossack opponents. *Conquest*, p. 115.

[4] Miller and Kovalevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

already dangerous, we should probably lose our horses and perhaps our own lives; he or one of the others should, of course, have been in front. We rode up the bank again and some minutes later Poti side-slipped on a shelving slab of rock amidst dense undergrowth and down we came, I, luckily, pitching clear. It was no one's fault, for we had chanced upon a smooth stretch of stone, at an awkward angle, quite hidden by leafage. Later we crossed the Western Tcherek, just above where it joins the main river, by a bridge, and following the latter upstream crossed it in turn by a second bridge, and at dusk, in heavy rain, were astonished to catch the glimmer of something white and tent-like in a water-logged meadow. We called a halt, then Ourousbi and I rode forward to reconnoitre. We had thought of some party of road-engineers or surveyors, but they, almost certainly, would have had an orderly camp, which this evidently was not, and in less objectionable surroundings. What was our surprise to find two Cossack wagons drawn up, their teams hitched beside them, their owners hurriedly descending, rifle in hand, from one vehicle while from beneath a canvas sheet stretched over the other there gazed at us with eyes full of wonder and alarm, a man, two women, and several small children! They shrank back with more than one gasp of fear as I drew up close to them to make inquiries—they were evidently Russians—and dismounted, whereupon the mother of the family, the other woman by her dress being a nurse, cried out '*Gospodi* (O Lord); *he has an English saddle!*' To which I replied smiling, hat in hand, 'Why not, madame, as I happen to be English?' '*Anglitchánin! on Anglitchánin!* (an Englishman! he's an Englishman!)' Then followed voluble explanations as to who they were and where they hailed from. The father of the family, it seemed, was a photographer in Kharkoff. He had brought his family to Naltchik for the summer holidays. The Cossacks there had persuaded them to make an excursion towards the mountains, promising fine weather and, above all, no *razboiniki* (robbers). The weather was vile, some of the party were soaked to the skin, the canvas cover leaked like a sieve, their bread was sodden; worst of all, the Cossacks, for whom they had now, evidently, nothing but contempt, had failed in many attempts to light a fire and had at last given it up in despair. There they were, not very cold—luckily—but wet and hungry, with no hope of relief till morning at earliest, when they

were bent on driving back to Naltchik as fast as they possibly could, never more to risk their lives with 'stupid barbarous Cossacks' in so inhospitable a country as they now—though they knew not Horace—deemed the Caucasus. As to robbers they confessed that their hearts went into their mouths when they first peeped out and saw Ourousbi and me splashing up through the rain and semi-darkness, our faces and figures more than half hidden in *bashlyk* and *bourka*. We soon reassured them, of course, and learning their predicament I pointed to the dense smoke rising from where Islam and Boulá had already succeeded in kindling a brushwood fire. With eager, almost adoring faces, the children, round-eyed, gazed at the *Anglitchánin* as he explained that they could have jorums of hot milk-cocoa round, though it would take some time to serve them all, as our kettle was a small one. 'But ours is enormous!' cried materfamilias, and indeed it was. Offers of more solid food were gratefully refused, luckily for us as we had little to spare, nor would they leave the wagon where, huddled all together, they were comparatively warm and comfortable, to share our fire in the open. Their loaves were spoilt, but they had other things, and with the hot cocoa would do very well till morning. It might save the children's lives, who could tell? One of them at least was a mere baby. A Cossack came with us to our fire, which was now a roaring one, with logs on it, in spite of the rain—a feat of magic I more than once had good reason to admire in the mountains—bringing with him the huge kettle. I emptied a whole large-sized tin of cocoa into it and when well on the boil sent it back to the perishing family, with a promise of another such supply in the morning.

Our fire was partly sheltered by an old oak-tree of some size. On its roots I set my saddle, on the saddle my pillow, on the pillow myself. I had on field-boots and thick stockings, so my legs were warm and dry—all above them to the waist just sopping, the fact being that after my fall I had had to walk a considerable distance through the very wettest of brushwood, grass, and creepers, with *bourka* twisted round body and neck to make progress possible. I now got out my dry blanket—the saddle-bags of course, were waterproof—wrapped it round me from knees to waist next the skin, pulled my knee-breeches up again, my upper garments down, and with *bourka*, tent-like, over my head, could defy the rain that fell through the

night without ceasing. I sat there till dawn, never winking an eye, and with Ourousbi next me let my thoughts run over all our journeys together from the Caspian onwards; I dreamed, too, of what was yet to come ere Poti should wet his feet at last in the waters of the Euxine —vain dream—but the night that might have been so long and wearisome passed quickly and pleasantly. There was one diversion, it is true, that I could well have spared. Towards midnight a miserable, forlorn creature, a homeless, out-of-work, poverty-stricken Karatchai, crept up. A few grunts passed between him and my men, after which he was allowed to hunch near the fire; but Islam, I saw, took occasion to make sure that the tetherings of our horses had not been tampered with. I had meant to offer the poor creature a share of our morning meal, but long before dawn he rose and slipped silently away. His one occupation throughout the night was, from time to time, to bare one side or other of a shaggy breast, opening out the rag that did duty as shirt, and catch and exterminate vermin. (For the Karatchai country see Map 3).

Before daybreak we roused the fire to a blaze again, sent for the Cossack and his kettle, supplied all, including ourselves, with more hot cocoa and, having farewelled the family from on horseback, the baby and I blowing kisses, rode off at 7 a.m. (Sept. 2nd) to Upper Kozhókovo, where we rested from 11.30 to 1 p.m. The gratitude of the Naltchik party was quite touching; in fact I never, so far as I know, earned as much of that commodity so easily in all the days of my life, nor was there any question of favours to come.

Our next halt was at the largish village of Liasken (in Ossetine Khaevskoe) on the river Liasken, where we arrived at 5.30 p.m. and stayed till morning. I now felt the effect of a day and a night in the saddle, with or without a horse beneath me. Besides, we were out of the mountains now; a day more and we should sight the railway; another, and I should be talking 'oil' in Vladikavkaz! The knowledge was sobering, not to say depressing, and that probably is why I find nothing in my notebook under 'Khaevskoe', with the exception of two references, one to a curious creature, a five-horned tame ram, bought from a Mountain Tartar and supposed to be a cross between a male tour and an ordinary sheep—the sheep, that is to say, of all South Russia and the East, as well as of North and South Africa. It had the fat tail of the latter, was very vigorous and uncommonly

well grown.[1] The second reference was to the fact that, a little higher up this valley, eight families of Doukhobors, 'followers of Tolstoy' as Ourousbi, not unjustifiably, put it, had sold their land at Rs. 50 per dessiatine, a fair price being Rs. 75, and were off to Canada in the wake of the main body of those troublesome sectarians, which had left the Caucasus in 1899.

There was a change for the better during the night—the morning broke fine (Sept. 3rd); Dykh-tau and Koshtan-tau showed up well, the latter especially, west-south-west of us. We made a start at 7.45 a.m. and stopped to graze two hours later, having crossed a ridge of enchanting loveliness—broad slopes of grass, studded with grand old oaks, absolutely like the finest of English parks, but stretching down to vast forests of beech, mile upon mile, on either side—to the plains, that is, behind us, to the limestones in front, not craggy on this their northern side but green and smooth above the tree-line to their very crests. Above them and beyond were the giants of the Main Chain, Kazbek south-east, Dykh-tau and Koshtan-tau south-west, the valley of the Ouroukh pointing due south, as we now for a time rode, and leading up to the Adai-khokh group, whereof Adai itself stood out notably fine, with a broken precipitous ridge (?Karagom) to the west of it. My note-book says, 'Perhaps, after all, the mountains are most beautiful at a distance'; I hardly dare transcribe the heresy, but the scene was unusually lovely. We rested awhile at a haycutters' shelter (*balagan*) of wattle and props. There were bedsteads raised on short posts round two sides of the interior, covered with hay, a hearth in the middle, and over it a kettle hung on a jack made

[1] In Howarth's *Mongols*, vol. iv, 1928, p. 66, I find: 'Rockhill says that in his journey to Kuku-nor he bought a sheep with four horns, and he saw in the little flock from which it was taken several with the same deformity. Six horns are not uncommon, but the Mongols try to kill off such freaks (*Mongolia and Tibet*, 140).' The *Century Dict.* figures a 'quadricorn' sheep (*Ovis aries, var. quadricornis*), and the seven-horned lamb of 'Revelation' may have had a material origin in such abnormalities. See too, Marco Polo, i. 444. The giraffe in Mongalla district (Africa) has five horns (*Deserts Idle*, p. 62). *Re* four horns and Evil Eye, see *ante*, vol. i, p. 244. As to the 'fat-tails', Mr. Lattimore coming westward from Kwei-hua sees them for the first time north of the Karlik Tagh range (*The Desert Road to Turkestan*, p. 251). For S. Africa see *Historic Farms*, &c., by Dorothea Fairbridge, Oxf. Univ. Press, London: Humphrey Milford, p. 100. The 'sheep most valued by the early colonists was *Ovis steatopyga*, a sheep with such a fat and heavy tail that little carriages were made for it by the natives to prevent it from trailing on the ground', a practice not unknown nearer home.

entirely of withies and wood. A bag for salt had been cunningly contrived out of the skin of a cow's fore-legs, slit each down one side and sewn together.

Riding on we passed a little to the north of Karadjaevo and there I noticed several *kourgans*, with, apparently, lines of circumvallation; also, scattered about, huge specimens of *sorbus domestica*, bearing fruit which, like that of the medlar 'rotten ere half-ripe', is only sweet when fallen.[1] Very noticeable beneath them were bushes of a wild mallow, bearing large pale-yellow flowers, and the seed-cases we called 'cheeses' as children. When near the left bank of the Ouroukh we drew rein, about 2 p.m., and bade good-bye to Boulá, who was highly gratified at the amount of the payment I made him, which would indeed have horrified Dr. Merzbacher and other such travellers who in the Caucasus fought strenuously against any demand beyond the miserable scale they believed to be established in the mountains, often quite wrongly. In any case, a hard-and-fast rule could never fairly be applied away from beaten tracks. Circumstances varied greatly and what was reasonably good pay in one place might be grossly inadequate in another; the cost of fodder, for instance, differing widely. Boulá was a gay companion, a gallant figure, a man of good family, whose introductions had in all probability procured us, in more places than one, better treatment than would otherwise have been our lot. Why should I make a point of keeping within limits supposed, doubtfully, to be established by custom or by some vague 'authority', but never accepted by the poorest of guides without grumbling? It pleased me at parting to see his eyes sparkle, his whole being quiver with anticipatory pleasure, as, in all likelihood, he planned there and then a visit to Naltchik or even to Vladikavkaz, there to go *djighiting* up and down the principal streets till stopped by the police, to the admiration, doubtless, of many a fair one. I should have been sorry to think that, instead, I had added to the reputation for stinginess and bad manners the learned doctor and some other Europeans had left behind them in the mountains.

The grass was of good quality at this spot, so we let our horses graze at will for twenty minutes or so; then on and across the Ouroukh by

[1] Dubois de Montpéreux figures a fine specimen, drawn at Ai-Daniel, on the Crimean coast, some 40 feet high and more than that in spread of branches. *Atlas*, II Série (*pittoresque*), pl. L.

ferry-boat and through ten miles of tall and tasselled maize to Kogolkino, where Abdul 'of that ilk', a friend of Ourousbi's, who had heard of our coming, awaited us at the entrance to the village. This consisted of one long, wide, grassy street, the houses on either side separated by gardens with, at the far end, a spacious green on which numerous horses were grazing; but the Shaulokh herd, of which Ourousbi had often spoken, owned by this same Abdul Kogolkin, was now far away on the mountain pastures.

We dismounted with the usual ceremonies, but, our host being with us already and our visit expected, without the usual weary wait on horseback. Instead, Ourousbi and I were left to ourselves for a while in the *kounakskaya*, while Islam looked to the horses; then Abdul entered the room, we rose from our chairs, but he begged us to be seated again. We complied, but only for a moment, as our host remained standing; then Ourousbi entreated him most earnestly to sit with us. This he did, but almost immediately both men stood up, gazed at each other intently, then solemnly shook hands. One would have thought all this time that they were perfect strangers met to discuss some business of the utmost gravity and importance, whereas, in truth, they were friends of old standing with nothing particular to say to each other; but this ceremonial observance is—or was—a point of honour with the Kabardán nobility and gentry, who, as stated elsewhere, gave the law in these and other matters—including arms and dress—to all the Caucasus; and Ourousbi in knowledge and observance of etiquette was not to be outdone by any man, prince or peasant, between the Black Sea and the Caspian.

The thaw after this seemingly frosty interlude was gradual, but the *samovar* had, of course, been ordered, and, over our tea, conversation soon became friendly. Catching sight of a girl in costume a good way off I betrayed an interest which, though silent, my host was quick to perceive. He remarked that few of the younger generation of women wore any but Russian dresses now, but it so chanced that a girl from the far end of the village was in his house as a guest and she, he knew, was the happy possessor of a very perfect costume. Our horses being saddled—for we were making no stay—he borrowed mine and on it sent one of his men to fetch the dress. Soon after, we had the pleasure of seeing the good-looking owner, blushing and laughing, display herself and it before us.

Meantime we had heard of the assassination at Beslan by an Ossetine of no less a personage than the Military Chief of the District, which greatly distressed Ourousbi; and also of the suicide at Ghizel of a schoolmaster involved in a political riot that had taken place there recently. I think that the two incidents were connected, but am not sure. These, in any case, were but preliminary rumblings of the storm that was to break over Russia and the Caucasus from three to four years later, to be followed in 1917 by the Revolution.[1]

In one corner of the guest-room was a 'hospitality-stick' like that at Kousparti. While we were mounting, Abdul spoke of Ourousbi's horse, which he had promptly recognized owing to the fact that its former *abrek* owner had claimed hospitality from him the previous year. He confirmed that, as already stated, this notable animal went twice as well by night as by day—the result, no doubt, of very special training.

It was past 5 p.m. when we left Kogolkino; the horses were tired and we rode at a foot's pace down the street and across the green, where Ourousbi, halting once and again, on this the very scene told me anew of the rape of Princess Atazhukina, and the origin of the Shaulokh breed.

The Rape of the Princess Atazhukina.

A Kabardán gentleman, Tiazhikoff by name, fell in love, it seems, with the princess, who was young and beautiful, but out of all measure proud. The suitor could make no way with her at all, though well matched in age and looks, and of noble, if not princely, birth. It was not that she altogether disdained him, but she repelled his advances and would give him no hope, so that, driven to desperation, he exclaimed one day: 'Well, if you won't have me one way, you shall another. I will carry you off!'

Now, that might well be the fate of any ordinary Kabardán

[1] It was in 1905 that my friend Leslie Urquhart earned the 'Albert Medal of the 1st Class', which King Edward made a point of presenting personally, by his notable safe-guarding in difficult and dangerous circumstances of the whole of the British community in Baku, and, in especial, a most gallant rescue of four of its members who had become stranded behind a barrage of some 10 or 12 miles of blazing oil-reservoirs, wooden derricks, and spouting wells amidst which—a veritable 'hell upon earth'—Armenians and Tartars for many days were slaughtering each other with every imaginable aggravation of abominable cruelty.

maiden; it very often was. But that the Princess Atazhukina should be carried off against her will from the midst of her powerful family and their many retainers, seemed to touch on the fantastic.[1] The princess thought so, no doubt, and answered scornfully enough, though not, perhaps, without just the shadow of a shade of encouragement in what was too slight, too evanescent, to be called a smile, 'Carry me off and I'll marry you!' 'You shall!' cried Tiazhikoff, and with that they parted.

For months nothing happened. Life at Kogolkino went its accustomed round; autumn wore away, winter came with more snow than usual, though not to lie long. March was cold and cheerless, but by the middle of April spring was at the full, flowers abloom, the birds in song. Then, one day, there was a wedding in the village; the bride was a friend of the princess, who graced the ceremony with her presence, and towards evening, danced with the rest on the village green, the pride and queen of them all.

In those days there was a fort on the far bank of the Ouroukh river and stationed there, as it happened, were two or three squadrons of a famous regiment, the Nizhni Novgorod (Nizhigorodsky) dragoons;[2] and some of the officers, naturally enough, came over by invitation to the wedding, their handsome uniforms adding colour to a scene already brilliant. Presently, one of them, Lieutenant Evstafieff, bowing low, solicited the honour of a waltz with the princess. He was a notably good dancer, and the lady adored dancing; she gave herself up without thought to the enchantment of the moment, heeding not at all the fact that, little by little, with many a dexterous turn and twist, now fast, now slow, her partner kept edging her nearer and nearer to the point where the street debouched on the green. She gave no heed—why should she? But suddenly there was a dull thunder of galloping hoofs, and the dance came to an abrupt

[1] According to Pallas (*Bemerk.*, vol. i, p. 383) the Atazhukins ruled as subjects the third part of the population of Kabardá, comprising over 3,000 peasants and 500 *ousdens* (gentlemen).

[2] Long 'the only corps of regular cavalry in the army of the Caucasus'; Wilbraham's *Travels*, London, 1839, p. 198. Dumas was their guest twenty years later and tells us something of their origin and history in his most excellent book. The regiment was raised by Peter the Great and had served in the Caucasus since 1813. *Le Caucase*, Paris, 1859, chap. 13. And see Potto, V., *Istoria 44vo dragoonskavo Nizhigorodskavo polká*. Richly illustrated, partly in colours; St. Petersburg, 1893–5.

end as, on Shaulokh horses swift as the wind, Tiazhikoff and Ourousbi dashed out. In less time than it takes to tell, the princess was seized, swung to her lover's saddle-bow—and away![1]

Then, indeed, there was 'mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan', in other words, amid shouting of men and shrieking of women, the Atazhukin brothers with their friends and retainers, mad with anger, got to horse as quick as might be; gripped revolver and rifle, sword or *kinjal*, and in another moment or two would have been hot in pursuit with, apparently, every chance in their favour, for they were many, the ravishers few—two only—and burdened with an unwilling victim. A stumble, a check of any kind, might be fatal; the recovery of the princess, the bloody death of her captors, seemed inevitable—when a strange thing happened.

The Russian colonel, it seems, had taken of late to drilling his men with marked assiduity, in the cool of each evening, on the green. On this particular day his squadrons were out as usual, but, the open ground being occupied by the merry-makers, what more natural than that they should use as a substitute the grassy street? There, at least, they were, and it so fell out that at the very moment when Tiazhikoff and Ourousbi fled by, a word of command rang out and the troopers drew up in close order across the street, blocking it completely! The commanding officer had his back to the mob of frantic horsemen who soon surged up and around him, vociferating wildly, and demanding instant passage. Professing the utmost amazement, and a failure, natural enough in the circumstances—for he spoke no Circassian—to understand what all the noise was about, he managed to delay pursuit no very long time, indeed, but sufficiently, with the initial gain, to enable the ravishers to put a very considerable distance between themselves and their pursuers. Darkness and cunning did the rest—a short cut here and there, false information volunteered by apparently innocent passers-by, deepening gloom in the forests. For everything to the minutest detail had been carefully thought out, the whole scheme planned and prepared for

[1] Much as the daughter of Erechtheus was snatched away by Thracian Boreas from Cecropia 'as she was whirling in the dance, hard by Ilissus' stream'. *Argonautica*, Bk. I, ll. 213–15 (Seaton's translation). 'Young Lochinvar' swung the lady up to the croupe, then sprang to the saddle before her, which might do with a willing bride, but not in such a case as this!

during the long months of waiting. Tiazhikoff and Ourousbi, the latter keeping a little to the rear, rifle in hand, ready to shoot down the leading enemies' horses if necessary or help to master the lady (in no very gentle manner) should she prove obstreperous, rode fifty miles hardly drawing rein—the princess after the first shock making little or no resistance—and caught an express-train northward-bound that had, in a strangely convenient manner, broken down at a minor station not far from Gheorghievsk, to start again even more providentially as soon as the fugitives had boarded it. The princess realized that the wager was lost and won. Hers was a royal nature as well as name; she had given her word; she possessed too, possibly, a pretty full share of what we now, I believe, call the cave-woman's feelings. She gave in and was wedded that night—or next morning.[1] Tiazhikoff, after all, as to means and position, was a suitable if not quite a brilliant match, while, as a lover, he had proved himself, in her eyes at least, well worthy of the royalest princess ever bred on 'the rugged flanks of Caucasus'.

The Shaulokh Breed.

The Shaulokh breed, according to Ourousbi, was the best in all the country. Klaproth, writing in 1808, of the Tcherkess, said: 'Their horses wander at liberty in the meadows and never enter a stable. They are sold to the Russians and the Georgians. They are of middle height and the majority bay or dapple grey; I have never seen a black among them. The best breed, called Shalokh, has a particular brand on the flank; it belongs to the family Tau-Sultan and numbers no more than 200 head, mostly bays—whites are extremely rare. The horses are always out at grass, in summer on the mountains between the Fiag, the Ar-don, and the Ours-don (Psekoush in Tcherkess), the rest of the year on the Terek, between Tatartoup and Djoulat. A foal is held equal as a gift to one slave; but the theft of one of these horses is punished no more severely than that of any other object or article belonging to the prince; that is to say, by a fine of nine times the value, with one slave thrown in. Really good horses are by no means so numerous amongst the Tcherkess as is commonly

[1] I have before explained that with the mountaineers the accomplished fact meant much. Once bedded, though not yet wedded, the quarrel, till then deadly, became, as a rule, mere matter for adjustment—financial adjustment, mainly.

supposed; so that one may have to pay as much as Rs. 100 for one of the best; for others, however, as little as from 15 to 25 roubles.'[1]

Elsewhere the same writer, speaking of the Five Mountains (Besh-tau), says that 'Ptolemy, who, seemingly, knew them well, calls them the Horse Mountains, τὰ ἱππικὰ ὄρη,[2] an appropriate name, as the best breeds are still found there, especially that called *trampkt*, which is branded on one flank with M, and is esteemed next to the Shalokh'. Probably this is the breed mentioned in a Circassian elegy —'the [red-haired Russian] general escaped, but Pshugui bore off his charger, of the valued race of *Tram*'.[3] Güldenstädt[4] had already, under date June 23rd, 1773, told of a herd of 3,000 mares and their foals, with a few stallions, belonging to twelve princes of Great Kabardá, which all came to drink water of the salt-lake Tambi near Besh-tau. The mares were branded on the left flank. The name of the race was Beslan, the colour mostly white or brown. On Map 3 of the same volume close to Besh-tau is a Christian village marked Tramkt, while in the next he speaks of the 'village of Tram, on the N. slope of Maschuka, renowned for its noble breed of horses'.

The actual name of Kogolkin's breed was Shaulokh, and presumably Klaproth's identification of it as Shalokh, which was a frequent appellation amongst the princes of Kabardá and applied by him to eight successive villages along the river Bdaya, was correct. The location of the herd in more modern times had undoubtedly been at Kogolkino and the owners the noble but not princely family of that name. The Kabardán princes, be it noted, lost many of their privileges soon after Klaproth's day, and some of their lines died out. The Kogolkins, presumably, inherited the herd from the Tau-Sultan family or acquired it from them by marriage, the unwritten but inviolable law that prince or princess could only marry an equal having by then been relaxed.

The Shaulokh brand, at the time I write of, was  , and a horse or mare so marked could only be bought first-hand of our host Abdul

[1] *Reise*, &c. (1812), vol. i, p. 581. I have not traced this passage to any previous writer so give Klaproth the credit for it—if doubtingly, that is no worse than he deserves.

[2] *Reise*, vol. i, p. 484.

[3] *Journal of a Residence in Circassia*; James Stanislaus Bell, London, 1840, vol. i, p. 175.

[4] *Reisen*, ed. Pallas, vol. ii, p. 21.

Kogolkin. Forgeries, indeed, were not unknown in spite of the death penalty established for illegitimate branding; but the large liquid eyes, the chief bodily characteristic of the genuine Shaulokhs, through which their mild yet indomitable spirit shone, were unmistakable; besides which, according to Pallas, they had another more definite physical peculiarity in that the hoof was quite full and without frog (Diese . . . Race ist noch ganz besonders durch einen ganz vollen Huf, ohne Pfeil, characterisirt).[1]

The story of their origin as told me by Ourousbi was this. One night, long ago, a party of Tchetchen raiders led by a Kabardán, no mere traitor but one who sought revenge for a real or fancied grievance, drove off a herd of his people's horses and at daybreak took refuge in the almost impenetrable wilderness formed by the reed-beds of the Terek. Presently, a wild stallion came trotting out:

Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttocks, tender hide,
Look, what a horse should have he did not lack,

and proceeded to cover a particularly ill-conditioned mare of the stolen herd. When night came again, the raiders, on parting from their guide, offered him a reward in money. This he refused, saying that all he would take was the scraggy mare, which in any case would be unable to keep up with the rest in their headlong race to Tchetchnia. His modest request was granted, not without much banter, but the result proved how well he had been inspired, for the mare foaled in due course and from her offspring came the Shaulokh breed, which has ever since been sought after, in especial, for raids, both speed and endurance being great, but even more remarkable a courage and devotion beyond praise.[2] Said Ourousbi, 'A Shaulokh horse, Iván Ivánovitch, can always be counted on however sorely wounded or distressed—within the limits of possibility—to bear his master home in safety from the most desperate of all his ventures'.

[1] In a plate of brands in Pallas, *Bemerkungen*, &c., vol. i, at end (or plate 21 in Atlas to French translation, Paris, 1805), frequently copied since, not only the Shaulokh brand but a hoof of the Shaulokh horse is shown.

[2] This story has points in common with that of Kurr-oglou's horse 'Kyrak', sired by a stallion that emerged from the waters of the Oxus, climbed the bank, joined the stud, and, having covered two mares, plunged into the river and was never seen again. Chodzko, A., *Specimens*, pp. 17–18. Pallas (*Bemerk.*, vol. i, p. 393) says that according to the Tcherkess the progenitor of the Shaulokhs emerged from the sea. For Kurr-oglou see *ante*, p. 61, n. 1. Cf. the Highland river-horse as in *The New Road*, p. 333.

Which reminded me that La Mancha's knight in his catalogue of virtues derived by man from the beasts puts loyal devotion—*lealdad*—to the credit of the horse.[1]

We now pushed on, and our horses, though not of the breed, responded bravely, despite the fact that rough riding and poor feeding had reduced them to very low condition. We were joined for a time by a party of riders in pursuit of horse-thieves, who apparently had swum the Terek, though owing to the late heavy rains, as we presently saw, it ran like a mill-race. At one place we bought a huge water-melon (*arbouz*) which I divided into three, then ate my share riding, slicing off great chunks of the luscious red flesh with my *kinjal*. Now, of all the food I ever tasted in the whole of my life nothing had left so vivid and imperishable a memory behind it as an *arbouz* devoured at the end of a drive across 'the hungry steppe' in Central Asia in 1894, when lips were cracked and bleeding, tongue like a piece of wood, nostrils, eyes, mouth, and throat choked with the infinitely fine dust of the loess.[2] We were in no such case now, but we had ridden many hours on tired horses and that is ever wearisome; the heat, too, had been great and I would not have exchanged our water-melon—price one penny—an article of food (or drink, for it is more than 90 per cent. water) not worth tasting in cool weather, for the costliest fruit ever grown, or for tumblerfuls of iced champagne!

The Terek we knew was unfordable, and not being horse-thieves the risk of swimming it would not in our case have been justifiable. But the ferry-service ended for the day at 7 p.m. and we feared missing it, for, latterly, to stir our horses out of a walk would have involved downright cruelty. As a matter of fact it was five minutes after the hour, and already dusk, when we reached the river-bank, but luckily we were in time for the last crossing in spite of the fact that an increase of brigandage and of other criminal manifestations—

[1] *Don Quixote*, second part, ch. vii. I can find no room for Kurr-oglou's points of the ideal horse; but for pith, truth, and brevity it would be hard to beat Charles Reade's description of a dainty mare, skittish on the road, but . . . 'put her at timber, stream and ploughed field, in pleasing rotation, and see her now! Up ears; open nostril; nerves steel; heart invincible; eye of fire; foot of wind!' *Love me Little, Love me Long*, ch. xix.

[2] So fine, so penetrating, that a perceptible layer of it formed on the ivory backs of my brushes, themselves in their own leather case and that inside a kit-bag, locked and strapped, but not, indeed, by any means new.

partly political—had led to the issue of brand-new regulations and their observance with a zeal and exactitude quite uncommon in the Caucasus and, indeed, in all Russia. I use the word 'luckily' because our alternative was to seek a night's lodging in the dark, probably in the Cossack *stanitsa* of Zmeyskaya, a prospect equally unattractive to Ourousbi, Islam, and myself. They had their own reasons for disliking the dominant race in general and the Cossacks in particular, while I had realized long since that to gain the confidence of the tribesmen the less truck I had with Russians the better; and in point of fact I very seldom spoke to one in all my many journeys in the mountains. For quite other reasons, and chiefly to secure the utmost possible liberty of action, I avoided with much pertinacity the frequently proffered company of my fellow countrymen, and, indeed, of all others except the natives themselves.

Landing without adventure on the right bank of the Terek we rode on a short distance to the house of a near relation of Ourousbi's not far from the railway station of Elkhótovo, so named after an *aoul* settled, or resettled, by Government with Ossetines from the Ghizel-don and Ganal-don after the Shamil scare of 1846, the object being to guard the ford or crossing. This was a point of great historical and strategical importance, the scene both of Timour's victory over Toktamuish in 1395—two years after the latter's sack of Moscow—and of Sheikh Mansour's defeat by the Russians just 400 years later, as well as of Shamil's daring attempt in the Murid war to raise Kabardá and so bring East and West together in the struggle for Freedom and the Shariat. It was known as Tatartoup.[1]

The Terek here, having reached the plain and been joined by many rivers such as the Kambileyevka, from the East, the Arkhon, Ghizel-don, Ar-don, and Ours-don (Russ. *Bielaya*) from Kazbek and the south, runs for a brief space as a single stream through the range of hills which, guiding and guarding the Ouroukh on its lower course, turns east beyond the Terek to end in a smother of derricks just short of Grozny. At low water there was a good ford; at high water the natives, mounted, as all were, and unencumbered, except on one occasion—in 1846—by artillery, baggage-train, or other impedimenta, crossed the river with almost equal facility, provided always that no hostile guns commanded them from the wooded hills.

[1] *Conquest*, chapter xxv.

Near the ferry on the south side were scattered various ruins attesting the existence there in former times of an important centre of human activity. Of these by far the most conspicuous was the famous minaret described at length by Güldenstädt[1] and, later, by Dubois de Montpéreux, who figures it in his atlas.[2] But, for once, that learned and accurate observer goes astray, for he gives the position as 43 versts by road from Vladikavkaz instead of *c.* 49, and on the bank of the small river Dourdour, which enters the Bielaya rather more than half a mile from the latter's junction with the Terek, instead of on the Terek itself. Now Güldenstädt, much earlier, had given a description of the ruins, including, besides the tall minaret and remains of two small churches and one mosque, a second half-ruined minaret 42 feet high. Klaproth, in between (1808), who was learned, no doubt, but not accurate, speaks of a minaret in connexion with Timour's victory but gives the height as 40 feet, the number of steps inside as 55 (against Dubois's 75), and a distance from the Terek of 'about 1,000 paces'. Evidently this is Güldenstädt's second minaret, the position of which agrees very exactly with Dubois's assignment but not with the structure he draws and describes. Klaproth, I conclude, never saw the building to which alone any fame attaches, Dubois's height for which is 75 *pieds du roi.* These, he expressly informs us, were as 15 to 16 English feet; so that the minaret was 80 feet high, not 40, but still 'less than half the height of the celebrated minaret of Shamkhor' near Elizavetpol, which it closely resembled. This, too, Dubois figures in his atlas.[3]

It was natural enough that myth and legend should gather round such a spot and that the natives should regard it as sacred. Tatartoup gave the right of sanctuary in cases even of blood-feud homicide; vows taken and agreements made there had a peculiar sanctity. Mussulman, Christian, pagan—all had their interests at Tatartoup, though, for some centuries past and up to our own time, none but the last named could claim actuality. Thus, the King of the Jann—Prometheus, heavily disguised—would, it was believed, graciously

[1] *Reisen*, ed. Pallas, 1797, vol. i, pp. 503 sq.

[2] Pl. XXIX, c., Série III, texte vol. iv, p. 464.

[3] Pl. XXIX *bis*, Série III. Madátoff, Yermoloff's famous lieutenant, gained a brilliant victory over a Persian army five times more numerous than his own at Shamkhor on Sept. 2nd, 1826 (*Conquest*, p. 158). For David Soslan's victory near the same spot see *ante*, vol. i, p. 43. Strictly speaking it should be Shankhor.

allow himself, out of consideration for human infirmity, to be propitiated at Tatartoup instead of on the summit of Minghi-tau (Elbrous). The builder of the minaret was held to have shared an honour related in connexion with the church of St. Basil in Moscow, that of Tsounda,[1] the clock over the Amir's palace-gate in Bokhara, and other notable products of human ingenuity, that, namely, of being condemned to death lest he should reproduce such a masterpiece for another and perhaps rival potentate. In this case, however, being warned by a maiden who loved him well, he made wings out of thin planks—an aeroplane evidently, or glider—and from the summit of the minaret found safety in flight.[2] With the coming of Bolshevism these popular tales and superstitions will doubtless soon disappear. Meantime, we may be glad that some of them have found their way into print and amongst them that called 'The Quest of the Sheaf'; for the real interest of pagan divinities, or demons—it is often hard to distinguish between them—lies in their intense, most intimate humanity, and this is in no way more strikingly exemplified than in their mutual hostilities, eventuating, frequently, in downright quarrels or, even, as in the present case, in ding-dong fighting.

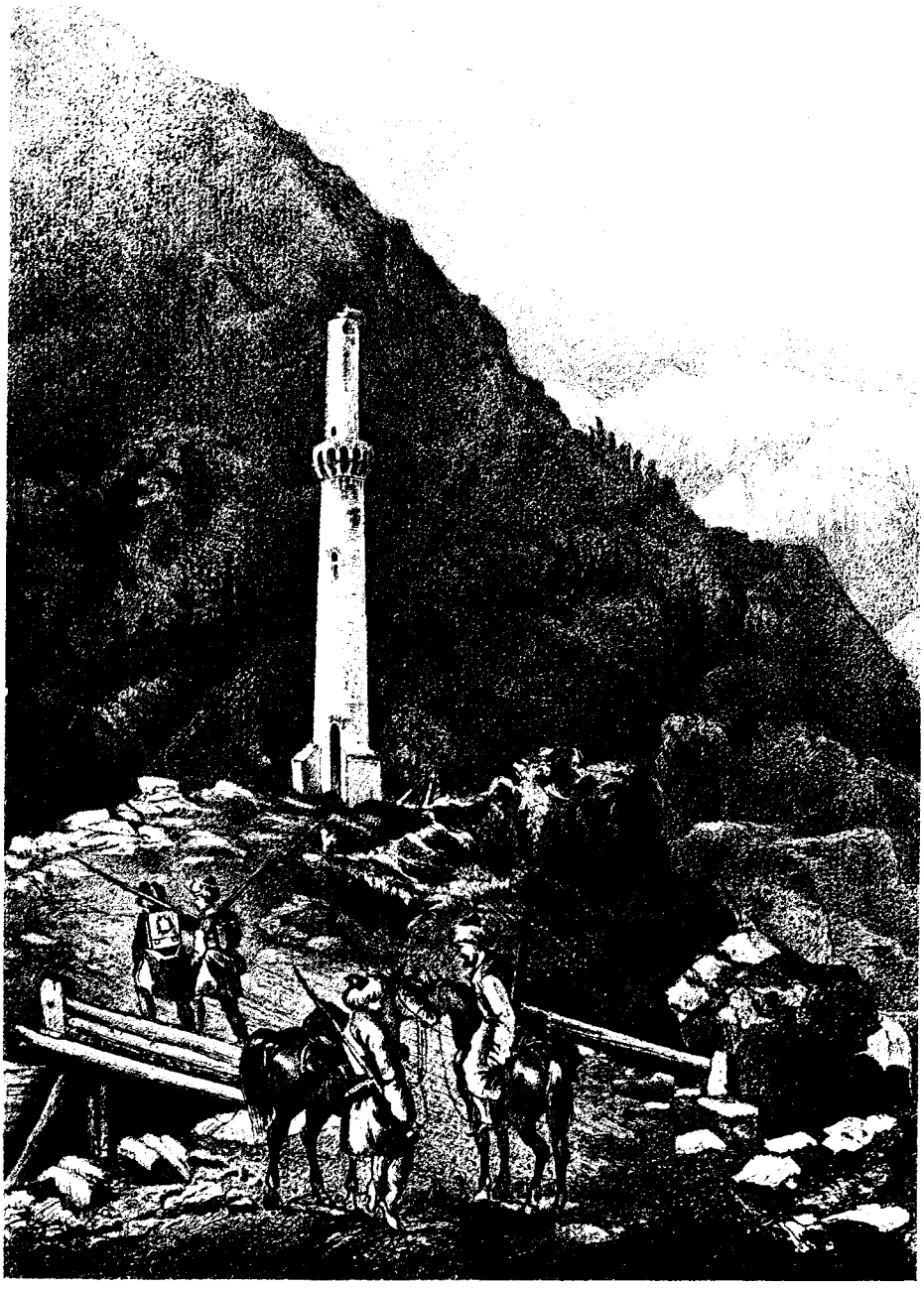
The Quest of the Sheaf.[3]

Once in every twelve months, at no very definite date but more often than not on or about New Year's Day, 'those who seek the Sheaf' gather at a rendezvous unknown to common humanity. The adventurers themselves are no ordinary mortals but *dasnité*, 'those who know', the possessors of second sight. Before setting out they fall into a profound slumber, husband warning wife, wife husband, as the case may be—for both sexes are participants—lest any of the household should chance to wake them; if they did 'the seekers' would assuredly die, and that suddenly. They mount, some on broomsticks, some on benches, others on cats or dogs, one or two, perhaps, in mortars—a few, by exception, on horseback; and all

[1] Perhaps the oldest town in Georgia, south of the river Koura, in the district of Akhalkalaki.

[2] John Bell of Antermony has a similar legend of the great Mosque of Adrianople, in which, however, the architect attempts flight at the behest of the Sultan, crashes, and is killed—a more natural as well as a more dramatic ending. *Travels*, &c., 1763, vol. ii, p. 419.

[3] 'Ossetine Popular Tales'. Djantimir Shanayeff in *Gor.*, vol. iii.



The Minaret

hasten to the place of meeting, whence, under the protection of the mountain divinities and their attendant spirits, they set out on a campaign against 'Tatartoup' which, personified, figures as a god both of the Ossetines and the Kabardáns, yet rather of the latter, we must suppose, for, as we shall now see, he makes a desperate fight for the Sheaf against the Ossetine divinities.[1]

Having reached Tatartoup, which is situated some way below the present Nikolayeva *stanitsa*, on the hill just above the minaret, where the boundary runs between Ossetia and Kabardá, all the mountain gods of Ossetia, with a whole array of spirits and mortals, men and women, engage in a mighty struggle for the Sheaf, their weapons, some say, being bows and arrows. One side at length gives way; the victors snatch the Sheaf, shouting for joy, tear from it a handful of ears and scatter the grain in the direction of their own country. The meaning of this is that the victors have secured for themselves a good harvest for the coming year at the expense of the vanquished. All then separate, and return each to his own home. Many are wounded, but the wounds are invisible to ordinary people, though not to 'those who know'.[2] They then wake from their heavy slumber and announce to their families and fellow villagers what sort of harvest they may look for. My informant said, 'I myself knew a man who had taken part in such expeditions; indeed, the people would point him out. His name was Tsar, he dwelt in Dzomakh, beyond the pass, and I believe still lives. He used to ride on horseback, for you must know that animals also take part in these affairs, and on each occasion he began by falling asleep. His wife, being warned, would wait patiently for him to wake. On one occasion he slept longer than usual and in his sleep called out, "On, on, my bonny bay; catch up with him, catch up!" He was speaking to his horse and at that very

[1] It is warfare, evidently, of Mountain against Plain, of Highland against Lowland, those dependent on precarious crops against the more fortunate dwellers in a fertile country. Such during very many years was the actual warfare waged between Ossetines and Kabardáns, in which the latter had the best of it, but in which, nevertheless, the former never quite lost their independence, not all of them, at least. Cf. the Legend of St. George and the Angel, p. 168, *ante*.

[2] 'In Ness . . . *cruchill* . . . meant originally an apparition which can only be seen by people endowed with second sight: Norse *ófreskr*, a mythological word meaning "endowed with second sight, able to see ghosts and apparitions hidden from the common eye" as defined in Cleasby-Vigfusson'. George Henderson, *The Norse influence on Celtic Scotland*, Glasgow, 1910.

moment the animal neighed loudly in its stable! Whether that woke him or he had slept his sleep out naturally God alone knows! In any case he woke, and, jumping out of bed, said smiling: "The Lord be praised, the victory is ours! We shall have an abundant harvest." Then he sent a boy to see to his horse. The boy came back saying that the horse was sweating terribly, just as though he had been galloped a hundred versts or more! So others went to look and, sure enough, the creature was so wet that you would have said he had been plunged in the river!'[1]

If any of my readers have accompanied me thus far, I hope that they will allow me to try their patience once more, and once only, with a version, or versions, of a classical legend dressed up in barbaric, yet eminently picturesque, Caucasian garb—the legend, namely, of

Prometheus.

Neither Aeschylus nor Hesiod, the first to mention Prometheus, makes 'Caucasus' the scene of his sufferings; Apollonius Rhodius does so, in the *Argonautica*, but Elbrous comes definitely into the story only when Arrian introduces it under the aptly descriptive name—when the two summits coalesce in the line of vision—of 'Strobilos' (a pine-cone). The Argonauts, as they made the shore of Colchis, sighted 'the lofty summits of Caucasus where Prometheus, fastened by iron chains to the savage rocks, fed with his liver an eagle that ever returned to him. They saw, as evening drew on, how, high above the ship, he flew with loud clangour near to the very clouds. Yet the sails bellied at the flapping of his wings, for this was no ordinary bird such as flies in the air; his wings were like well-planed oars.[2] Soon afterwards they heard the groans of Prometheus

[1] Kovalevsky, *Sovremenni obuitchai i drevni zakon* (Moscow, 1886), vol. i, pp. 90–2, gives an older version the close connexion of which with the family cult is obscured in Shanayeff's recension. Delmar Morgan's translation is on pp. 388–9 of *R.A.S. Journal*, New Series, vol. xx (1888). As to the concluding sentence we know that 'the British fairies ride at night on horses which they steal from the stables, and in the morning the poor beasts are found covered with sweat and foam'. Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 262, with a reference to 'Oppert, *Original Inhabitants*, 505', which, however, is not in his copious bibliography.

[2] A description that best fits the albatross or the frigate-bird.

as his liver was torn out. Lamentable cries filled the air until they saw the ravening eagle returning the way he had gone. That night, thanks to the skill of Argus, they came to the broad river Phasis at the farthest extremity of Pontus.'

It will be noticed that Professor von Hahn, whose Russian version[1] I partly make use of for that reason, speaks of 'iron chains', whereas other translators (as R. C. Seaton in the Loeb Classical Library) have 'fetters of bronze' (the word being χαλκέῃσιν).

Arrian, in his *Periplus*, writes, from the mouth of the Phasis, 'an anchor, said to be of the ship Argo, is shown here; but as it is of iron (σιδηρᾶ) it does not seem to be ancient; it differs, indeed, both in size and shape from those at present in use, but, nevertheless, appears to me to be of later date than the Argonautic period'.[2] Fragments of a stone anchor were also shown and that one Arrian, properly, thought less unlikely to be authentic.

Dr. Freshfield (*Exploration*, &c., vol. i, p. 5) has, in his translation of this passage, 'bronze' for 'iron', which, if allowable, would, according to the commonly received chronology of the two metals, tend to lessen Arrian's objection; but is it? Now, I have mentioned this confusion between iron and bronze[3] merely because the Caucasian and Armenian versions of Prometheus, to which I now come, depend for their most remarkable variation from the Greek original entirely on the presence of the former metal, which would, naturally enough, replace the latter in men's minds as time went on, and, by the ignorant, perhaps, be referred back to days long before iron was

[1] *Mat.*, vol. iv, p. 48.

[2] Falconer's trans., Oxford, 1805. For anchor-lore of ancient, especially classical, times, see Brindley's article in *The Mariner's Mirror*, Cambridge, 1927, vol. xiii, where is figured (after Furtwängler) an anchor from a Sardinian scarab at Cagliari *c.* 600 B.C. of which it is said: 'This example appears to be by far the oldest representation of a Greek anchor as yet known.' See also *The History of the Anchor*, by Dr. F. Moll, *loc. cit.* The *Periplus* above mentioned is, of course, that of the Euxine Sea.

[3] 'χαλκός, οῦ, ὁ—copper: Lat. Aes., first in Homer and Hesiod . . . Copper was the first metal that men learned to smelt and work . . . Lucret. has (5. 1292) *prior aeris erat quam ferri cognitus usus*; hence χαλκός being the metal in common use, came to be used for metal in general . . . and when *iron* began to be worked, the word χαλκός was used, especially by Poets, for σίδηρος, χάλκεος for σιδήρεος: so even in *Od.* 9. 391 sq. χαλκεύς means an iron smith, blacksmith'. Liddell & Scott, 8th edn. Tin was known as *plumbum album* or *plumbum candidum*, much as graphite is known as 'blacklead'. 'White iron' for tin is recorded by Boswell at St. Andrews, in 1773, *Tour*, &c.; and white-smith, of course, means tin-smith.

actually in use[1] much as, conversely, 'such phrases as "smote him with the bronze" (i.e. spear) frequently occur in the epics although the actual weapon may have been of iron.'[2]

A Kabardán legend of Oshkhamakho (Elbrous) runs that the mountain was inaccessible until, at last, a hero having one eye in his forehead dared to violate the secrets of Tha (the Supreme Deity) and climbed to the saddle between the twin summits, to that very place where a huge rock, visible from below to the naked eye, stands up with, at foot, a spring of water, crystal clear. 'Whereupon Tha, the deathless one, resenting the insolent daring of a mere mortal, fastened him to the rock by a long chain that passed round his neck. Many years went by: the hero grew old; his beard, white as the glacier-snow of Oshkhamakho, reached to his knees; his mighty frame was bent; his proud lineaments all seamed and wrinkled. Moreover, further to punish his insolence, Tha sent a bird of prey, a vulture, that still comes flying, day by day, to peck mercilessly at the hero's heart; and when the sufferer stoops to sip water from the spring, the bird, forestalling him, drains the last drop. Now, this water has magical properties; whoever succeeded in drinking it up would live till the world's end. But a time will come when Tha, losing patience with the wickedness of the sons of Adam, will remit the balance of the one-eyed hero's penance and set him free from the heart of the mountain. Woe, then, to the human race, for on them he will avenge the tortures of centuries.'[3]

This version explains the next, which might otherwise be puzzling. I take it from the lithographed pamphlet, already mentioned,[4] by General Chodzko, the well-known head of the Trigonometrical Survey of the Caucasus in the 'forties and 'fifties of last century, who spent five days on the summit of Ararat and camped, too, on Zilga-khokh. He writes:

'The popular legend, ancient as the world, tells that Prometheus was chained to the rocks of Elbrous, there to expiate his temerity in having brought down fire from Heaven to mortal man on earth. His faithful companion, a giant hound, licks unceasingly the iron chains by which his master is fastened to the rock. Little by little as the

[1] Thus Hyginus makes Mercury fasten Prometheus to the rock with 'iron nails'.
[2] Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, vol. ii, p. 610.
[3] *Mat.*, vol. xii, p. 38.
[4] See *ante*.

metal rusts it loses strength and consistency, and towards the end of the year is worn so thin as to be not far from breaking. The danger to the world of men is great and must somehow be averted; wherefore, on the Feast of the Three Kings, every smith, young and old, in all the Caucasus, taking hammer in hand beats vigorously on his anvil, and as he does so, lo! the iron of the captive's fetters grows strong again and holds him prisoner as before!'

There are other versions, with which I will deal briefly. Thus, in the Georgian story it is Amiran who represents Prometheus. He begins life well, killing dragons and giants as a hero should, but after a while makes ordinary men his victims and ends by slaughtering Christians! Jesus Christ decides to put a stop to it. He appears to Amiran in human guise and challenges him to a trial of strength on a lofty mountain. They meet, and Christ, looping a leather strap round His neck, by a muscular effort rends it to bits; Amiran does the same, but his bits become links of an iron chain, and the hitherto unconquered giant is thus by Divine power made captive. The rest of the story presents little that is new. Nothing is said as to what would ensue if Amiran broke loose, though evil may be inferred.[1]

In a version written down from the words of a blacksmith in Kakheti we have the captive Amiran and his faithful dog on 'Mt. Sakornĕ', 25 v. N. by E. of Telav, wrongly said to be covered with eternal snow. The new feature is that all smiths, but, apparently, they alone, are threatened. They strike their anvils on Maundy Thursday, as, too, in the previous version, not the Epiphany.

In yet another variant God has bound Amiran with a great iron chain and tethered him to an iron stake, together with his dog Qursha, the latter having destroyed many of God's beloved *tour* (*jikhvi*). Man and dog drag at the chain day by day until, in the course of the year, the stake is almost out of the ground, but at that moment a little bird flies down and perches on it. The enraged hero brandishes an iron mace and the bird flies off just as the blow falls, driving the stake deep into the ground again. This happens every year . . .

The dog Qursha is said to be the pup of an eagle, a dog with eagle's wings on its shoulders, reared by a hunter. In two bounds it can overtake a *tour*; a third bound would disgrace it.[2]

[1] Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 230–1.

[2] *Mat.*, vol. x, pp. 3, 47–9.

In a Svanetian version Amiran's offence was thrice breaking an oath taken in Christ's name. There is no dog and the captive's whole effort is to reach his sword, which he might do if only his finger-nails would grow a little longer: that, however, is prevented by a watchful demon, who cuts them just in time. The Svani, by way of helping Amiran, refrain from paring their own nails on the first four days of the week. They believe that the hero will eventually win free and bring the Golden Age to Svanetia and to all Christian lands.[1]

In a very long Abkhaz version the hero's name is Abrskil. His sin is overweening pride. He destroys mercilessly all men with fair hair and blue eyes, whether strangers (prisoners of war) or his own people. They have the evil eye, he declares.[2] Finally he uproots all vines because, festooned above the forest paths from branch to branch, they cause men to bow, as it were to God, with whom he, at least, claims equality. Once made fast it is his horse that licks the chain, but with the usual abortive result.[3]

Of all these versions, in the Svanetian alone will the release of the captive bring happiness to mankind. In the rest evil is directly foretold, or at least implied. In the majority the faithful dog plays his part. In all we may suppose that Elbrous is the scene of the tragedy, even when it is not distinctly so stated. But there is yet another version, differing from the rest in many details, but especially in regard to locality. It is also many centuries older, as a written account, than any of the above, having been preserved for us by Moses of Chorene (5th century A.D.) in those fragments of ancient Armenian song he did so well to rescue from oblivion, even when, seemingly, his only motive was to point at them the finger of scorn.[4]

Ardaschès III, King of Armenia, was succeeded in A.D. 120 by his son Ardavazt IV, who reigned according to some accounts only a few days, according to others about two years. This was in the time of the Emperor Hadrian. The obsequies of Ardaschès were noted for their limitless extravagance. 'The chroniclers give in detail the number of persons sacrificed—his beloved wives, his concubines and

[1] Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 238–41.

[2] Westermarck alludes to this superstition in his *R. and B. in Morocco*, vol. i, pp. 419, 420, 439, 461.

[3] Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 242–6.

[4] *Moïse de Khorène.* Collection des Historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie. *Victor Langlois*, vol. ii, Paris, 1869, p. 110. Chap. lx; *Mort d'Ardaschès.*

his devoted slaves, &c., &c.' all of which calls to mind the Scythian funeral slaughterings already referred to.[1]

Now, it is just this funeral extravagance that supplies the reasoned motive in this Armenian version of our legend. Ardavazt, the heir, with unfilial audacity, ventures thus to remonstrate with his father on his deathbed:

Thou wilt soon be gone, and with thee all the [? wealth of the] country
While I survive to reign o'er the ruin left behind!

Which drew from his father the curse:

If thou goest hunting on free Masis[2]
The Kadch[3] *shall seize upon thee, and lead thee down beneath free Masis;*
There shalt thou remain, nor ever more see the light of day!

Our historian adds that according to old wives' tales Ardavazt is imprisoned in a cavern, loaded with iron chains which two dogs gnaw unceasingly, while he struggles to regain his freedom and wreak vengeance on the world. But to the sound of the blacksmiths' hammers the chains renew their strength. 'That is why even in our time [5th century A.D.] many smiths, obedient to the fable's teaching, strike their anvils three or four times on the first day of each week to make solid again, as they say, the chains of Ardavazt.'[4] Fourteen centuries later Weidenbaum tells us that 'the smiths of Armenia and Georgia keep up this custom of striking three blows on their anvils on certain days even in our own time'.[5]

These fabulous dogs were of generous breed and excite our admiration, but the real dogs at Elkhótovo were if possible more savage than any I had so far encountered. Even inside the courtyard they flew at our horses, and their masters had some trouble in reducing them to order. One brute, we were told, would not allow his owner to enter the compound with a gun in his hand, unless hidden behind his back. The reason for this was that what with

[1] Vol. i, p. 271, note 1.

[2] Ararat.

[3] The *Kadch*, however, were superior and benevolent spirits, as opposed to the *Dev* (*Div*, *Daev*) or evil spirits 'of the race of the Giants who inhabited the world before Adam. They, the *Kadch*, fell into sin and were banished to the Caucasus by the Almighty. Their head-quarters were Elbrous and Ararat.' *Caucasian Folk-tales* (A. Dirr), trs. by L. Menzies, 1925.

[4] *Op. cit.*, ch. lxi.

[5] i.e. in A.D. 1884. *Zap.*, vol. xiii, p. 134.

brigandage and local quarrels there was nothing for it but to make the dogs as fierce as possible. One favourite way of venting spite against any one was to cut off his horse's tail, which made it valueless, for no tribesman would for the life of him be seen riding an animal so maimed, and the dogs were the only safeguard against such deeds of malice.[1]

Next morning (Thursday, Sept. 4th), we started at 7 a.m. with a heavy day before us, and rode first south-east between the river and hills to Kardjin, a distance of only 10 versts which took us none the less over two hours; then on to the farther end of Darg-kokh (Long-wood), a very long village, where we drew rein at 11.15 a.m., the one street being a sea of mud from end to end after last night's heavy rain. Here we rested the horses an hour, then on to Zilghee, a total distance from Elkhótovo of only 27 versts (18 miles) which had taken us six and a half hours' actual riding, a pretty good indication of what condition our cattle were reduced to. Ourousbi told me as we rode towards Kardjin between the wood and the railway how his brother had been attacked there not long since. He was fired at twice and had his hat shot off but, luckily, when some hay-cutters on the hillside above began firing, the robbers made off. At Zilghee we were hospitably entertained by a friend of Ourousbi's who fed us on chickens, soup, tea, plums, and *arbouz*, all of good quality, congratulating us the while very gravely on having escaped attack ourselves at the same place, which had been terrorized for some time past by a band of eight *abreks*. Only a few days since, a fight took place between them and two Ossetines, who, being well armed, drove them off, though not before one had been wounded. On the other hand, one of the bandits left behind him on the ground his chin, bearded and bloody!

We had ridden that part of the road in open order—Ourousbi leading, with my Winchester at the ready, I next, a hundred yards behind, with Browning pistol and *kinjal*, Islam last with my double-barrelled gun, loaded with slugs, the object being to avoid the risk of a volley and charge on all three of us at once. There was Siberian

[1] 'The cutting of a horse's tail was formerly by the Tartars, and still is by the Persians, considered as the greatest insult to its master.' Chodzko, *Specimens*, &c., p. 365 n. See the broadly farcical trick that made Syrdon's horse laugh. Dumézil, *Légendes*, &c., p. 118.

(cattle) plague, we learned, at Zilghee; a bullock had died of it and had been eaten by the poorer villagers. Two of them had died in turn and those who skinned the animal and had cuts on their hands fell ill, but savage cauterization saved them. We left Zilghee at 3.45 p.m. and, keeping the same order most of the way, in drenching rain that never ceased, the roads being quagmires, reached Vladikavkaz at 8 p.m., the horses quite done up.

Ourousbi on reaching the first lamp-post crossed himself devoutly and said: 'Now, Iván Ivánovitch, we can burn a candle to God, a big one! I feared an attack between the German colony[1] and the town—it is just the brigands' night and the gardens the very place for them.' He paused a moment, then added: 'It 's not death one fears, but mutilation—curse them!' and, turning, he spat upon the ground.[2]

After a Persian bath followed by a good supper at the Hôtel de France with Ourousbi as my guest, I turned in and slept like the dead. Next day Walton came in from Grozny with certain documents and posted me thoroughly as to all that was doing in the oil-fields. On Saturday, September 6th, I took the express train for St. Petersburg, bidding farewell to Ourousbi, as always, with infinite regret.

[1] Mikhailovskaya.

[2] Barbarous mutilation of a slain enemy's body has in modern times been largely, if not entirely, devoid of ritual significance; but in the past it was not so; and those who have paid any attention to the subject can hardly fail to connect even its present-day manifestations, in the Near and Middle East, if not universally, with the ritual observance so strikingly illustrated in the *Argonautica* (Bk. iv, ll. 477–9):

> ἥρως Δ' Αἰσονίδης ἐξάργματα τάμνε θανόντος,
> τρὶς Δ' ἀπέλειξε φόνου, τρὶς Δ' ἐξ ἄγος ἔπτυσ' ὀδόντων,
> ἢ θέμις αὐθέντῃσι δολοκτασίας ἱλάεσθαι.

'And the hero, Aeson's son, cut off the extremities of the dead man [Medea's brother Apsyrtus, *she being present*], and thrice licked up some blood and thrice spat the pollution from his teeth, as it is right to do, to atone for a treacherous murder.' (Seaton's trans.).

Even Ourousbi's expectoration may well have had a ritual origin!

APPENDIX A

EXCAVATIONS ON THE GEORGIAN MILITARY ROAD

THOUGH, to my mind,[1] the Dariel route was not a possible one for invading armies or unwelcomed race migration, until the Russians built their road from Vladikavkaz to Tiflis, the valley of the Terek above and below the Dariel gorge or 'gates' was held by various tribes, races, and nations during many centuries for periods short or long. It is not, therefore, surprising that it should yield in our day archaeological remains of much variety and interest; rather may we wonder at their comparative scarcity, and more particularly at the want of accurate information available in regard to such as do exist. Indeed, the lack of interest shown by the Tsarist Government in all concerning the archaeology of the Caucasus is most lamentable. For it cannot be doubted that had the Russian autocrats who lavished blood and treasure during sixty years on the conquest of the mountain land devoted, even in moderate degree, their attention and energy to the preservation of remains, historic and prehistoric, on either flank of the Main Chain, the results would have been of the greatest interest and importance to the world of science. The bounds of knowledge would have been enlarged, the fame of the Russian rulers, from Alexander I to Nicholas II inclusive, correspondingly enhanced, and it would not have been possible for Kaleetinsky to write so lately as in 1926 the scathing condemnation that follows:[2]

'Caucasian antiquities as a section of Russian archaeology are, unhappily, still in the condition described forty years ago by Kondakoff.[3] It is not merely that the materials so far found are far from giving a complete picture of the Caucasus in past ages, but even the most vital chronological questions concerning it remain obscure or at best are but vaguely indicated, and this in spite of the fact that Caucasian antiquities are fully accessible to inspection and study.

[1] *Ante*, vol. i, p. 191.

[2] See his article in *Recueil Kondakov*, Prague, 1926, pp. 40–3. (This article is in Russian, others in various European languages.)

[3] I. Tolstoi and N. P. Kondakoff, *Rousskia Drevnosti*, pt. iii, St. Petersburg, 1890, p. 97.

Not only here, in our own country, in the museums of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tiflis, but in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, and Lyons, objects are to be seen in great abundance coming from Caucasian graveyards.'

Here follows a list of those distinguished persons who have excavated for archaeological ends in the Caucasus, to which he adds: 'None the less we must repeat that the main problems connected with the antiquities of the Caucasus still await solution, the best illustration of which is the long line of figures arrived at in the attempts to date the Koban burials, each individual writer having his own ideas on the subject, thus:

'J. de Morgan, XXX–XXV cent. B.C.	M. Hörnes, X cent. B.C.
V. A. Gorodtsoff, XV cent. B.C.	A. S. & P. S. Ouvaroff, VIII cent. B.C.
E. Chantre, XV–V cent. B.C.	S. Reinach, VI cent. B.C.
O. Montelius, XIII cent. B.C.	O. Tischler, I cent. B.C.
R. Virchow, XI–X cent. B.C.	N. P. Kondakoff, II–III cent. A.D.

'This state of things is mainly due to the fact that nearly the whole of the Caucasian materials available for archaeology either passed first through the hands of dealers in antiquities or were purchased from the local inhabitants, who made a profitable business of plundering the ancient sepulchres. Hardly one single journal or report exists wherein such plundering is not mentioned, bearing witness to the systematic or wholesale destruction by the natives of archaeological remains, for which reason nearly all the Caucasian collections, whether in museums or in private hands, consist of mixtures of chance-found objects from a variety of burials of different epochs.' But the inexperience and even mere carelessness of collectors were likewise responsible, in part, for this sorry state of things. We read, for instance, that 'the most crying example of careless work is furnished by the excavations at Souargom (Tchmee) where, in the course of one single week, thirty-six catacomb tombs were laid open, which existed in several layers at depths varying from 2 to 12 arshins.[1] As a result, the excavator, Professor Samokhvasoff, gathered the whole of his finds into one great heap and attributed them all to the seventh–eighth centuries A.D. merely because, in the mass of objects found, there occurred some few Byzantine and Sassanian coins of that

[1] The arshin = 28 inches.

period. The remaining 150 catacomb tombs were turned out and about—and, of course, plundered—by the local inhabitants!'

Countess Ouvároff,[1] while admitting Samokhvasoff's unhappy procedure, takes into account not only his finds and her own, but all those housed in the Leningrad Historical Museum, and the Moscow Kremlin, and sorts them out, as well as she can, into five epochs extending from 'Old Koban' (her eighth century B.C.) to the eighth century A.D. It is to be feared, however, that one happy event, and one only, could ever enable experts to settle definitely the age of the older Caucasian finds, the discovery, namely—unlikely but not impossible—of untouched burials, and their treatment *ab initio* in a purely scientific manner. Of such treatment there is, apparently, a much better chance now, under Bolshevist rule, than ever there was before.[2]

Tchmee was one of the two places on the Georgian military road, north of the watershed, where notable archaeological remains were found. The other was the village of Kazbek, 12 versts higher up the Dariel gorge, at the foot of the mountain so named, the two sites being located at the northern and southern exits from the gorge, respectively. The story of the Kazbek find, since known as 'the treasure of Kazbek', differs in details from that of Tchmee, but is hardly less discreditable to the Russian archaeologist concerned, this time G. D. Filimonoff, Director of the Roumiantseff Museum in Moscow, who was sent down officially to superintend operations on the receipt of certain articles indicating the probability of discoveries of exceptional value. This was in 1876.

Filimonoff's report[3] was published two years later in Russian in a *Journal* with a very long title and 'difficult of access' as we learn from Professor Tallgren of Helsingfors University, the well-known Finnish expert on Caucasian archaeology, from whose article in *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua*, v, 1930, pp. 109–82, I take, with the author's kind permission, verbatim, the following summary.

'The cemetery here has been subterranean. It stretches to under the highway leading to Kazbek village and is situated in the vicinity

[1] *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. viii, pp. 111–26, Plates LV–LXIII.

[2] Rostovtzeff as lately as in 1922 (*op. cit.*, p. viii) wrote, 'The scientific exploration of the Caucasian lands . . . is still in its infancy'.

[3] See Bibliography.

of the farm and church called Stepan-Tsminda [St. Stephen]. Ten labourers were engaged and set to work in a row with crowbars and spades to dig a trench to the yard of Mr. Kazbek's farm; work was begun at a distance of about a fathom from a stone fence that divided the yard from the highway, the level of which was about three fathoms lower than the level of the yard. It was while this highway was being made that the graveyard had been found. The old road was said to have been where the yard now stands; the new had been moved nearer to the Terek. While the stones with which the yard is paved were being emptied out of the drain, we found, in the exact centre of the drain, moist earth, as though water were seeping through it. This was apparently the lowest depth of the drain, as anything similar was not observable elsewhere. The clearing of the soil was continued throughout the whole of the drain, a length of about 10 arshins [*c.* 23 feet] and a width of about 2 arshins, the men throwing out the stones and the earth that had crumbled over these. This was done to a depth of one arshin. Then, at the above-mentioned moist part of the drain, right amongst the stones and earth, a gold ear-ring gleamed. After I had taken it out of the drain and examined the surrounding area, I found a little gold disk and a broken pale-blue bead made of a glassy substance. These objects had apparently been carried to the site by chance, during repeated diggings for the foundations of all kinds of out-buildings. Nevertheless, they gave grounds for the belief that a bigger treasure might be hidden in the vicinity. Fearing the great cupidity of the workmen, I hastened to segregate them at the ends of the drain, keeping only two in the middle, with whom I began to deepen the drain at the spot where the objects had been found. Before half an hour had passed, pieces of a copper chain appeared at a depth of one and a half arshin. They were scattered amongst stones and fragments of soil. I descended into the drain and began feeling carefully around a spot under a dislodged stone, whence the ends of a similar chain protruded, and having laid hands on a firm mass of metal, formed by a packed mass of objects placed in receptacles, began freeing them of earth in order to examine them before taking up the remainder. At that moment the workmen crowded round the drain; some descended into it and regardless of my commands began to lay hands on the objects, now behind my back, now behind that of the

workman sitting opposite me. I saw that I was dealing with half-savage people. . . . The news of the find spread rapidly through the neighbourhood, and people arrived unceasingly, until soon I had over a hundred robbers around me. As the smallest delay would have caused a final looting of the grave, I told the workmen nearest to me to take up with all speed the objects that had come to light during the excavation. I had only time to note that some of the objects, such as the little bronze figurines, idols, &c., were in a silver bowl and tied around with chains, and that in addition to this vessel there was another one of bronze, also full of objects, and still two others of bronze. All were in direct contact with each other and tied around with chains. Evening came, and there was no time to examine the find on the spot. It was necessary to hasten and collect the objects together and into bags, to protect them from the greed of the crowd, which pressed insolently around us, obviously to take advantage of any carelessness on my part. When I had collected all the objects found in this treasure, I began to sift the earth lifted from the hole in which the objects were discovered, at the same time subjecting it to a preliminary inspection for further finds, continuing this work until the sun had set. As is well known, the southern day changes rapidly into night, particularly in the mountains. Being compelled to interrupt our work until the following dawn, I filled the hole with big stones and entrusted the village Elder with the duty of seeing that it remained undisturbed until dawn. The Elder and the members of the Kazbek family present, belonging to the privileged classes, reassured me, declaring that no one would dare to enter the yard of their relatives by night, especially as the country house opposite was occupied by a field hospital and harboured soldiers.

'When, on the following day, I reached the site, I saw to my horror obvious signs that digging for purposes of loot had been carried out during the night. The insolence of the thieves was such that they sold me on that very spot, through the agency of little boys, objects dug up by them during the night, after having deliberately, for the sake of gain, broken them up into several pieces. The labourers employed by me cleared the hole and continued digging to the depth of another arshin, but no more objects were found. I had to be content with the treasure found on the preceding day.'

Now, the whole of the Caucasus and most especially the one and only road across the mountains was under the direct military control of Russia. There is something fatuously naïve, to my mind, in sending an amiable old gentleman from Moscow on a mission such as this. It should have been entrusted to a soldier, a man of rank and character, with an escort strong enough in case of necessity to guard the finds and preserve order. Professor Filimonoff would then have been useful, no doubt, in his own technical line, and lamentable confusion and loss would have been avoided.

It seems never to have been suggested so far that the mass of precious articles so strangely bundled together may have been buried for safety's sake on occasion of some sudden raid or alarm of invasion. Those who so disposed of it might well have been killed or carried away into slavery, no record of the 'treasure' remaining.

Professor Tallgren's article, with its wealth of illustration and ample references, points the way to those who would inquire further into this subject.

Many of the more important finds are figured and described in the works of Virchow, Chantre, Countess Ouvároff, and others.

APPENDIX B

NADIR SHAH

THE chief source for the life of Nadir Shah has hitherto been the *Tarikh-i-Nadiri* of Mirza Mahdi. In 1770 Sir William Jones most unwillingly published a French translation of the work from a Persian manuscript brought to England by King Christian VII of Denmark. Of this version a magnificent copy with Jones's holograph inscription to Oxford University is in the Bodleian. In 1773 an English translation, likewise by Jones, appeared—but with some singular omissions—heralded by the following remarkable announcement: 'After that, Erivan surrendered (Sept. 22nd, 1735) and Nadir employed the next 3 months in reducing the savage nations called Leczis who infested the mountains of the Caucasus [their native country!]; his success against these banditti was very rapid; but as his battles with the mountaineers have nothing in them either instructive or entertaining it will be more agreeable to the reader to omit them.'

Sir William Jones himself must have the discredit attaching to this astonishing statement. What he omits is to be found in his French editions of 1770, 1799, and partly in this vol., pp. 40–2. The importance of the Daghestan campaigns, with their facile successes, their ultimate total failure, can hardly be exaggerated, as will be evident to all who can visualize the results that might or must have followed on a victory over the Avars in central Daghestan. But we must not be too hard on this great scholar, for the provocation was extreme. The Danish King, his Court, and the English 'Minister of State'[1] literally bullied him into undertaking and carrying to completion this difficult and extensive work, which included a Dissertation on Persian Poetry, all within the space of one year; with the result, as he himself tells us, that 'the whole book and more especially the Dissertation, is full of errors'.[2] The dates in particular are notable for their glaring inexactitude, made the more conspicuous in the magnificent first edition by being fully displayed in

[1] Mr. Lockhart tells me that there was no Foreign Office until 1782. The Secretary of State in question would have been the head of the Northern Department. These officials at this time succeeded each other very rapidly and it is not easy to decide which one in particular put the pressure on Jones.

[2] Teignmouth (Lord), *Works of Sir William Jones*, London, 1807, vol. i, p. 144.

its luxuriantly wide margins. We may well believe, as the unhappy translator assures us, that the task was 'a most disagreeable one'. His mastery of the French language was, he modestly admits, far from perfect. As a consequence he entrusted the editing of the book to a 'competent Frenchman'. Hence, possibly, some part of the confusion so unluckily present.

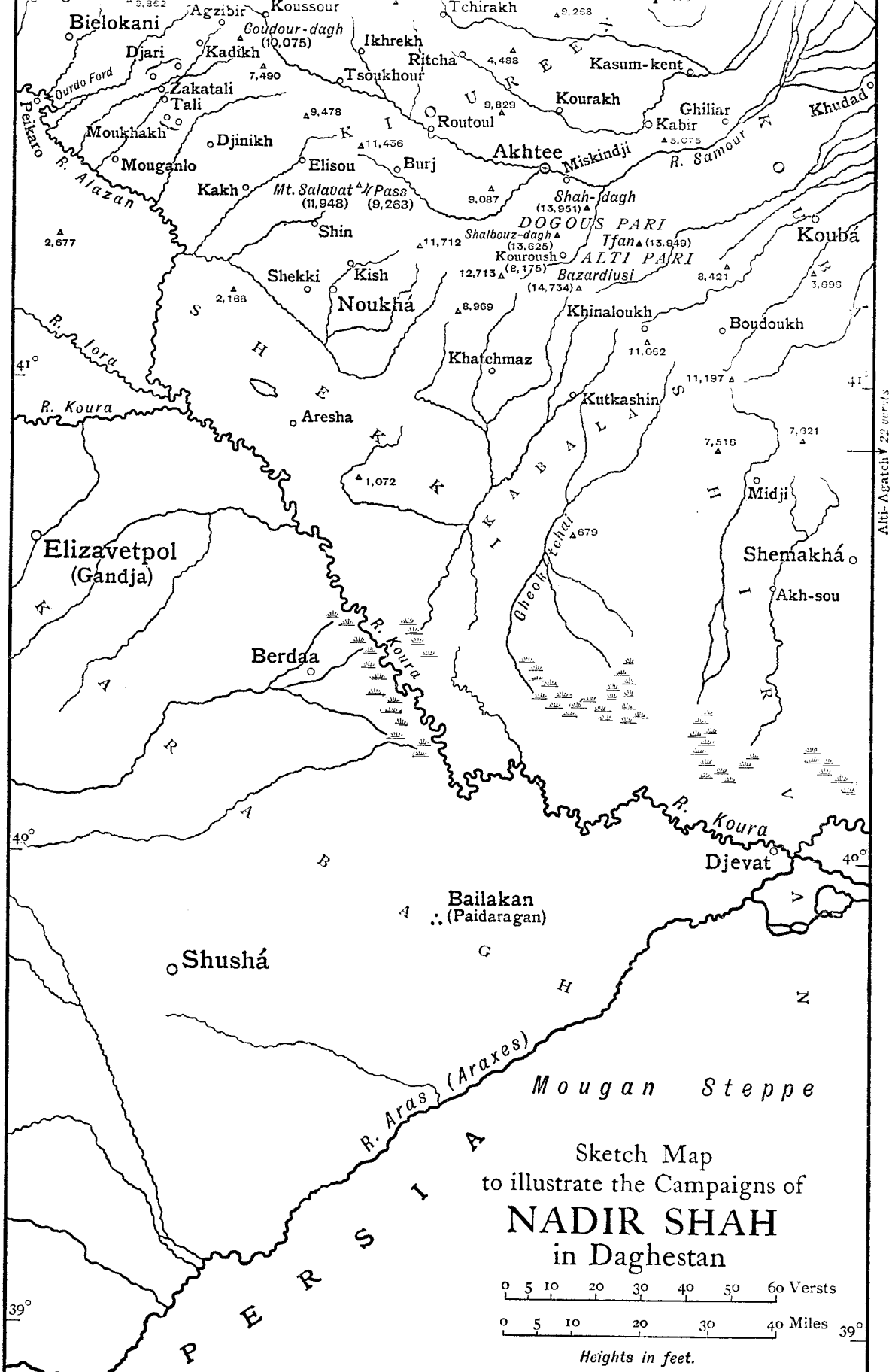
Abbas Kouli Agha Bakikhanoff (i.e. of the ruling house of Baku, *b.* 1794, *d.* 1846) left behind him a work in Russian called *Gulistan-Iran*, which was published in Baku in 1926 only; but, meantime, a portion of it under the title of *The Campaigns of Nadir Shah in Daghestan* had appeared in the official Tiflis paper *Kavkaz* in 1846 (first year of publication) and also in that same year in the first of certain half-yearly volumes of extracts from it (*Sbornik gazeti Kavkaz*, pp. 228–47).[1] A careful comparison with the work of Sir William Jones offers proof positive that the original in both cases is one and the same, i.e. the Persian text of Mirza Mahdi, though his name is not once mentioned by Abbas Kouli. But in the latter's oriental library in Baku, as catalogued by Berezin in his *Journey in Daghestan and the Trans-caucasus* (Kazan, &c., 1849, Russ.) a copy of the original Persian duly appears.

While Abbas Kouli may not have equalled Sir William Jones in knowledge of Persian, he knew it well, and his familiarity with Daghestan, Shirvan, and other neighbouring countries and languages, including Russian, was perhaps unrivalled. He had travelled, too, extensively, even visiting St. Petersburg, while resident mainly in Khoudad or Baku.

As to Mirza Mahdi's merits, he has been up to now acknowledged as the fullest and most authentic source for the history of Nadir Shah, whom he served until his assassination in 1747 as Secretary of State, accompanying him on many of his campaigns. There is, however, part of a work on the same subject, also in Persian, in the Asiatic Institute, Leningrad, which, according to the late Professor Barthold, 'by the wealth of its data far surpasses . . . all other sources not excepting Mirza Mahdi'.[2] A photostat of this manuscript is now in the School of Oriental Studies, London, and has recently been

[1] My copies of these works are now in the London Library.

[2] Professor Minorsky in *E. of I.*, No. 49, article 'Nadir Shah'. The title of this new source is *Kitab-i-Nadiri*, the author's name Muhammad Kazim.


Bielokani
Agzibir
Koussour
Goudour-dagh
(10,075)
Djari
Kadikh
Ikhrekh
Tchirakh
9,263
Ritcha
4,488
Kasum-kent
7,490
Tsoukhour
Ourdo Ford
Zakatali
Tali
9,478
Kourakh
9,829
Routoul
Ghiliar
Kabir
5,075
Khudad
Peikaro
R. Alazan
Moukhakh
Djinikh
11,436
Akhtee
Miskindji
R. Samour
Mouganlo
Elisou
Burj
Kakh
Mt. Salavat
(11,948)
Pass
(9,263)
9,087
Shah-dagh
(13,951)
DOGOUS PARI
Shin
2,677
11,712
Shalbouz-dagh
(13,625)
Kouroush
(8,175)
Tfan (13,949)
ALTI PARI
Bazardiusi
(14,734)
Koubá
12,713
8,421
3,096
Shekki
Kish
Noukhá
2,168
8,969
Khinaloukh
Boudoukh
11,062
R. Iora
41°
Khatchmaz
11,197
41°
R. Koura
Kutkashin
Aresha
7,516
7,321
1,072
Midji
Elizavetpol
(Gandja)
679
Shemakhá
Akh-sou
Berdaa
R. Koura
R. Koura
40°
Djevat
40°
Bailakan
(Paidaragan)
Shushá
R. Aras (Araxes)
Mougan Steppe
PERSIA
39°
39°
Sketch Map
to illustrate the Campaigns of
NADIR SHAH
in Daghestan
0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 Versts
0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles
Heights in feet.
Alti-Agatch
22 versts

made use of by my friend Mr. Lawrence Lockhart, in his thesis for the degree of Phil.D. at London University, having for subject Nadir Shah.[1] Other sources are fairly numerous, including some few of considerable value.

On January 12th, 1736, Nadir, after a successful campaign in Daghestan, reached Djevat at the junction of the Araxes and the Koura, which by the Treaties of 1723 had become the meeting-place of Russia, Persia, and Turkey.

In Dr. Cook's *Journey of the Russian Embassy to Persia in 1746* we read (Hanway, vol. i, p. 388) of a pyramid at Djevat, on the south side of the Koura, 'near 50 feet high; in which are niches filled with 282 human heads, of the late Persian and Tartar chiefs of the Shamakie rebellion, who were all beheaded in one morning'. Here, by command, all the notables of Persia met Nadir, numbering, it is said, 100,000.[2] Twelve thousand huts had been erected for them of wood and of reeds, with all needful accessories such as mosques, baths, caravanserais, and a magnificent palace for Nadir himself. Here it was that, after feigned contests with the chief notables lasting a whole month, in the manner of Caesar and Cromwell, on March 8th, 1736, he 'accepted' the throne of Persia on his own terms, the chief of which, the practical abolition of the Shiah sect, coupled with the terrible exactions necessitated by his military expenditure, was to lead within barely ten years to the utter ruin of all his plans and achievements—and, incidentally, of unhappy Persia. According to some authorities one brave protest had, indeed, been made—by the Moullá Bashi, whom Nadir straightway caused to be strangled, whereupon opposition ceased! From Derbend, in 1742, Nadir issued an ordinance 'even to the confines of the Province of Cabul and Peshawar' explaining at greater length his intentions and the reasons for them, threatening all opponents with the anger of Heaven and 'our own most[3] formidable resentment'.[4]

Master of Persia, not merely in fact but in name and title, Nadir lost no time in pursuing his career of conquest. In the course of four years he overcame successively the Bakhtiaris, stubborn mountain men, and the Balouchis; took Kandahar, Cabul, and Peshawar;

[1] *Nadir Shah*, by L. Lockhart, London, 1938.

[2] Including followers, presumably, but even then the total seems excessive.

[3] I had almost written 'more'! [4] Sir W. Jones, *Works* (ed. 1799), vol. v, p. 353.

marched on India, defeated the Mogul, captured Delhi, and, on his way back, conquered Scinde. He then forced Bokhara and Khiva to submit, extending Persia's northern boundary to the Oxus.

To be more precise as to the first part of this period, in the middle of August Nadir entered the Bakhtiari country, and on the completion of a successful campaign there went on to Ispahan, where he spent five weeks (October 15th–November 21st, 1736) preparing for the further campaigns against Afghanistan and India. He was at Kerman at the end of December, but his first objective, Kandahar, was taken only after a siege that began on March 9th, 1737, and lasted a whole year.[1]

In 1738 occurred the death of his brother Ibrahim, avenged somewhat tardily in 1741, as already related on page 40 of this volume, where, and on pages 41 and 42, a brief summary of Nadir's further proceedings in Daghestan will also be found.

[1] The above dates are New Style and have kindly been supplied to me by Mr. Lockhart. Abbas Kouli omits all reference to these events.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.

Shirvan, Shemakhá. Shirvan at its greatest included Derbend and Djevat with all that lay between them. The capital was in pre-Moslem times Shabran; later Shemakhá for the most part, but at one time Koubá.[1] See for its very confused history Professor Barthold's articles 'Shirvan' and 'Shirvanshah' in *E. of I.* A story pertinaciously adhered to that in 1712 three hundred Russian merchants were killed at Shemakhá and their property plundered appears to have had no better foundation than one of the frequent disturbances in that unruly city where Shias and Sunnis were apt to fall out at slight provocation, while raids by fierce Daghestanis were by no means uncommon. The date was subsequently transferred to 1721, when a raid of some sort did take place, and the imaginary outrage was used by Peter the Great to bring pressure to bear upon Persia. Shirvan and Shabran are said to be the same word.

[1] At the end of May, 1735, Nadir, having realized the unsatisfactory position of Shemakhá from the military point of view, caused a new city to be built some thirteen miles away on the river Akh-sou (white river), whence the name it bore, for a time, alternately with that of 'New Shemakhá'. On Bronevsky's map (1823) we have Old Shemakhá and New Shemakhá, while on more recent maps, as the 30 v. map, we find Shemakhá and a mere village, Akh-sou, as in former times. Klaproth (*Tableau*, p. 151) tells us that New Shemakhá had already been destroyed several times, and now (1834) had only a few hundred inhabitants.

APPENDIX C

RETREAT OF THE TEN THOUSAND GREEKS

XENOPHON would, perhaps, be gratified could he know the interest and admiration still excited by his narrative more than 2,000 years after the date of the mighty episode it records, pronounced by Rennell 'the choicest piece of ancient military history'. In the nineteenth century many attempts were made to follow in 'the tracks' or explore and elucidate the more doubtful points in the great adventure, and much was written. The present century, in turn, has already witnessed a recrudescence of interest which from the turn it has taken gives promise of still further discussion.

In the nineteenth century those who explored, and as well as they could explained, the more difficult sections of Xenophon's route on the Retreat were, many of them, English; and this was due partly to General Chesney's 'Euphrates Valley Expedition' (1835–7), partly to the efforts of individuals amongst whom were such notable men of science as Rennell, Layard, and Rawlinson. The surgeon to the Expedition, W. F. Ainsworth, a scholar and scientist, wrote various works on the countries concerned, including *Travels in the Track of the Ten Thousand Greeks*, published in 1844, and a Geographical Commentary of seventy-three pages annexed to J. S. Watson's edition of the *Anabasis*, published by Bohn in 1859, a most useful book of reference still, though no longer quite up to date.

It was Ainsworth, by the way, who led me astray, for it was the fact that in his *Travels* he makes Tsalka on the river Khram *c.* 44 miles WSW. of Tiflis and well within Transcaucasia the site of the Taochis' hill-refuge, where the terrible scene took place to which I have likened that at Akhoulgó in 1839,[1] that induced me to bring this episode within the scope of my book. Following the story up in the *Anabasis* I was led to examine quite recent versions of the Retreat in its final stages, and finally to select four of them—in Russian, English (by an Armenian), French, and German, all varying greatly in their conclusions—to present to my readers in brief, together with a sketch-map (VIII) which I trust may help to make a matter complicated in itself reasonably clear.

[1] See *ante*, vol. ii, p. 30 and n. 2.

Route 1. KHOUDADOFF

Mr. Khoudadoff, who writes in Russian but whose local knowledge suggests a long residence, at least, in the Caucasus, in his article 'The Retreat of the Ten Thousand from the Araxes to Trebizond' published in the *Izviestia* of the Russian Geographical Society, vol. lx, 1928, part 1 (Leningrad–Moscow), pp. 155–68, with a brief summary in French, begins by adding up at a constant rate of six kilometres each all the many *parasangs* mentioned in Xenophon's narrative of this, the most controversial portion of the Retreat, and is thereby —if I, a non-expert, may dare to say so—led widely astray.[1] He makes the total 1,100 kilometres and, presumably to fill in this very considerable distance—the air-line from Köpri-keui, where modern authorities agree that the Greeks left the Araxes, to Trebizond, being but little more than 200 kilometres and Lehmann-Haupt's estimate of the distance actually covered, being by map-line, 450 kilometres —he gives the route from this point as follows: over the Soganloug range; through the province of Kars; down the valleys of the Debedá and Khram to the Koura (below Tiflis); up the Koura valley past Souram, keeping south of that river; through the Borzhom defile; and down to the junction of the Olti and the Tchorok. Here Mr. Khoudadoff locates Mt. Tekhes whence the heroes caught sight of the Euxine and shouted their immortal *Thalassa! thalassa!* But having identified it at this unexpected point our author, maintaining his originality, makes directly for the Black Sea coast at Atina and thence by the shore line to Trebizond—a distance of sixty to sixty-five miles. It is difficult to believe that if Xenophon had followed this route he would have omitted, as he does, all mention of first reaching the longed-for sea and then marching his men by the coast-line to Trebizond.

Some of Mr. Khoudadoff's identifications are: the Araxes with Xenophon's Phasis (not the Phasis of the Argonauts, now the Rion) which no one disputes; the Harpasus with the Koura; Gymnias (Lehmann-Haupt's Baiburt) with Nakhalakhevi, the 'site of a vanished city' (but *not* Archaeopolis!) in the immediate neighbourhood of the troglodytic town of Vardzia, and not far from Khertvis.

[1] Khoudadoff explains that the views expressed in his article are still substantially the same as those he arrived at when studying the *Anabasis* under the immediate guidance of Professor Victor Bérard in the years 1903–5.

His one point in common with Dr. Lehmann-Haupt is a firm repudiation of the 'aimless wanderings' so freely adopted by many authorities in the futile attempt to account for some at least of Xenophon's innumerable *parasangs*, the fact being that the country in question is mainly mountainous and cut up by the deepest and narrowest of rifts and gullies. In such a country the actual distance covered in a day's march may obviously be very much greater than that shown on the map, to say nothing of the heavy snowfalls and strenuous fighting encountered—but see Supplementary Note on *parasangs*.[1]

A chief point of difference, on the other hand, is that Khoudadoff makes Xenophon's seven days' journey 'along the Araxes' a journey *downstream*, Lehmann-Haupt *upstream*, in either case to, or to the neighbourhood of, Köpri-keui.

Route 2. SAFRASTIAN

In approaching the problem of Xenophon's route through Armenia, Mr. Safrastian has the initial advantage—at first sight a very great one—of being himself an Armenian; evidently, too, an ardent lover of his country as well as a keen student of its history, language, and literature. But there are pitfalls both in love and in knowledge, and in reading this present article,[2] which deals only with the Armenian section of the Retreat, I am led to wonder whether the writer has not been, to some extent, led astray by just that familiarity with 'the Armenian classics and the contemporary Armenian language' the want of which he deprecates in others. Place-names and personal or titular names may, indeed, be of immense value in historical researches, but it is just possible that they may, on occasion, give rise to conjectures or speculations that, followed with enthusiasm by a student overflowing with patriotic fervour, may—quite unconsciously—blind him to unwelcome truths, or, at least, to the value of alternative and not impossible theories. The present writer has never set foot in Armenia, nor has he even the slightest acquaintance with the Armenian language and literature. If, nevertheless, he

[1] p. 258. All the above lines are air-lines, or map-lines, and roughly measured—in the circumstances it could hardly be otherwise.

[2] 'The itinerary of Xenophon's Retreat', by Arshak Safrastian, in *The Asiatic Review*, New Series, vol. xxx, October, 1934.

ventures, with the utmost diffidence, to enter the above *caveat* it is solely because of the bewildering nature of the contradictions he has met with in the course of an attempt to get at the simple truth as to the famous 10,000 in the matter of their Retreat from the Tigris to the Black Sea. In reading Mr. Safrastian's pages he has felt, as it were, an almost perpetual undercurrent of quite unintentional 'special pleading' induced in the first place by the author's unique knowledge of his subject, but encouraged, it would seem, to a dangerous degree by his patriotic feelings as an Armenian.

The present article stops short at the head-waters of the Murad-su; the author's intention is to follow the Retreat as far as Trebizond. He informs us, indeed, that the farther northward march, in rough outline, is now ready. Meantime, all I can do is to summarize very briefly the route already given from the Kentrites (Eastern Tigris) to the Murad-su (Eastern Euphrates). There seems to be little difference of opinion amongst scholars as to where the retreating Greeks crossed the Kentrites (Bohtan-su), flowing in from the north and east, at or about the point where, coming from the west, the big river now takes a sharp bend to the south. The Bohtan-su, by general agreement, was forded at Tillo or neighbouring Mutit, and here the trouble begins! For, while Dr. Lehmann-Haupt circles widely to the west and north of Lake Van, Mr. Safrastian does the very opposite, insisting that the Greeks now had to take the line of the small river Keser-su (upstream), a two days' journey to the NE., camping the second night probably at Verkhnis and thence making a deep bend 'past the sources of the Tigris', east and south, to reach Xenophon's Teleboas which he identifies (by place- and personal names, the value of which I cannot, of course, judge) with the river T'rpâtûnik (Khoshab-su) flowing into Lake Van at its SE. corner, the lake (not mentioned by Xenophon) being hidden entirely, meantime, by the mountains intervening between it and the route of the 10,000. From where the Greeks cross this Teleboas–Khoshab-su–T'rpâtûnik river at Norgiugh, some 25 miles E. of Lake Van, the route goes NE. to Serai, N. between Lower and Upper Khachan to where some way below Bayazid a sharp westerly bend takes it over the Toparez pass, and so SW. to near Oskik, where this section of Mr. Safrastian's article leaves it, on or near one of the sources of the Murad-su.

I must add that this author states positively that the so-called 'aimless wanderings' of the Greeks, totally denied by Lehmann-Haupt, and others, not only took place but are fully accounted for by Xenophon's text.

Route 3. Boucher

In 1935 I tried the British Museum, the R.G.S., the Bodleian, and the London Library in vain for M. Boucher's book *L'Anabase de Xénophon*, Paris, 1913. All I can do, therefore, is to offer for my readers' consideration the following excerpt sent me by Dr. Lehmann-Haupt from his review of E. von Hoffmeister's *Durch Armenien*, &c., pp. 104–9, vol. 120 (New Series, vol. 24) of the *Historische Zeitschrift*, München und Berlin, 1919 (p. 107):

'It may be mentioned as a curiosity that M. Boucher likewise envisages a westward deviation, but he goes much too far afield since he takes the 10,000 Greeks from the sources of the Murad-su near Karakilissa backwards in a SE. direction, by a gigantic detour, over the Perso-Turkish frontier mountains to Khoi and across the Araxes to Djulfa; thence by way of Erivan and Dilidjan to Kars, and on to Hassan Kalah. In so doing the Greeks would have deviated to a quite incredible extent from what must necessarily have been the natural line of their Retreat.'

Now, I am assuredly incompetent to take any part in a discussion on the respective merits of this and other theories as to the famous march. Who, if any one, is actually right, which route if any of those advocated is the most likely, I cannot say, I have hardly indeed even a right to suggest. Yet, taking cover under the cloak of my own ignorance, I will, greatly venturing, breathe a strong inclination to follow my late lamented friend, Dr. Lehmann-Haupt.

Route 4. Lehmann-Haupt

This great authority on all things Armenian, in the third volume (Band II, zweite Hälfte, Berlin 1931[1]) of his work *Armenien einst und jetzt*, which is now complete all but the Index, gives very fully his conclusions as to the line of the Retreat from the Tigris to Trebizond, these conclusions being of a most positive character

[1] Band I was published in 1910; Band II, erste Hälfte, in 1926.

except in regard to the last stage of the journey, from 'Gymnias-Baiburt' to Trebizond, which, as he frankly admits in a private letter to the present writer, he does not know himself. Those interested will find in the above-mentioned volume detailed maps of the route from 36° to 37°30′ (Map I) and 37°30′–40° N. Latitude (Map II), with, further, a diagram, brief but clear, giving the continuation of the Retreat, as he conceives it, to Trebizond.

Starting, then, from a little above Mutit, where, according to this authority, the Greeks crossed the Bohtan-su or E. Tigris, the line of the Retreat makes a westerly bend wide of Lake Van through mountainous country to Moush, then runs NE. by way of Melasgird, keeping to the left bank of the Murad-su (SE. Euphrates), to Karakilissa, where that river is crossed. Thence over the plain of Alashkert to Kaghysman on the (Phasis) Araxes, the right or southern bank of which is kept to during a seven days' march (upstream, be it noted) to the bridge of Köpri-keui.

At Koshko, some 26 kil. NNW. of Hassan-kalah, the route turns north and a bit east up the valley of the Tortum river, along its left bank to its junction with the Olti-tchai and, almost immediately, to this latter river's junction with the Tchorok. The discrepancies between the views of Dr. Lehmann-Haupt and the other writers quoted are, here as elsewhere, remarkable, the former keeping from this point to the right or southerly bank of the Tchorok (Xenophon's Harpasus, as he believes) and taking the Greeks through Ispir to Baiburt (his Gymnias). For the last lap over the Zigana pass in the 'Theches' range and with a north-easterly bend to the Euxine at Trebizond, he professes no certainty.

The whole of the route from the Euphrates to Trebizond is given by Dr. Lehmann-Haupt in his second volume, second part, chap. xxx; but the arguments and observations by which his conclusions were reached are scattered throughout the book.[1]

[1] The Index to *Armenien einst und jetzt* not having yet appeared it will facilitate reference, meantime, if I add here that in Band I, ch. xi, will be found a detailed determination of the point at which the Greeks crossed the Kentrites (Bohtan-su). In Band II, 1, chapters xxv and xxviii, pp. 230 sq. and 376 sq. give the line of the Retreat from Kunaxa to the land of the Kurds and pp. 431–7 the difficult march, west of Lake Van, to the crossing of the Euphrates near Karakilissa. [N.B. After this note was written I received from Dr. Lehmann-Haupt an early proof of his Index, but as this may not in all cases reach the possessors of the book itself, I leave the note intact.]

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.

The Parasang. Most writers on the *Anabasis* appear to have been troubled by the fact that Xenophon gives his distances in the Persian measure of the *parasang* or *farsakh* (modern Persian), a measure which has been regarded as a fixed and invariable distance. There are many extant calculations by different authorities, all endeavouring to find out exactly what this distance is. The results of these calculations nearly always differ one from another, though the amount is usually not far from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 miles. Abercromby, for example, says 7 *farsakhs* equal nearly 25 miles, i.e. just about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the *farsakh*. Bronevsky, a Russian writer of the early nineteenth century, puts it at 7 versts, say $4\frac{2}{3}$ miles (for E. Daghestan), an unusually long estimate. Khoudadoff, a recent traveller, takes Xenophon's *parasang* at a constant rate of 6 kilometres = $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles; and Lehmann-Haupt, in his recently published third volume (Band II, zweite Hälfte) of *Armenien einst und jetzt*, makes it 5·95 kilometres, approximately the same.

It seems hardly possible that the *parasang* can originally have been a fixed geographical distance, but rather the distance that can be covered in a fixed time. Now, this distance would vary geographically according to the nature of the country and the local means of transport. In a flat country it would mean the distance that could be covered in the usual time-unit by either a horse or a camel, a mule or donkey, or a wagon; in a very hilly country, possibly, the distance that would be covered by a laden porter. Thus not only would the distance covered in, say, an hour differ greatly according to the means of transport available, but it is quite possible that in different parts of the Near East the unit of time itself varied somewhat. Again, as all who have travelled in mountainous countries know, the distance actually covered on the ground is very much greater than the distance on the map between any two points, while in flat, and particularly in desert country, the difference is slight.[1] The ground covered in reaching a point 40 miles off in easy country might well be by road only 45 miles, an easy two days' march, while in bad mountainous country the distance actually

[1] E.g. 'the distance on the map across the St. Gotthard Pass from Göschenen to Airolo is about $15\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres, while by road it is 29 kilometres'. Kindly worked out for me by Mr. F. Allen, Map Curator of the R.G.S.

covered might be nearer 80 miles and the time occupied at least three times as great. So, if the *parasang* be taken as the distance covered in a certain time, there would be three times as many between the second pair of places as between the first pair.

No doubt the various calculated *parasangs* that we find in Babylonia and elsewhere were standardized *parasangs* representing fixed spatial distances—possibly the distances usually covered in the local time-unit along the main roads leading out of the capital. These roads in Babylonia, which seems to be the country of origin of the *parasang*, were no doubt flat and straight, so the distance not unnaturally works out to $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles or thereabouts, for in Babylon the standard unit of time was the hour of $\frac{1}{24}$th of a day. But this standardized *parasang* could hardly apply in a mapless age to journeys away from the post-roads and far from the capital; the ordinary time-unit would be reverted to.

Incidentally we also find the *parasang* described by Arab geographers as a subdivision of a degree on the earth's surface. Mamun (9th century) gives $22\frac{2}{9}$ *parasangs* to a degree, El Idrisi (12th century) gives 25, and others different figures. But this does not help much, as to the Arabs the length of a degree was still a matter of conjecture.[1]

The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* says that this *farsakh* is 'a Persian measure of length equivalent to the distance covered in an hour by a horse walking', and goes on to say that in Persia it was 6,000 dhira of 1·0387 metres each, i.e. 6,232 metres (*c.* 3·9 miles), whereas the Arab who borrowed the measure made it out at 3 Arab miles = 5,763 metres (*c.* 3·6 miles). Abdul Kerim, who accompanied Nadir Shah on his return from India, says definitely that the *farsakh* is equivalent to an hour's march of a good camel, laden. Curzon, Patrick Balfour, and other travellers have noted the elasticity of the *parasang*. Hoffmeister tells us that the distance from Resht to Kasvin (uphill) was reckoned at a greater number of *parasangs* than the same distance on the return journey (downhill).

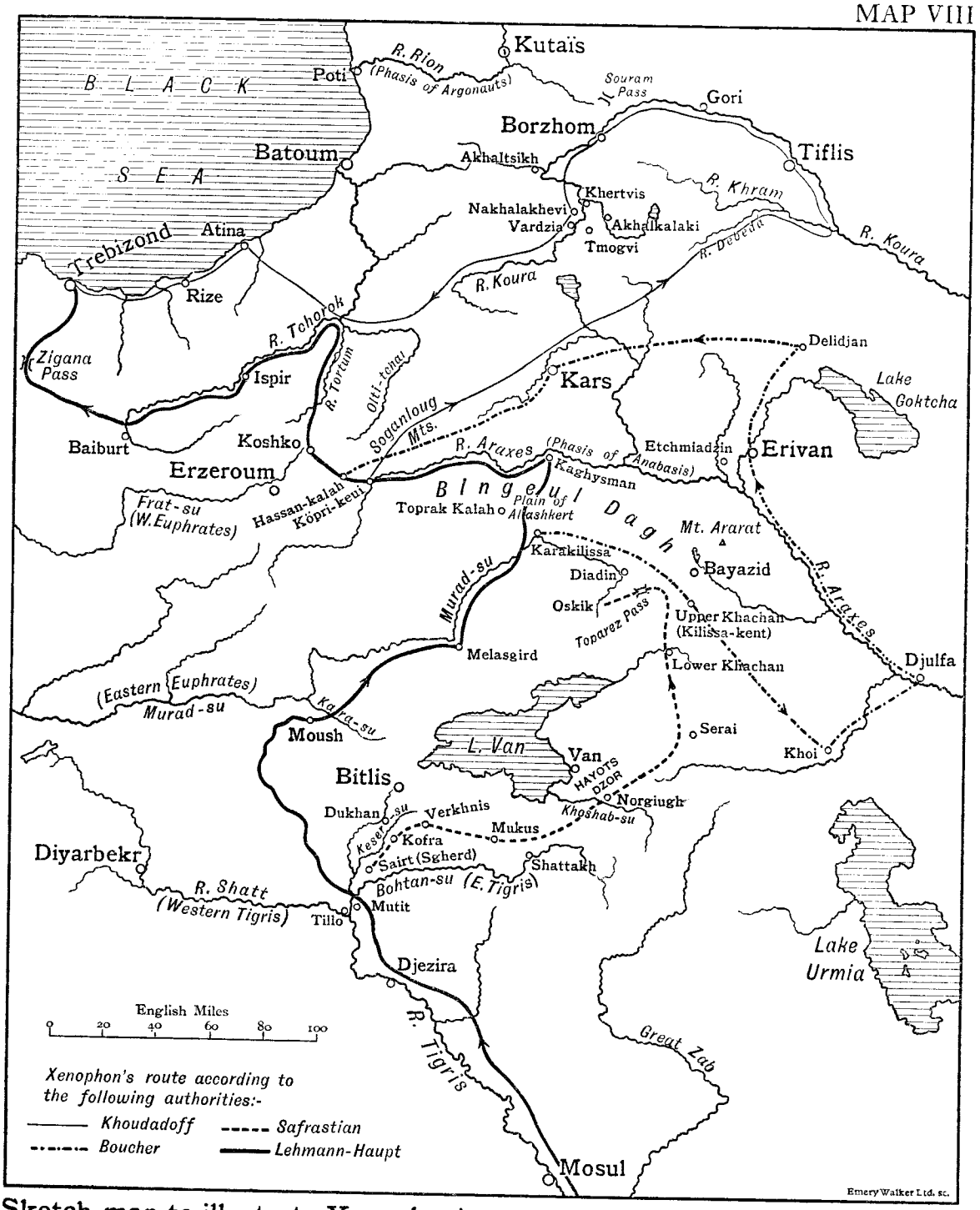
It may fairly be assumed, therefore, that in the most hotly disputed part of Xenophon's march—from Köpri-keui to Trebizond—the *parasang* distance between any two points would be immensely increased by three factors in this, in parts, almost impossibly moun-

[1] Cf. the modern geographical or nautical mile = $\frac{1}{60}$ degree.

tainous country, i.e. the slowness of the climbing (especially in winter, when this part of the retreat took place), the detours that must inevitably have been made, and the winding or zigzag nature of the paths even where no wide detours were called for.

Between these two points Xenophon says the army actually covered 175 *parasangs* in 43 days—an average distance of about 4 *parasangs* a day. Now, in such a country, to cover a map-line of 450 kilometres —approximately the length on the map of the route suggested by Lehmann-Haupt betweeen these two places—it would be necessary to cover on the ground anything from half as much again to twice as much, say a distance of 750 kilometres. This for 43 days march is about 18 kilometres or 11¼ miles a day—a very good average march in such country—and would make his *parasang* average 2¾ miles, which must, surely, be nearer the truth in such a difficult and precipitous terrain.

In these circumstances, to trace a much longer itinerary than that given by Lehmann-Haupt seems to call for impossible distances for an encumbered army to march, and to require considerably more *parasangs* than Xenophon himself gives.



Sketch map to illustrate Xenophon's retreat from the Tigris to Trebizond, according to recent authorities.

APPENDIX D

THE DJARO-BIELOKANIS; ELISOU; SHEKKI (AFTERWARDS NOUKHÁ), &c.

HELPED out by a glance at Map VIII (opposite page 248) it is hoped that these few pages may do something towards answering the troublesome questions that so frequently arise in connexion with these people—their origin, their country, their feats of arms, their many misdeeds, and ultimate fate. Eichwald (*Reise*, &c. vol. i, pt. 2, 1837, p. 422) tells us that 'Djhari is the richest and most powerful of the five communities known collectively under that name, the others being Bielokani, Taly, Mukhakh and Djinnikh'. Taly is evidently the Tellé of Sir William Jones, who speaks of 'the people of Giar and Tellé' just as the Russians do, later, of those of 'Djaro-Bielokani'. Their numerous villages were inhabited by a ruling class of Avars and other Daghestanis. Under these were the descendants of the former inhabitants, Georgians reduced to the condition of serfs and forcibly converted to Islam, which considerable numbers of them renounced for the faith of their fathers when at last they came under Russian rule. These people were known as 'Ingheloitsi'. Thirdly, or perhaps more correctly in between, came the 'Mugalis' (Moguls), who were Tartars, Mussulmans of old standing, and, as such, received on a footing of freedom though not of equality. They had filtered in from time to time, apparently, from the neighbouring countries, being descendants of invaders who had come from the East with the Mongol hordes.

The country, it will be seen, forms part of the southern flank of the Main Chain, which here, as usually though not always, constitutes the watershed—a ridge largely forested, averaging about 10,000 feet in height but with peaks up to 12,000 feet and more. From this ridge numerous torrents flow down to mingle with the waters of the Alazan through deep, narrow, and often excessively rugged gorges, sometimes mere clefts in the rocks.

In such a country, with all Daghestan behind it as an ultimate refuge, and always the fierce Avars ready to swell their robber-bands, it is not surprising that during the unhappy times when Georgia, as so often, was rendered powerless by the devastations of

Mongol and Tartar, Arab, Turk, and Persian, the Djaro-Bielokanis should have occupied a position of vantage such as made them invincible in their own homes, and wellnigh impossible to guard against in their quality of raiders. They had also another notable advantage by reason of their alliance with the semi-independent Pashas of Akhaltsikh, that, namely, of a safe and permanent slave-mart. Dubois de Montpéreux tells us a harrowing story of the sufferings of Gori during the reigns of the last Kings of Georgia and even to within 5 or 6 years of his being there himself (in 1833).[1] They made of Gori a sort of half-way house, between their mountain fastnesses and Akhaltsikh, where they sold into slavery the Georgians and others whose capture was their principal pursuit, whose sale their main source of income. No wonder that in 1803 when the Russians stormed Bielokani the Georgian contingent, exasperated by centuries of hideous outrage, slaughtered every living being in the place—man, woman and child.[2]

The peace conditions after this victory had included the acknowledgement by the Djaris of Russian suzerainty, but it was only in 1830 that the confederation as a political entity ceased to exist. The successive defeats of Persia and Turkey by Paskiévitch in 1828 and 1829, and the capture and incorporation of Akhaltsikh in Georgian, therefore in Russian territory, had finally deprived these turbulent people of all hope of outside support or succour, but not before they had inflicted a severe defeat upon a Russian force under General Strekáloff at Zakatali, they having been stirred to rebellion by Hamzad, afterwards second 'murid' Imam, Shamil's immediate predecessor.[3]

As we follow on south and east, immediately below the watershed and between that and first the Alazan, then the Koura, we come to a small country whose last native ruler Daniel 'Sultan of Elisou' after long hesitation joined Shamil in 1844 but played the traitor again in August 1859 when final victory began visibly to declare for Russia. He was warmly welcomed and handsomely rewarded by

[1] *Voyage*, &c., vol. iii, p. 187.

[2] A fuller account of the unspeakable sufferings of Georgia, especially Kakhetia, before Russia put a stop to it, will be found in *Zap.* xiv. 1, pp. 256–7. It was the 'Great' Shah Abbas I who let loose the flood of Daghestani robbers and murderers upon the Georgia he himself had already plundered and largely depopulated.

[3] *Conquest*, p. 257.

Prince Bariátinsky, but, on finding that the sultanate itself, which straddled the Main Chain so as to include the Tsoukhour (Tsakhour) group of villages on the Upper Samour, would not be restored to him, retired in dudgeon to Turkey. Elisou was then united to the Djaro-Bielokani territories to form the Zakatalski *okrug* (district, part of an *oblast* or province).[1]

Beyond this, again south and east, lay the once well-known khanate of Shekki, the town of that name, reduced now to a mere village, being separated by one small ridge only from the later capital Noukhá which gave a new name to the khanate.

According to Professor Minorsky (*E. of I.*, art. 'Shekki') Ptolemy's 'Kabala' and 'Albanian Gates' correspond to the 'Kabala' of later times and 'the passes which above it give access to the valley of the Samour (Khatchmaz and Kutkashin roads)'. Kabala, once the largest city in the Caucasus, is said by the same authority to have stood at the confluence of the two branches of the Turiyan-tchai, the next tributary of the Koura west of the Gheok-tchai. It was the control of these passes that gave Shekki its importance through the ages and brought it both good and evil. Tamerlane, in 1386, after taking Tiflis 'set up his winter quarters at Kabala and thence waged a war of extermination against the Lesghis' (Brosset, *Add.*, p. 387). He was again in Shekki after his campaign (?1394) against the Karakalkanliks (Black Buckler men, i.e. the Pshavs, Khevsours, and Goudamaqars, *ibid.*, p. 388).

Nadir Shah in turn invaded Shekki and traversed it many times in the course of his Daghestan campaigns, but failed, finally, to subdue it.

By the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813, Shekki (or Noukhá) was ceded together with several other khanates, from Talish (S. of Baku) to Derbend, by Persia to Russia. Six years later, the last Khan died heirless and Yermóloff lost no time in seizing the capital and proclaiming the whole territory a Russian province.

[1] A notable feature of Elisou is the Kourmoukh torrent, which, starting at a height of 11,000 feet, flows down centrally through that country to reach Kakh (3,000 feet) with an average fall of over 400 feet per mile, and thence the Alazan through another 15 miles or so of level country which it waters by many channels.