IX

ROUND KAZBEK (*continued*)

The Korá Pass — Ounal — Nouzal — Rekom, its legend — The Kasára defile — The miracle of the wood — Fratricide and parricide — When vengeance fails — Nar — Churches at Zroug — The Nart's cauldron — The Zakka Pass — Resi — 'Blooding' in venery — Skulls copper-patched — Klaproth — The uppermost Terek — Kazbek — Many customs — Death by lightning — The Dariel gorge — An angry Goddess — Tamára — The horse-thief — Fate of Tchmee — A boy's revenge.

WE took leave of Mourzagánoff overnight as we meant to make an early start, and in fact we were up at dawn (5.30 a.m., Sept. 22nd) and by 8 o'clock had reached the top of the pass by a very steep track past Tamára's tower, and along the upper Korá river, not entering either *aoul* of that name. The height of the pass was just over 8,000 feet. In the limestones above, looking north, there was a cave with a spring in it whence clear water flowed in winter whereas in summer it was frozen hard, or so the natives said.[1] From the pass one got a very good idea of the formation of this district and of the famous 'line' Ourousbi was always talking about, of which we had now completed more than one section, between the Black Mountains and the White. Looking back eastward the spurs of Djimarai-khokh and other giants of the Side and Central Ranges, including Kazbek, were seen to sink in successive curved lines to the saddles or cols forming the various passes we had ridden over, to rise again to the limestone wall on the north.

At 9.35 a.m. we reached Djimee after a long and steep tramp down the gully, fatiguing to me as I was feeling far from well. Luckily the ground was dry, otherwise the descent would have been trying indeed. *Tsirkh*, I learned here, were stone pillars set up on the mountains, as a calendar or seasonal dial for the year. Natural features were used for the same purpose, as also in Daghestan, where, according to Abdoulla Omaroff, 'on the heights surrounding the *aoul*, above and below which the sun rises and sets, stone columns have been erected

[1] So one of the four fountains delved by Hephaestus in the palace-garden of King Aeetes grew warm at the setting of the Pleiads, icy-cold at their rising. Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica*, bk. iii, l. 219 sqq. (trs. by R. C. Seaton, M.A.).

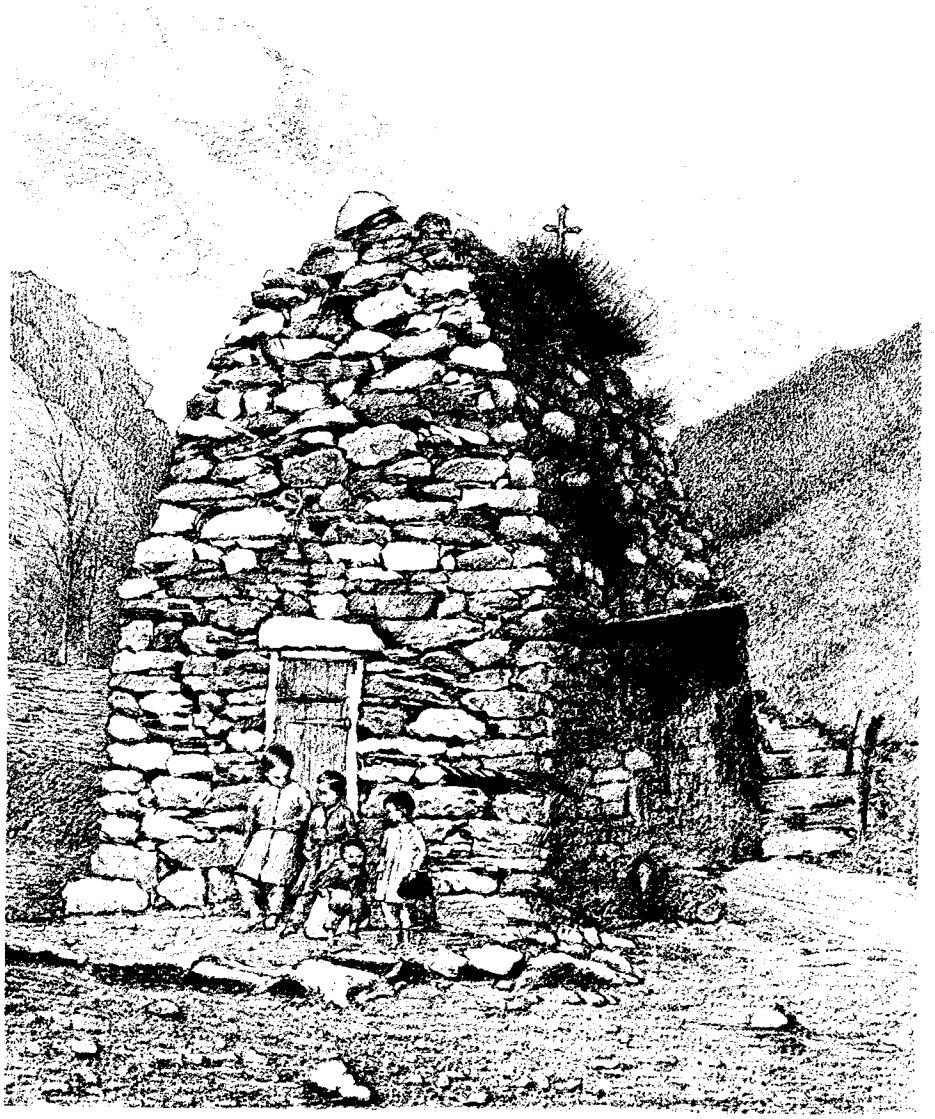
to show the seasons of the year. . . . This simple calendar is almost universal in the mountains.'[1]

On the opposite side of the ravine, some 3 versts down and very picturesquely situated, was the *aoul* of Kholust or Kholst; near it were two of the old high-peaked tombs. We walked down to Ounal through a very fine defile or gorge, with bright autumn tints on shrubs and ferns, the water running swiftly between nearly perpendicular banks. A small trial-sinking for a silver-lead mine was visible, half-way down, opposite to us. Nearing Ounal we came upon fir-trees for the first time since leaving the Georgian road. We stopped to rest 2 versts beyond Ounal bridge on the Mamisson (Ossetine military) road at a *doukhan*, and thanked *Khtsau*[2] that we could eat our own food at once and buy a bottle of wine, sharing everything with a merry fellow who had walked all the way from Dallag-kau that day, and was going on to Digoria to buy cows which, according to him, were cheaper there. We had overtaken him near Djimee.[3] At 5.45 p.m. we rode into Nouzal and were lodged near the church by the *starshiná*, who showed me a book published in Tiflis in 1897, called *Slava Nuzala Alguzian*, of which only 25 copies were printed. It was already unobtainable. In it was the inscription on the Rekom bell of 1674, seen by Pfaff in 1869, but since lost. In the Dzivghiz church was a similar bell dated 1673. Both were gifts from George XI, King of Georgia. A Berdan rifle hanging on the wall, with stock cut away to suit native requirements, was pointed out to us as the one used by an Ossetine who had robbed a *gheneralsha* (general's wife) not long before but had been pursued and overtaken by a whole *sotnia* of mounted police. He fought desperately, killing three and wounding more, and, finally, charged the rest *kinjal* in hand and was killed. He became, of course, a popular hero. There was a big bearskin on one wall, some large *tour* horns and other trophies on another. Our host's name was Znaouroff Zokoff. I measured the church roughly and found it to be 20 by 8 feet outside, 16 by 5 feet inside; according to Vs. Miller mortar had been used but, externally, at least, it was not much in evidence; the stones were of all shapes and sizes, of granite, limestone, clay-slates, and what not, all the various formations of the surrounding mountains having contributed, seemingly, to the building of this minute but

[1] See *Gor.*, vol. iii, p. 12, and presently, vol. i, p. 187, vol. ii, pp. 63, 186.

[2] The Deity.

[3] For Ounal stories, see vol. ii, pp. 123–34.



Church at Nouzal

famous structure. Inside the building were the remains of frescoes, which, unfortunately, had been defaced by a Georgian priest, Nicolai Samurganoff, because in his opinion they flattered the Ossetines at the expense of his own countrymen. It was one of the queerest little churches in the world, in position as well as in structure, ensconced as it was in the deep defile of the Ar-don, looking north to the great limestones and south to the giants of the Central Range. There were ancient walls too, as at Dzivghiz, and a heap of *tour* horns scattered on the right bank of the river, above the *aoul*, marking the usual pagan shrine.

September 23rd. We rode on to St. Nicholas through a gorge of which my best photograph (see Plate XI) was taken from almost the same spot as von Déchy's small one of which he writes:

'Beyond Nutzal the Ar-don once more comes clashing through a narrow defile. The schistose formation ends here and is succeeded by noble cliffs of gneiss and gneiss-granite, between which the foaming water forces its way. The snow-fields and sharp peaks of the Kaltber ridge (14,462 ft.) are seen in the foreground above the steep walls of the valley, which, in places, are clothed with bushes and coniferous trees.[1] The gorge—the most beautiful and the wildest we had yet seen—is short and opens out to some extent at St. Nicolas, where a double-terraced basin is shut in all round by mountain walls, the elevation being 1,142 m. (3,476 ft.) above sea-level.'[2]

We now turned up the Tseya river through a defile wider and more open than usual. This was said to have been formerly a way to Imeréti by which came the trees of which Rekom was built, the wood owing to the sanctity of the place never rotting. We made a brief halt at Tsei *aoul* and then rode on to the famous shrine, which we found to be a tumble-down wooden building, all lop-sided, an aisle, the only one, split away from the central structure, and cracks and crevices everywhere, so that I could see inside without difficulty; but, apparently, there was nothing left but the usual collection of rubbish —votive mugs, rags, beer-vats, &c. It was not so formerly.[3]

[1] 'For some distance east of the Mamisson Pass this ridge [the Kaltber] is exceedingly formidable on the north side', Freshfield, *Explor.*, vol. ii, p. 268.

[2] von Déchy, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 25. St. Nicholas' Day was a notable festival of the Tsei-valley dwellers, every four families combining to sacrifice an ox or bull in honour of the saint (Vs. Miller, *Oss. Etyudi*, Part II, p. 276).

[3] *Bulletin Kavk. Ist.-Arkh. Instituta*, No. 4, 1928, p. 24, tells of money assigned for the repair of Rekom.

Vs. Miller in 1880 noted 'on a wide stone slab, fixed into the wall by way of altar, clay cups of different sizes once filled with beer, clay figurines of sheep—*ex voto* offerings from women desirous of bearing children—beads, bits of wadding, silver wire, metal braid, fragments of woven material, 2 or 3 icons, an ancient helmet attributed to Osibagatar, and, in an annex to the shrine, a huge heap of arrow-heads, with and without shafts, reaching to the roof of the building'.[1]

Entrance, we were told, was not allowed without special permission from the Church authorities, which we had not thought of obtaining. Ourousbi was probably right in thinking that this was a mere pretence, the real fact being that the local people were, as usual, averse to letting strangers inspect their sanctuary. I took photographs of the building and of the huge heaps of stag and *tour* horns outside it,[2] also of a curious iron gate with a bell over it, and a yard enclosed by a rough stone wall over which I clambered, though Ourousbi would not, the villagers who had accompanied us from Tsei declaring that we should be struck blind—as King Aepytus was at Mantinea.[3] He was not in the least impressed a little later by a similar warning at Akhieli, but the god or saint there was not his own! He was an Ossetine, and Rekom had a hold even upon him, or, perhaps, he merely preferred to let his countrymen think so.

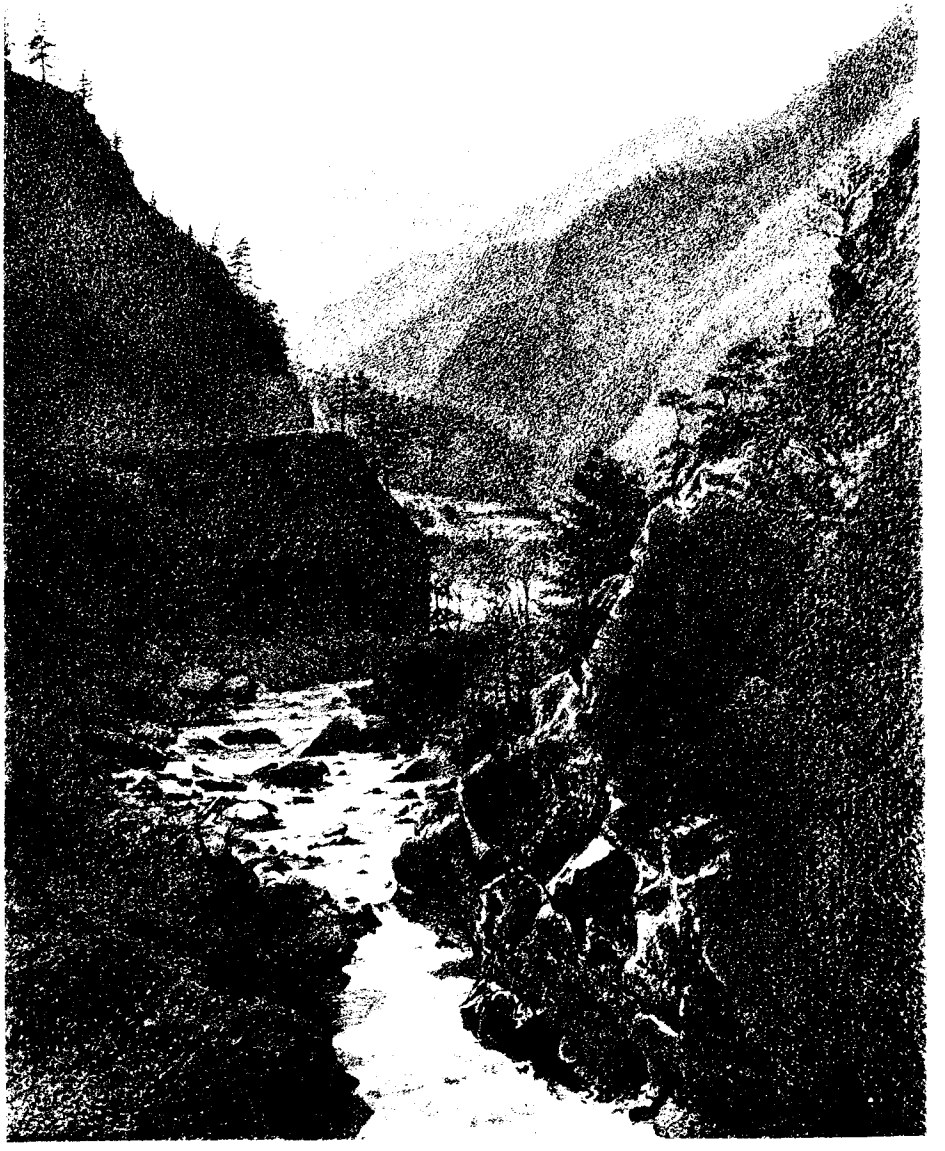
How Rekom originated.

There is a notable Nart legend to account for the origin of Rekom. The Almighty had a very soft spot in his heart for Batraz in spite of that hero's manifold iniquities, but at last his patience was exhausted and he gave orders to certain attendant angels for his execution by the Balsag-wheel, of fire and thunder—in other stories the wheel of St. John—which they proceeded forthwith to bowl 'down the hill of Heaven' with fatal effect. Now the angels were told to bestow the body in a cavern on the mountain side, but the dead man loosened his spirit against them and slew sixty. Those who were left returned to God and complained 'His life was bad enough for us, but his

[1] *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. i, p. 47.

[2] 'Martial described how in his time the Roman shrines were covered with horns . . . the local shrines in the Himâlaya are decorated with horns of the wild sheep, ibex, and goat.' Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 225. And see my Plates, vol. i, p. 234; vol. ii, p. 154.

[3] Frazer's *Pausanias*, Introduction, p. liv.



Nouzal Gorge

death has been far worse!' 'That', said God, 'was my doing; go now and bury him as I told you.' 'We shall not be able to!' said the angels. 'That, too, is my affair,' said God. When they reached the cavern Batraz set both his feet against the rock and would not budge. 'Why will you not enter the cavern?' asked the angels. 'How can I, without seeing God?' So God came and said to him 'My son, why thus recalcitrant?' To which the answer came, reproachfully, 'I refused obedience so far because I had not seen your face.' Then God let fall on the body three tears; of which one became Tarandjelos, another Mikal-Gabyrta, the third Rekom—famous shrines, all three. Batraz's body was buried in the cave and is there to this day.[1]

This Tsei, or Tseya, valley struck me as being the most beautiful I had yet seen in the Caucasus; turning as we rode up it I looked back on a picture Turner should have painted. In front of us through the forest the glacier gleamed white, with Adai Khokh just above it.

Azalea leaves were said to be poisonous to cattle and horses; so, of course, Poti tried to get some! On the other hand, a decoction made from the capsules and leaves was supposed to cure rheumatism. We had been lucky in regard to weather, as hardly had we left Rekom, on our way back to Tsei, when rain fell and continued falling for hours. We had luck, too, as to food, for our host at Tsei was out when we came back, so we were able to stay our hunger there and then with food from our own saddle-bags.

We walked, leading our horses, down the Tseya valley to the Ar-don, then, mounting, rode up that river through the Kasára defile to Tsmee. On the map of the Tsarévich Vakhusht, attached to his geography written in Georgian in the year 1745,[2] we find the Kasára defile called *Kasris Khevi* (lit. 'Trough valley'), while at the spot now called by the Ossetines *Zilin duar* ('Crooked Gates'), where

[1] Dirr, *Kaukasische Märchen*, pp. 179, 180, who tells us that the site of Tarandjelos is unknown, but the word means 'archangel'. From Countess Ouvárova (*Poutevuia Zamyetki*, vol. i, p. 26) we learn that Mikal-Gabyrta (Michael-Gabriel) was situated in the Kasára defile, and, as Rekom is not far off, we may suppose that the third shrine, too, was in the valley of the Ar-don, or in that of its affluent, the Tseya; though Tchoursin has a 'Tarandjelos' shrine at Ermani on the Little Liakhva. Mikal-Gabyrta shrines, he tells us, are frequent in South Ossetia. *Op. cit.*, p. 75. See p. 177, n. 4.

[2] I use Brosset's text and translation (Fr.). See Bibliography. For another Kasára defile, see p. 183, n. 1.

are ruins of walls and gates known as Osi-bagatar's Toll-bar, we have *Kasris Kari* (lit. 'Trough Gates'). We reached Tsmee, where three rivers join to form the Ar-don, at 6.40 p.m., and found good quarters and a hospitable reception at Khetagouroff's, where were an engineer —a German educated at the School of the Russian Mining Corps— and a 'magistrate's secretary', with a guide and interpreter of the former. A good house and new rooms furnished in civilized fashion.

The miracle of the wood.

It seemed that 60 years since an avalanche had destroyed a village where the Khetagouroffs lived and only three were left alive who happened to be away at the time; so they settled here. The first Khetagouroff had fled from Kabardá owing to a blood feud, so they told me, but Shanayeff has another and fuller version wherein the crisis develops from a quarrel between three brothers, grandchildren of Inal, the Kabardán ancestral hero. The younger brothers Bi-aslan and Islam, it appears, combined against their elder, Khetag, who at last had to flee for his life, accompanied by two of his sons. When nearing the Minaret on the Terek they were overtaken and in the fighting that ensued the sons were killed. Khetag took refuge in a tower and later resumed his flight in the direction of Alaghir; but, a few versts short of that place, he was once more overtaken by his vengeful brothers, who were bent on killing him to secure the possessions they had robbed him of. Escape this time seemed no longer possible, and Khetag was about to surrender when a voice in his ear whispered: 'To the wood, Khetag, to the wood!' Now the nearest wood was not far off, but it was uphill and strength failed him; he could but gasp 'Not Khetag to the wood, the wood to Khetag' and lo! hardly had the words left his mouth when the trees in some miraculous fashion closed in all round him so densely that the enemy were completely baffled. Besides, they were awe-struck, as well they might be! Khetag was saved! The wood still exists, or did a few years back, and in it, though game might be killed, the wild-bee's honey taken, and fruits and berries gathered, all without any exception must be consumed on the spot; not one scrap might be carried away.[1] Khetag, eventually, made his way to Tsmee in the Nar valley, all the inhabitants of which and not only the Khetagou-

[1] For similar inhibitions see vol. ii, p. 141 and note.

roffs claim him as their progenitor or at least their 'founder'. The wood itself became sanctified as the dwelling-place of *Khetadji-Dzouar*, and thither resorted on a certain day in each year all the Nar-valley people to do honour to their patron saint in the usual hearty Ossetine fashion.

The story is told with variants by M. Djanashvili [1] in prose and with considerable liberties by 'Marlinsky' (Bestouzheff, the *Dekabrist* so generously championed by Dumas) in verse [2] which I translated one day in the train on my way north, after bidding good-bye sorrowfully to Ourousbi at 'Mineral Waters' station, on finding the snow too deep for our intended ride to Soukhoum-Kalé.

A Mongol legend tells how Kang-hi was saved in similar fashion at Kukuhoton, with the difference that in his case, instead of a wood moving, a single tree became a grove.[3]

An English alpinist, in 1874, after crossing the Kodor Pass, finding his Karatchai guides unusually proficient in the art of lying, bethought him of Sir John Mandeville and his wonder-tale of a 'great thick cloud' that, in answer to the prayers of Christian fugitives pursued in 'Abkaz' (Abkhazia) by a 'curséd Emperour of Persia', overwhelmed the Mussulman host 'and so schulle thei ever more abyden in darknesse, tille the day of Dome be [by] the myracle of God'.[4] Here a cloud replaces the wood, but the purpose is the same, and if Mandeville's legend has any foundation in fact—and many, if not most, legends have, though a recent writer says not—the impenetrable nature of the forests of Abkhazia may well give a clue to what actually happened.

As to fratricidal hate, proverbially so bitter, the 'Anonymous' writes: 'My interpreter was once robbed by five brothers. When the plunder came to be divided a rich morsel fell to the second. The eldest thought himself wronged, shot him, and was killed in turn by a third brother who buried the original victim and the booty with him, in the belief that it was his property by rights and justice must be done.' Nor was parricide unknown amongst the Ossetines: 'A son shot his old father in my presence for having verbally insulted him.

[1] *Mat.*, vol. xxii, p. 196.

[2] In *Ammalat-bek*, a romantic tale of Daghestan, founded on fact and once very popular. See my *Conquest*, p. 144.

[3] *Russia, Mongolia, China*, vol. ii, p. 166 (from Pozdneyeff's *Mongolia*, ii, p. 67).

[4] Grove, *op. cit.*, pp. 323–4, quoting from the edition of 1725.

He stood calmly by to reload his weapon while the death-rattle sounded. . . . All others present passed the dying man indifferently by, uttering no regrets, making no attempt, even, to move him out of the way. I called upon the chief elder, to whom I had boasted the superiority of our laws, to punish the murderer. He laughed at my fervency and said "Why, what would you do?" To which I replied, "Put him to a still worse death!" "So that is your vaunted justice!" cried he. "Yet he is not your father or mine, but that man's! There stand his brothers; pray, what business is it of ours?"'[1]

It was Kovalevsky who pointed out that the customary law of the family communities of the Caucasus gave the key to many at first sight strange characteristics of ancient criminal legislation. In particular the absence of all mention of punishment for parricide, whether in the oldest codes of Greece or of Russia, was due not to the hope that such a crime could not occur in Athens—as the legend was of Solon in Cicero's time—or Kieff, but to the fact that there was no such thing as crime within the family. Crime implied an outside criminal against whom, to satisfy the dead, vengeance could and must be taken. But vengeance within the family was to the Ossetines unthinkable. It would have been vengeance against oneself, with which the family, dead as well as living, was completely identified.[2]

The Abayevsky family gathered to worship every year at a *Kapishtche* (pagan shrine) on the top of a grass mountain to the right of the road, while up a glen leading to Adai-Khokh was a sacred grove of mighty pines, of which only some ten remained. Only one family had a right to cut these trees. 'George, son of *Vakhusht*, Tsar of Georgia', so the books say, took refuge here and his tomb was visible on the high promontory dividing the united Nar and Mamisson 'dons' from the Zramag-don.[3]

[1] *Tagebuch*, p. 68. It was purely a family affair.

[2] *Sovremenni obuitchai i drevni zakon. Obuitchnoe pravo Osetin v istoriko-sravnitelnom osvieshtchenii*, Moscow, 1886, vol. ii, pp. 122–5. There is a useful summary in English in vol. xx, New Series, *R.A.S. Journal*, by the late Mr. Delmar Morgan, 'Customs of the Ossetes', &c. A similar state of things obtained, too, in North Albania—Miss Durham, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

[3] Mr. Raeburn made him 'King of Georgia' and his tomb a 'castle'. My friend Mr. W. E. D. Allen writes: 'It is difficult to say who he was. Both George and Wakhusht are common enough names among the Georgians. Wakhusht himself was buried in Moscow. Tsar and Tsarévich are used indiscriminately of all the innumerable

At supper many stories were told of the injustice of the Russian Government to the mountaineers, giving rise evidently to much discontent—land-tax, for instance, imposed on a plot made, literally, of earth carried up by hand to terraces hewn out in the mountain-side, or on a patch of land ploughed ceremonially in blood-feud reconciliation; also fines for wood-cutting with absolutely no other fuel within reach.

September 24th. We rode on past Nar, of which I took photographs from near a school in which boys were singing hymns.

Züssermann, apparently, was the first to advocate the establishment of village schools in Ossetia. At the chief village up the Zroug torrent, which joins the Nar from the south just below the *aoul*, he found a priest, Joseph Sourgouladze, who was willing to start such a school if only for six boys, but means were wanting. There was a ruined church at Zroug dedicated to the Mother of God and held in such reverence by all Ossetines that none would think of riding past it: they would invariably dismount, doff their *papakhas*, and lead their horses by. Two walls only remained standing, but the others, though fallen, were intact and might be re-erected.[1] Pfaff, 14 years later (1869), tells of the ruins at Zroug of a beautiful Georgian church dating, he supposes, from the seventeenth or eighteenth century. There were still visible on the ends well-executed pictures of saints. The villagers affirmed that 9 years previously the priest Sourgouladze had carried away rich treasures belonging to the church, but had been killed on his way to Georgia.[2] Gatouyeff in 1889 describes the church as still in ruins, but declares that it had once been 'majestic', and was attributed by the people to Tamára. 'Built entirely of yellow, cut stone, the north wall was largely ruined, the others cracked, but on them were old Greek frescoes—at the east end, the 12 Apostles with God Almighty above them; on the (ruined) north wall beneath a window, the Crucifixion; more to the left [*sic*], the Holy Women bringing myrrh to the Sepulchre, and [appropriately] on the projecting part of a column, St. Nino. Above the metal entrance-doors were to be seen The Last Judgment, flanked

Georgian royalties. Wakhusht calls himself Tsarévich although he was only one among several bastards of King Wakhtang VI of Kartli.'

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 343. [2] *S.S. o K.*, vol. i, p. 151.

by the Virgin and Child and various saints.'[1] It would seem that either there were two churches in the Zroug valley, which is not very probable, or that Züssermann's description was inaccurate.[2]

Farther on we came to a small *dzouar*, not much more than a heap of stones, near a quarantine-post at the junction of this valley and a small gully coming from the south. Here were many piles of wood left unguarded by the roadside, as no one would steal what the saint had in charge. At 10.45 a.m. we halted to lunch off our own food, passed an *aoul* at 12.15 p.m., and, later, stopped at Souarkh of the map—really, I was told, Abayeva, all the villages here being called, collectively, *Zakkim*. From here there were three passes: Khiliak (or Kolota, 10,633 ft.) to Kharishtchin, due north; Zakka (10,332 ft.), the next highest, eastward to the Georgian road at Kobi; while Sbasvaits (9,173 ft.), the lowest, led south, as also did the Rok Pass (9,814 ft.), a little farther west.

The people of Nar and district spoke an Ossetine dialect and with a coarser accent—Ourousbi said like Little Russian compared to Great Russian. Here, at Souarkh, however, the speech was pure Ossetine. The most valued household utensils of the Ossetines after the hearth-chains were the great copper brewing vats, which when in use were sometimes half-buried in the ground, with fire in a channel beneath them, the support being necessary as they were very thin for their size. Indeed, one I measured here was fully 5 ft. high, but strengthened to some extent by riveted strips of copper. These vats were not tin lined, yet the beer did not suffer, nor, apparently, the people who drank it.

Lavroff mentions a copper vat in the Zakka valley—perhaps the same—5 ft. 3 in. high by 4 ft. 1 in. wide.[3] Reineggs says of the Tousheens that every opulent man of them 'endeavours to save the honour of his house by possessing a copper cauldron so large that at least two cows can be boiled in it at the same time', which strikes one as being, possibly, an exaggeration![4] In any case, the vats being of

[1] *Report of the Society for the Restoration of Christianity*, for 1889, as quoted by G. Bayeff in the Vladikavkaz newspaper *Terskia Viedomosti*, 1899, a cutting from which is in my possession.

[2] On Vakhusht's map *Karthli au N. du Kour*, the Zroug (Zrogo) flows from east to west between the Nar river and the Zakka.

[3] In 'Zamietki ob Osetii i Osetinakh', *Mat.*, vol. iii, p. 241.

[4] Reineggs, vol. i, p. 207 (Engl. ed.).

such importance in Ossetine economy, it is not to be wondered at that they enter bravely into the cycle of Nart legends, as the following instance, where Reineggs' dimensions are immeasurably surpassed, will attest.

The Narts' Cauldron.[1]

The Narts possessed a huge beer-brewing cauldron which was the subject of much contention, as several different households, often enough, would want to make use of it at one and the same time. They resolved, therefore, to make it over once for all to whomsoever of them could cause water to boil in it by spoken word alone. Having assembled together at one place they filled the cauldron with the Tarp glacier, but when all, from oldest to youngest, had made the attempt they were no farther on than before—none could make the cauldron boil, though they tried the whole day long. That evening Batraz came home from hunting, and, seeing the Narts assembled, rode up to them and asked what it was all about. Having heard, he begged them to leave the vessel in common use as before; no one, however, would listen to him, asking instead that he should make the trial himself.

'*In that case*,' said Batraz, '*may God's wrath overtake me if in the very slightest degree I overstep the limits of truth—I have been out hunting and crossing the spurs of a lofty mountain I killed no less than seven Watsilis!*'[2]

At this the ice in the cauldron melted.

'*Passing over certain other spurs I killed seven Wastyrdjis.*'[3]

Hereupon the cauldron began to give off vapour.

'*On a third set of spurs I killed seven Mkalgabris.*'[4]

Hardly were these last words uttered when steam and boiling water began to spurt and spatter from out the cauldron in all directions.

Batraz caught the vessel up and carried it home.[5]

The people here were much dirtier than any we had met with hitherto, but not less hospitable. We had no introductions, and

[1] 'Skazaniya o Nartakh', by A. Kaitmazoff, in *Mat.*, vol. vii, p. 14.

[2] St. Elias's.

[3] St. Georges.

[4] According to V. Millar, Mikala is here St. Nicholas; Gabyrta is from *Kaber*, a conical hill (Munkácsi, p. 216, see Bibliography).

[5] Dumézil reminds us of Herodotus' story of a Scythian brass kettle, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

Ourousbi had not been here before; yet, merely mentioning Khetagouroff's name, our host gave us what he had—poor mutton, a *samovar*, and some very dirty-looking meat and cheese pies. Later we came across a Khetagouroff who was *strazhnik* (warden) here against the cattle-plague. He told with great glee a story of three Russian students from Vladikavkaz who came here on a walking tour. They got in a thorough 'funk'; thought their throats were to be cut, fell on their knees and begged for mercy. When only a sheep was killed, and after hospitable treatment they were safely guided to Nar, they were very grateful and naïvely told their story.

In the graveyard we noticed a tomb with a modern iron railing—ornamental, but quite out of keeping with all else for many miles round. The guide we took here for the Zakka Pass said that unfortunately one of his family—not himself, we hoped—had hit his wife over the head with a stick. He didn't think her much hurt, but she died soon after. Her family heard of it and obtained Rs.300 bloodwite and this handsome monument. Not far from the village we came on a small bog from which peat was being cut, a novelty here; and as we saw many more bogs on the way up the valley, and wood is scarce, the innovation might be useful. From here nearly to the top of the pass and on both sides there was nothing but grass, which should give abundance of hay. We walked the last few hundred feet up, took leave of our guide at the top (10,332 ft.), and walked on down to Resi by a very steep though not at all dangerous descent—unless one happened to slip and start rolling! We then remounted and rode on to Tep, which we reached at 6.45 p.m. The people of Tep came some generations back from Djimará, as did those of new Djimará near by, a hunter having crossed the mountains and found the land unoccupied. The people of Resi came from Donifars, the Digor *aoul*, west of the Ouroukh.

Our host, an old white-headed man, took a small horn of *arrack* and made a speech in our honour, then handed it to Islam, who passed it on to Ourousbi, I having begged off. He told a story of a Mamisson Ossetine who, having found a watch still ticking in a bundle dropped on the road by some careless traveller, after listening awhile with growing fear and amazement, took a stone and smashed it to pieces, saying 'I've killed *that* devil at least!'

Our host was over 70 years old, and Ourousbi counted his age by

the wrinkles on his brow—10 years to a wrinkle, as he did, but with one year only to a ring or wrinkle, on the horns of a *tour*. The blood-wite here was heavy—18×18+9×9 'cows'.

Some time back I had heard rumours of a lady alpinist, the first of her kind in the Caucasus. We now learned that she had arrived here from Ghergheti about three weeks since, with an Ingoosh guide, after climbing Kazbek and crossing more than one glacier. She had been some days on the way. Her name was Maria Pavlovna Preobrazhenskaya.[1]

A pass opposite, from the small *aoul* of Tsotsolta, 2 versts lower down, and so called, led to the valley of Ursualta, whence a path went (?by Edisa and Erimani) up to Lake Kel, and from there down to Mleti. This was easier than the Zakka Pass.[2] There were no fish in Lake Kel[3] and only very small trout in the Terek. Near the lake chamois browsed like sheep, and were easily shot. Another pass, but only possible on foot, went more directly to Lake Kel—I think from Desi.

The mention of Edisa must be my excuse for introducing here a few notes on places I did not myself visit in

South Ossetia

Blooding. It is of no little interest to find this primitive sporting ritual surviving, up to quite recent times at least, in the Central Caucasus as in England. Of its more sinister aspect I have already spoken.[4] Tchoursin tells us that 'when A. M. Djateeyeff of Sba went shooting for the first time in his life and made his first kill—a thrush—an old man ran up and smeared the boy's index-finger with the blood, evidently with magic intent'.[5] There was some correspondence in *Notes and Queries*, in March 1930, on this subject, and I now read in *The Times* (Jan. 21st, 1931) that 'The Brocklesby had a special

[1] In *Geographia Kavkaza*, 1924, it is stated that this lady climbed Kazbek more than once and even built a hut there for meteorological observations. The first ascent of Elbrous by women, five in number, was recorded in 1925. They were accompanied by fourteen men, the whole party consisting of members of the recently founded Georgian Geographical Society. R.G.S. *Journal*, vol. lxix, No. 4 (April 1927).

[2] This is the 'Urustal' pass of Freshfield and Merzbacher, presumably from the 1 verst map; height 9,053 feet. In *Yugo-Osetia*, 1925, the height is given as 10,633 feet, the name as Ouroushtal.

[3] Owing, Professor von Hahn thought, to the falls in the Ksan river; see p. 196.

[4] See p. 13 *ante*.

[5] *Osetini*, p. 71.

meet for children at Little Brocklesby yesterday, when Captain Jaffray addressed the young fox-hunters on the manners and customs of the hunting-field. . . . Hounds afterwards killed a fox in the presence of the young fox-hunters, many of whom were blooded.'

Nart Surgery. The South Ossetines attribute the many ancient tombs in their country to the Tsarts (=Narts), and declare that they have often found skulls in them patched with copper plates.[1] This reminds me that in the Nart story 'Alagata'[2] Sosryko, having sliced off by stroke of sword the crown of Khizi-son's head, the latter persuades the Heavenly smith, Kurd-Alagon, to forge him a new one of copper. 'But how about the points of the nails; they will want clenching?' 'Leave that to me!' And, sure enough, as each nail is hammered in the patient heaves a deep sigh and of its own accord the point turns upward.

The Night of Power. Sometimes the Heavens open, and whoever sees this can have three wishes granted, of which two must be good, one evil; but all must be wished or none. David Beghisoff saw once, when young, the sky aflame with various colours; a candle in the church lit of itself and lightened all the village. His wishes were that he himself should prosper, that his son might live, his daughters die —and all three wishes were gratified.[3]

Cyclopean Remains. I shall have occasion later on to mention the 'unique' round tower at Edisa.[4] More interesting by far, I suppose, may some day be considered the remains of ancient buildings of so-called 'Cyclopean' masonry in Armenia and Georgia, which, in the opinion of certain modern archaeologists, suggest a coming light on the darker periods of Caucasian ethnology and history, such as until recently had hardly been dreamed of. Not much has been done as yet, it is true, though the foundations are being laid by eager scholars and searchers; and all I can do, myself, is to mention the fact, and instance in connexion with Edisa, Professor Melikset-Bekoff being my sole authority,[5] the grandiose remains described by him of the 'Castle of the Divs' or 'Giants' Castle' on the opposite side of the river Greater Liakhva to that on which stands the village 'Galouat-

[1] *Osetini*, p. 6.
[2] Dj. Shanayeff, 'Ossetine Tales (Nart section)', *Gor.*, vol. v, p. 9.
[3] *Osetini*, p. 82.
[4] See p. 243.
[5] *K Arkheologhii i Etnologhii Tualskoi Osii*, Tiflis, 1925.

kau, the most northerly inhabited spot in Southern Ossetia, close under the main watershed at the Kaldasan defile and pass'.[1] This, I take it, is the Tsotsolta Pass already mentioned, but definite information as to this and other points on the particular section of the Main Chain in question is difficult to come at. The ruins are situated 'on the very edge of a precipice forming the left bank of the torrent and occupy a portion of a high plateau several square versts in extent thickly encumbered with heavy rock-masses (each of several hundreds or thousands of poods weight) of what the geologists call "effusive", that is to say "volcanic" origin, amongst which are visible, here and there, traces of buildings, including, on the western side, the ruins of a mighty fortress'.[2] These ruins are much like similar remains found in Armenia and Southern Georgia. They occupy a rectangular space the containing walls of which, except on the south, are largely intact, the north wall, with an entrance through it, being the best preserved. The thickness of the walls is in general about 7 feet, but, in places, more. There are no signs anywhere of the stones having been cut or dressed, or of cement having been used. As to date of origin, Professor Melikset-Bekoff can, so far, only suggest that the question is one with that of 'Cyclopean' remains in general; in regard to which he thinks attribution to the Celts more likely to prove correct than any other.[3] Meantime, what interests me personally—and I hope will interest my readers—is the suggested possibility that these and other Caucasian remains may eventually throw light on the origin of the Narts—in other words, on the epic traditions of the Caucasus.

There are degrees of dirt. This room and everything about it was very filthy looking, yet on hearing that I wished to visit the Khevsours, our host threw up his hands in dismay, saying 'But they are terribly dirty!' Which was certainly true; and, so far, I had never been bitten by anything more venomous than a flea in Ossetia. Our host's family name was Kalagoff (Totolo); his son Kaour-bek Kalagoff was a keen hunter.

This valley was called Terse-gom from 'Terek', and probably Klaproth's 'Tirsau tribe' was a mistake due to this, as all the inhabitants I met with had clear traditions of their comparatively recent

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 259. A more recent spelling is Kadlasan, *Yugo-Osetia*, p. 54.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 264–5.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

origin in northern Ossetia or elsewhere. 'Troussovsky' defile is likewise evidently derived from Terek, *Tirse*, which the Ossetines pronounce, to my ear, almost like *Turse*.

In March 1808 Klaproth, so he says, made an excursion from Mtskhet up the Ksan river to its source 'at the foot of Mt. Khokhi'. I shall give my reasons presently for saying, as I do categorically, that, in spite of his arrogant claims, Klaproth in my opinion never went near the sources either of the Ksan or of the Terek.[1]

I was offered here 'mountain' tea, made from bear-berry (*Vaccinium arctostaphylos*, L.). The leaves were gathered, wrapped up, set in a warm place to ferment, then opened out; this was repeated twice and the tea was ready for use.

Supper was much as usual, with more divination. I slept outside on a very good bed made up on planks, beneath overhanging eaves. The room was uninviting in appearance, besides being damp and cold, and already I had feverish symptoms; so I took quinine, and with clothes on, and a blanket and *bourka* over me, slept well, nor felt the heavy rain that fell—indeed it was the best night I had passed for a long time.

September 25th. Up at 6 a.m. The mountains down to about 9,000 feet were covered with fresh snow, the sky overcast. Two Khevsours from Batali-koi (presumably 'Batsaligo' of the 5 v. map) arrived, having come by way of the Djouti Pass and Tsno to exchange their honey and walnuts for skins. I took photographs of them. They were certainly very dirty fellows, but amiable, and most anxious that I should visit them in their homes. I should perhaps have done so had I not been baffled by snow on the Arkhotis Pass in October of this same year.

I also took photographs of some new crosses cut by our host's son over family graves. There was a fine bit of green stone in one of them, of which, I was told, whole blocks occur higher up the mountain.[2] On our way down the Terek I stopped at Karata-kau to change films and to photograph the very picturesque village. Some of the people came out and talked to us and in answer to inquiries said that certain of them came from Digoria, the rest from Kakadour.

We reached Kobi, at the junction of the Baidarka, flowing from the Cross Pass and Mountain, with the Terek, at 12.45 p.m., after an

[1] Suppl. Note, *Klaproth and the Sources of the Ksan and the Terek*, see pp. 195 sqq.

[2] *Yashma* (Russ.), Pistacite (from Pistachio, on account of its colour).

easy and pleasant ride through a very narrow gorge, called by some Kasára,[1] above and below which we passed many mineral water springs—iron, sulphur, and others. One village, Kektrisi-kau, next below Abano, was threatened with destruction by the action of the mineral waters on the opposite bank, which are very abundant and petrify on exposure to the air. Slowly but irresistibly they were forcing the Terek over so as to under-wash the bank on which Kektrisi stood.

Züssermann in 1855 found the inhabitants from several of these villages of the Trousso defile gathered together at, apparently, Abano for the 'festival of the dead' (*All Souls*), a drunken orgy, repeated yearly at ruinous expense, though they were so miserably poor that when their women went down to the water-mills to grind corn children were put to spy on them lest they should secrete or devour some of the grain—which was muzzling the ox with a vengeance![2] There was one small modern church in the valley, never opened—no priest ever came there—and, when certain rather gorgeous-looking vestments and other ecclesiastical appurtenances intended to further the revival of Christianity amongst them were displayed, they seized upon them greedily, but had not the faintest idea what they were meant for.[3]

The post-station at Kobi, where I stopped to change horses on many occasions both going and coming over the Cross Pass, is situated at the foot of a huge eruptive mass of andesite, of which the prismatic structure is plainly visible from the road.[4]

We rode on to Kazbek, arriving at 5.40 p.m., and stopped for the night at the post-station by permission of the chief, we, as casual travellers riding our own horses, having no claim to quarter there. At dinner, and subsequently, my inquiries elicited, as usual on such occasions, much information of no little interest. I learned that on Christmas Eve and Christmas Morn, also at the New Year, fires were lighted in the yard of each house, and the young people jumped through the flames. Ourousbi could not say why. Kovalevsky tells us, however, that 'The dead, like the living, require not only food

[1] The gorge occurs in the Trousso defile. According to Lavroff, the Terek here falls not less than 120 feet to the verst, the width of the gorge being from 14–42 feet, the length 5–6 versts. *Mat.* iii. 12.

[2] The Soviet authorities go one better, supplying the children with dogs and sticks and treating as heroes those who betray their nearest relatives. (*The Times*, 6 Aug. 1934).

[3] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 346.

[4] Favre, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

and drink, but fuel. That is why at the New Year, or more precisely on the last Friday but one in December, the house-owner stacks bundles of straw in his yard to the number of his family dead and sets these alight with the words, "May you, our Dead, be bright (*svietli*); may your share of fire not be extinguished". The object is to supply the dead with fresh fire for the coming year.'[1]

On the morning of the New Year the Ossetines killed sheep and made feasts. Whenever this occurred they took a brand from the fire and with it burned the wool on the sheep's forehead, before killing it, in the form of a Cross.[2] On the Wednesday before the New Year, which is 'the Devil's holiday', each family killed a sheep, carefully abstaining from mention of God, saint, or blessing of any kind; no guests were invited, but the flesh was eaten as usual. This feast it seems was in honour of devils of all sorts, to deprecate their malice or anger.[3] On New Year's Eve they took the bones of the sheep, put them in a bag, and threw them into water. This was to guard the flock against wolves. There was a sacred wood near Sanibá. On the festival of St. Elias a sheep was killed by each family in turn, one each year. The whole skin and head was put on a pole and planted in the ground at the shrine of the saint. This in July; to which, in spite of its length, may be added the following vivid description of a

Death by lightning.

Speaking of the people of Lower (or Northern) Digoria, the 'Anonymous' tells us that: 'They are desirous of being called Christians and

[1] *Sovr. obuitchai*, vol. i, pp. 83–4.

[2] Lamberti (*op. cit.*, p. 166) says of the Mingrelians: 'These people think that the only way to obtain all they want from God is to lead a victim early in the morning to the priest, who recites several prayers over it, making mention of the sacrifices of the Ancient Law, those of Abel, Abraham, Solomon, and others. They burn with a candle the hair of the creature in five places in form of a Cross, and walk it three times round the person who offers it.' Zampi repeats this (*ibid.*, p. 276); and see Gateeyeff, *Gor.*, vol. ix, p. 47, and Vs. Miller, *Mat. po Arkh.*, vol. i, p. 47, for a full description of the ritual. For titles of Lamberti and Zampi's journals see *ante*, p. 38.

[3] B. Gateeyeff ('Oss. Superstitions', &c., *Gor.*, vol. ix, p. 27) tells us that the feast is called *Duai astda*—'between two'—being devoted neither to God nor to the saints but to an evil spirit, in the sense of the maxim 'Pray to God but don't anger the Devil'. He gives a full description of the proceedings. Elsewhere the 'Devil' is identified with the House-spirit, who was more malicious and uglier than our 'Brownie', especially if of the female sex. This hobgoblin was attached to the house, not the household, and therefore took no part in 'family removals'.

Cross Pass, looking south

have some knowledge of Christian usages, such as the observance of the chief fasts and the veneration of St. George and St. Elias, mixed, however, with superstitious customs. I had an example of this on my return to Koubati. A violent thunderstorm, such as are frequent and terrible in the outer range of mountains, compelled the women who were working in the fields to hasten back to their villages, and one young woman was killed by lightning not 50 paces from my tent. At this her companions shouted for joy, sang, and danced round the body, while the men working in the fields, as well as all the people from the village, joined the dancers, albeit the storm continued raging. Their simple and only song was *O Ellai! Ellai! Eldaer Tchoppei*—words no one could explain to me, as they themselves did not know the language they came from.[1] Dancing the measure in a circle they repeated these words, backwards and forwards, while one led and the rest followed in chorus. When the storm was over the dead woman was clothed in new garments and her body set down on a cushion at the very spot where she had been killed; the dancing was then kept up uninterruptedly well into the night. Her parents, sister, and husband danced, sang, and showed as much joy as at some festival, for any appearance of sorrow would have been held a sin against St. Elias and deemed worthy of punishment.[2] The celebration lasted eight days and was directed by a mountaineer-doctor, Ghenshek by name, the Aesculapius of the Caucasus, who had learnt his art from the old wives and was everywhere renowned as a herbalist.

'My curiosity had fee'd this man many times, and did so now once more. He caused a young man who had once been struck by lightning to be haled by force to where the body lay, the belief being that all living things struck by lightning but not killed became the servants and oracles of St. Elias; even cattle struck by lightning receive their liberty. As soon as the young man drew near to the dead woman, he greeted her as a comrade, as one more fortunate than himself, sang, danced round and round, was seized with convulsions

[1] Klaproth (*Reise*, vol. ii, p. 606) renders this—quite arbitrarily according to Professor B. A. Alboroff in his article 'The Ingoosh "Galierdi" and the Ossetine "Alardi" ', in *Izv.* (Ing.), i, p. 399—'O Elias, Elias, Lord of the mountain summits', the Professor himself giving credit to Klaproth for the story and remarking that it is, therefore, 120 years old, not knowing that it was printed already in the *Tagebuch* of 1781, two years before Klaproth was born!

[2] Imperial Rome treated suicides and lightning's victims alike!

and fell down at last on the cushion, his eyes closed but the convulsions continuing to the point of complete exhaustion. It took four strong men to hold him and that not without difficulty. When the convulsions abated the chorus kept on singing and dancing, but when they were renewed all present gazed at him with great earnestness and devotion, while with eyes shut he related very volubly all that went on at the saint's and gave the names of all the lightning-victims Elias had there with him. After many hours of varying convulsions, in his last fit he transmitted the saint's commands in regard to the dead woman. Of these the most important enjoined an eight days' festival to be held near the body with abstention from all kinds of work and strife. Gifts must be collected, the dead coffined, and the coffin kept on a catafalque for eight days. The eighth day it must be put on a new *arba* (cart) drawn by a pair of white-flecked oxen. The oxen were so specified in order that a certain avaricious man should have to present them; they would, eventually, be slaughtered. This trick was played him because he had failed to pay the "doctor" for a cure he had made! Young people went with the relations in procession to the nearest village, singing, and collected gifts of cattle and other produce. These gifts were either for the dead woman personally, or for the feast, or for the relations, with whom the doctor and the youthful seer would share. At the price of a few gifts I learned from the doctor the trick he had played. He had bound the young man's arm so tight as to hinder the circulation of the blood, whereupon the convulsions naturally followed. In spite of the heat, after eight days I could perceive no smell from the coffin; the Ossetines considered this a miracle; as, however, the coffin was closed I had no means of discovering the trickery.

'Finally, the coffined body was put on an ox-wagon, the animals were set in motion, and where they first stopped of their own accord —which, this time at least, was at the next patch of grass—stones were piled up in an oblong to the height of a few feet, the coffin was lifted on to the pile and surrounded and covered with stones to the height of one fathom.

'Alongside the stone-heap a pole was set up with on it an outspread goatskin and head; on a smaller staff were hung the best clothes of the departed, then the gifts collected were consumed in common at the grave. The cattle presented to the dead woman herself, however,

were driven off alive on to the steppe, where they were to remain free and unmolested. On them was bound a mark, so that if any of them tried to rejoin the herd they might be driven off again.'[1]

To resume. On New Year's Eve a big log was dragged to the hearth and one end put in the fire; it must lie there and burn all through the week. On bringing it in they prayed that all sheep and cattle might have female offspring and all women male. A certain stick was called *Dat-Koe Kodakh*. Ourousbi could not say what *Dat-Koe* meant, but *Kodakh* was a log. On New Year's Day a meat-pie was made in honour of the Sun and of Fire and was called *Art-* (fire) *Khuron* (sun). All the family partook of it. Art-Khuron was the name of the Fire-god who sent down skin-diseases on the human race.[2]

The Ossetine month was lunar. January was called *Nogpone mai* (new month): February, *Art-Keelan mai* (threatening month, because of changeable weather). Then came *Waltzüg* or spring-time, which was not divided into months, followed by *Shousheni mai*, the two summer months (June, July). *Vazheg* (Autumn) included August, September, October; *Arag Vazheg* (late Autumn), November; *Taudji mai* (Winter month) was December, also called *Khourkhala* (*mai*), meaning 'when the sun has reached its lowest'.

All over the mountains the seasons were counted by *Tsirkhs*—that is, by the disappearance or reappearance of the sun behind, or from behind, artificial pillars or natural mountain features. Of this we have already heard at Djimee.[3] The days of the week in Ossetine were:

Sunday	*Saubon* (God's day)
Monday	*Koureesher* (Week-head)
Tuesday	*Dützeg* (Second day)
Wednesday	*Artetzeg* (Third day)
Thursday	*Tsparram* (Fourth day)
Friday	*Mairambon* (Mary's day)
Saturday	*Shabat* (Sabbath)

Next morning (Sept. 26th) we were up at 6 a.m., and an hour later

[1] *Tagebuch*, &c., pp. 100, 103. [2] Miller's *Oss.-Russ.-Germ. Dict.*, vol. i.
[3] *Ante*, p. 168; vol. ii, pp. 63, 186.

left for Vladikavkaz.[1] Rain fell most of the way, but I did not regret it as I knew the road well enough in all its fine-weather aspects, whereas the wet brought out the colours of the rocks in a way that was, to me, a revelation. The stones from Kazbek carried down by the Terek had long been the admiration of travellers, who could hardly fail to be struck by the richness and variety of their colouring.[2] With the rain on them, the cliffs and boulders by the roadside now shone out in larger masses of light and shade with nearly as much colour-variety—only the green breccia was missing—and with one added form of notable singularity; for near Gvelethi columnar basalt was strikingly displayed in a nearly vertical mass with, in one place, a cavern at its base.

The columns are cylindrical and, compared to those of the Giant's Causeway, small. Klaproth found them 'de la plus grande beauté', and Lord Bryce calls them, rather surprisingly, 'a beautiful range of basaltic columns, much like those of the Giant's Causeway'. M. Koechlin-Schwartz, on the other hand, in his pleasant travel book,[3] likens them to macaroni, a comparison so very unromantic that I must set against it another Frenchman's statement, that the Dariel gorge is so narrow and so overhung with beetling crags that the sky is only visible at rare intervals,[4] which is romance indeed!

We passed the site of ruined Gvelethi,[5] the village whose robber inhabitants (Ingooshee or Kists) used to amuse themselves by cutting luggage from the backs of carriages, and sometimes even attacked the travellers; but two or three years back they had the double misfortune to rob first a mail-cart and then the carriage of the Governor of Tiflis! This brought matters to a head, and they were all packed off to some place in the province of Kars, leaving only one family, temporarily, to collect the sheep and cattle and sell them as best they could. Naturally, they got little for them. Finally, one man was left behind to act as watchman over the Devdoraki glacier and to give warning of danger impending from it.

[1] For Kazbek, from the alpinist point of view, see Freshfield and Merzbacher; for the excavations, see Appendix A.

[2] As Reineggs, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 313.

[3] *Un Touriste au Caucase*, Paris (? 1879), p. 320. My copy was given to me by Mons. Raymond Koechlin.

[4] Mourier, *Guide au Caucase*, Part II, p. 49, ed. 1894.

[5] Dubois de Montpéreux, iv, p. 286 n. *Gweli* in Georgian means 'serpent'.

This glacier is one of eight that form on the higher slopes of Kazbek, but has attracted far more attention than the remaining seven owing to the danger it threatens to the Georgian road. Local tradition, magnified as time went on, told of avalanches—or rather falls of ice, rock, snow, earth, and water—that occurred regularly at seven-year intervals, and reaching the Terek blocked it, with more or less disastrous results. But this was a gross exaggeration. The falls did occur, but neither frequently nor at regular intervals; they varied much in extent, and not many of them came near the Terek. The cases on record are: 1776, when the river was held up for three days and the subsequent flood reached villages 250 feet above it; in 1808 a stoppage of only two hours' duration; in 1817 one, said vaguely to have lasted 'days', the barrier attaining a height of not less than 350 feet. The next and, so far, the last occurrence of the kind was in August 1832—not 1833 as the for-once-inaccurate Dubois has it—when a mass of ice, with the usual concomitants, 2 versts long, 280 feet broad and as many high, crashed into the valley of the Terek, blocking the stream for some eight hours. The waters meantime accumulated above the dam, forming a wide lake; then, having gathered sufficient weight, broke through the obstruction and swept down the narrow defile, carrying ruin with them. Similar catastrophes were threatened in 1842 and 1855, but in neither case did the fallen mass reach the Terek. These occurrences were attributed by the Ingooshee to an extremely irascible snowstorm goddess whose throne was the summit of Kazbek, her seven sons the stars of the Great Bear.[1] (See footnote 4 at end of chapter, p. 202.)

The Devdoraki glacier has its origin in an extensive snowfield situated at a height of 12,500 feet on the north-eastern slopes of Kazbek. Its length is about 4 versts, and at 8,200 feet above sea-level it attains its greatest breadth of 1,260 feet.[2] Below this point it narrows gradually, to end at a height of, roughly, 7,500 feet. Its main feature is its extreme steepness, which in the upper portion averages 50°, resulting in the formation of a series of icy cascades, split by broad and deep cracks, which render it absolutely inaccessible. Lower down, where widest, the gradient lessens to 23°. The breadth of the defile below the ice-tongue is not more than 630 feet, the left bank being formed of old clay-slates, the right of large, old, terminal

[1] Dalgat (a), p. 117. See *post*, p. 212. [2] Weidenbaum, *op. cit.*, 1,645 feet.

moraines. The stream flowing from the glacier is called the Amilishka until joined by the Tchakh, coming in on its left from the glacier of that name, when the two together become the Kabakhi torrent. This falls into the Terek 5 versts below the Devdoraki ice-tongue, 7 versts below Kazbek village (Stepan-tsminda), and 1 verst above the old Dariel fort, where the gorge of that name begins.

In spite of investigations by competent observers, extending over many years, the actual process resulting in the fall of ice from the Devdoraki glacier has never been satisfactorily explained.[1] The greatest experts were sometimes most at fault. Thus in 1860 Abich, after a careful examination, sounded a clamant note of alarm. He was convinced that a catastrophe impended; yet nothing happened.[2]

Tamára's Castle.

Just above the fort, on the left bank, looking down upon road and river, were the ruins of Tamára's Castle, so called, which in its day must have commanded impregnably the southern entrance of the defile. This latter has commonly been identified with the 'Gates', to which Classical, Byzantine, and Eastern authors applied at one time or another such epithets as Caucasian, Iberian, Alan, Sarmatian, Dariel, and even Caspian;[3] but their descriptions and allusions are so

[1] My chief authority for the above is a *feuilleton* in the *Terskie Viedomosti*, No. 162 (July 25th, 1902), signed by 'K', an official specially appointed that year to investigate the conditions of the glacier owing to alarming reports then current. Earlier information will be found in Freshfield's and Merzbacher's works and in those of other non-Russian writers. Statkovsky's *Official Report* (Tiflis, 1865) has detailed plans and elevations. He had recently engineered the famous Mleti zigzags.

[2] Fester wie je bestätigt sich meine Vermuthung dass die Katastrophe mit ungewohnter Energie eintreten kann und aus physikalischen Gründen muss. *Aus Kaukasischen Ländern*, Reisebriefe von Hermann Abich, Band ii, Wien, p. 95.

[3] Procopius, though Pliny, already, had corrected the error. Sir Percy Sykes (*Geogr. Journal*, June 1929, p. 360) thinks Sir Thomas Herbert was 'probably correct in identifying the *Caspiae Portae* with the pass "not more than 40 yards broad and eight miles long" through the main range between Isfahan and Ashraf near the Caspian Sea'. This defile is some forty miles NE. of Teheran. See Lieut.-Col. Beresford Lovett, R.E.'s journey and map in *Proceedings*, R.G.S., New Series, Feb. 1883, pp. 57–84. I have used the Russ. translation with 'amended' map, the amendment being a mere matter of transliteration, in *Izv.* ix, pl. I, p. 21. The author was H.B.M.'s Consul at Astrabad. Others identify the Caspian Gates with Derbend.

vague or so general as to apply equally well to many other of the mountain defiles of the Caucasus. The less impracticable of these had to be armed and defended against the northern barbarians by the civilized rulers of the South, including Persians, Byzantines, and others, though, personally, I incline strongly to the belief that organized invasions on a large scale, whether by army or nation, could at no time, as so frequently stated or assumed, have been possible through them. The Cross Pass itself, until the Russians built their road over it, was a barely practicable route for anything more than a raiding party. On the other hand, the peaceable or unopposed transfer of even considerable numbers of men of one nationality or another—either as immigrant settlers on vacant lands or additions to the armed forces of Georgia, did take place, at times wide apart, over the Central Range, and partly by way of the Cross Pass and Dariel defile. But the line of 'Invasion' throughout the centuries was the shore line of the Caspian Sea.[1]

Queen Tamára, of course, had possession here, and may well have built or rebuilt the castle; but Lermontoff, who had already used her name, legitimately enough, in his purely fictitious poem *The Demon*, was less justified in making 'Tsaritsa Tamára' the heroine of a smaller poem embodying the Astarte legend wherein, as Sir James Frazer puts it, 'Fair but mortal youths pay with their lives for the brief rapture of the love of an immortal Goddess', and attaching it to this castle in the Dariel defile. I mention Astarte, though neither Lermontoff nor his commentators, to my knowledge, do so, because in essentials the derivation is unmistakable. It is suggestive, moreover —I put it no higher, knowing what traps beset the unwary in such matters—that, while Astarte was undoubtedly worshipped on the Taman peninsula, objects have been found in or about the Dariel gorge itself which archaeologists rightly or wrongly assign to her cult, more especially Chantre.[2]

Where the Kabakhi torrent joins the Terek the black, argillaceous schists give place to gneiss-granite and crystalline schists, mainly very

[1] See my letter to the *Standard*, 9 October, 1888.

[2] *Recherches*, &c., vol. ii, p. 203 (with figures). For archaeology of the Terek above and below the defile see Appendix A. Lermontoff, I suppose, got his story from Gamba (*op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 21), who excited Dubois's mirth by it. None of them allude to the goddess.

pale grey in colour, which prevail until just below Lars post-station; here the former reappear, to continue as far as the lower—northern—end of the defile, which has a total length of 13 versts. After that the valley opens out somewhat, the Jurassic limestones rise to as much as 9,000 feet (Mat-khokh), and are succeeded by the chalks and newer formations.

At a quarantine post near the Alexander bridge we came upon an Ingoosh friend of Ourousbi's who had served as guide to Rossikoff, the ornithologist, years ago. He would go with us willingly now, anywhere we liked to take him, but was tied to his post. Also, he suffered from sciatica so badly that at times he only wished to die. It was at the hot springs below the Ganal-don glacier that Ourousbi first met him, where extolling, once, his countrymen, another Ossetine asked him gravely if he knew their origin? Admitting ignorance, he was told a story of a woman who met a wolf who took advantage of her: hence the Ingooshee! Ourousbi now greeted his friend with 'How goes it, O son of a wolf!'—at which there was much merriment. A hardly practicable footpath led thence, on the eastern side of the Terek, to opposite Djerakh, a name said to have been transferred by the Russians from the district on that side of the Terek, up the Arm-khi or Makal-don, to their former fortress on the left bank.

At old Lars we called a halt at the *doukhan*, where I had stopped with George Dobson and his wife in 1888, when on our way to Tiflis, he as correspondent of *The Times*, I of the *Standard*, on the occasion of the Emperor Alexander III's visit to the Caucasus. Here we heard that a horse had been stolen that morning by an Ingoosh who levelled a Berdan rifle at the owner, a villager from the upper Terek beyond Kazbek, threatening to shoot if he moved—this within a hundred yards of a Cossack post! On the other hand the Ingoosh above mentioned, Ourousbi's friend, had got back the four cows stolen at Sanibá but had failed to hit the thieves when crossing the Terek, where he lay in ambush for them. Prudence, perhaps, had much to say in the matter!

Riding by chance ahead of Ourousbi I presently met a man walking towards me with white *bashlyk* flying in the wind. He looked a gallant, resolute fellow, and the fact that he was on foot attracted my attention. However, I rode on, and only afterwards heard that he was a famous Ingoosh horse-thief, Bazirko by name, very probably con-

nected with the theft of that morning. 'Else what was he doing here *on foot?*' Ourousbi had spoken to him and asked, pleasantly, if he had stolen the horse? This of course he denied, protesting complete innocence. 'Why, give me your own cattle and *taboun* (herd of horses) to keep and I guarantee not one animal will be lost!' This indeed was likely enough on the principle that an expert poacher may have in him the makings of a good keeper. Said I: 'It is a pity I didn't know who he was in time to snapshot him.' Three weeks later I passed a night in his castle but, unluckily, he was away. The horse, no doubt, was hidden up a gully, or in the forest, till nightfall or other favourable opportunity came to cross the Terek. It would have been easy enough to stop all this had the Government liked, as the thieves would seldom be able to cross the river with their booty if armed posts were established at the very few fords, of which there are none at any time of the year in the defile itself.

I promised some little way back to relate what happened to Tchmee in 1830. In those days the upper *aoul* dominated a considerable stretch of the Georgian road. The inhabitants were renowned as robbers and worse, attacking travellers on the road, plundering them and carrying them away captive, or killing them—especially soldiers. They had even gone the length of attacking Todleben's rear-guard in 1768![1] Prince Abkházoff determined, therefore, that the *aoul* must be destroyed and the people carried off and settled on the plain near Vladikavkaz. Von Blaramberg, at the head of the column as usual, was already on his way down to the road when he was recalled and instructed to blow up the three Towers of Refuge and then set fire to the village, for which purpose he was given two companies of sharpshooters and 100 Cossacks, the rest of the forces returning to Vladikavkaz, bringing with them the elders of Tchmee as hostages. 'I saw the inhabitants', he writes, 'weeping, as they carried their belongings out of their *saklias* and packed them on donkeys and horses. They then set out in the wake of the main column. In front of the village chieftain's dwelling stood his wife, a pretty Ossetian of some twenty years, tall and slim, lamenting loudly, which grieved me much. But my commander's orders must be obeyed. The three towers were undermined: I fired the charges

[1] *Tagebuch*, p. 82—a further evidence, if any be necessary, of Todleben's route; see *ante*, p. 31.

myself and one after the other all three went high in air with a terrible din, echoed a hundredfold by the mountains around. That was the signal to fire the village, and in ten minutes all was smoke and flame. Then I turned my back on the sorry spectacle and hurried with my men after the main column, which we overtook just short of Vladikavkaz.'

At 2 p.m. we stopped for an hour at Novui Redant and again called for *shashlyk* and wine, then rode on to Vladikavkaz, where we arrived in a deluge of rain at 4.40 p.m. The horses were none the worse; we had made the full circuit of Kazbek—in the larger sense of Dr. Freshfield's 'Kazbek group'. Ourousbi and I were well pleased.

That evening, after dinner, he told me amongst other things that it was the custom at the New Year, in Ossetia, for the boys to go round with good wishes for the ensuing twelve months—that the men might kill stags in plenty and the women bear sons only; meantime they looked for thanks in the form of *bashli*—bread in special shapes, which would indubitably bring them luck, or at least fill their small stomachs. His uncle, whom I had once met in Sanibá, was put to school in Vladikavkaz. One day his father came to see him, and when he left, the boy, being home-sick, ran after him, keeping out of sight, but was captured by an Ingoosh who carried him off to Gvelethi and refused to give him up till Rs.300 had been paid in ransom, and that took time. Years after, when the boy grew up, he recognized his captor one day and promptly killed him, which was thought merely the right and proper thing to do.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE. *The Doudároff Legend.* 'Doudároff was a native of Kii (Mountain Tchetchnia), though one source calls him a Nogai. Endowed with rare courage, a strong will, and love of power, he failed to agree with his fellow villagers, so that there were many quarrels between them. Hampered in turn by the Ingooshee, he went from place to place with a band of hired followers until, leaving the Assá valley, he settled down in the Metskhal community, near the *aoul* Karpé. Here at the foot of the cliff he built a strong castle, subjugated the surrounding population, levying dues on them of one log from every load of wood that passed that way. Doudároff had several sons—some say three, some seven. When, one day, a young man came to Karpé from Galgai-land to visit an uncle, Doudároff

took him captive and loaded him with chains, profiting by the latter's temporary absence. Soon afterwards, when Doudároff in turn was away, a woman of Karpé came on some errand to his stronghold. The captive found means to exchange a few words with her, and said "Tell it in Karpé that the intention is to carry me off to sell into slavery. As we pass through the valley I will give the cry of the raven". The woman told this to his relations when she returned home and they set an ambush. When Doudároff's sons came down the valley with their captive he gave the cry of the raven swart. The people of Karpé fell upon them, killed them all, and set their prisoner free. The victors cut off the heads of their enemies, and next morning called out to Doudároff from the top of the cliff, "Hey, Doudároff! here are some goats' heads for you". Doudároff at the moment was standing beside his castle smoking a large pipe. The heads of his sons rolled down to their father's feet; one of them fell into the river and was carried downstream by the current. Said Doudároff: "I will not drink water red with the blood of my children." He abandoned the castle, transferred himself to the neighbouring *aoul* of Doukharghisht, and there built himself a tower. Some time later he raided Lars and came back with much booty. He gave the family named Koushtoff, who dwelt in Doukharghisht, an ox, to the tail of which was tied an ass laden with silk and gold. Doudároff became sworn brother to the Koushtoffs, and after a while, with their help, fell upon Karpé and took all the male inhabitants prisoners. Then, fearing the vengeance of the Ingooshee, Doudároff crossed the Terek into Ossetia.'[1]

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE. *Klaproth's Journey to the Sources of the Ksan and the Terek.*[2] In the Preface (*Vorrede*) to his *Journey* (*Reise*) in the Caucasus and to Georgia, undertaken in the years 1807 and 1808, and published in 1812 (vol. i) and 1814 (vol. ii), Klaproth writes:

'On the 5th of March I again went from Tiflis to Mtskhet, and then by way of Moukhrani and Akhalgori as far as the source of the river Ksani (*bis zum Ursprunge des Flusses Ksani*), at the foot of the snowpeak Khokhi, on the east side of which are also to be found

[1] This legend was taken down locally by the Ingoosh Expedition of 1927 and is printed in *Izv.* (Ing.), vol. i, pp. 204, 205.

[2] *Reise*, vol. ii, pp. 239–85.

the sources of the Terek. I had to contend with indescribable difficulties in order to reach these latter through the snowy gorges (*Kluften*) of that mountain. Wherefore the fame of having first discovered and visited the source of the Terek belongs to me and not to the two Dorpat students[1] who some years later went thither from Kobi.'

At the end of his account of the expedition he claims to have 'drunk of the sources of the Aragva and Terek and determined' those of the Ardon, the Didi (Greater) Liakhva, the Patarĕ (Lesser) Liakhva, and the Ksan.[2]

Now, by his own account he rode up the Ksan to the point where the road, or bridle-path, diverged to Lomisa, and following this latter across the dividing ridge descended to Mleti on the Aragva, at the foot of the Cross Pass. But the Ksan has its origin in Lake Kel, 20 versts farther up, NW., from where Klaproth left it. The height of this lake is 9,583 feet.[3] Dinnik tells us that it is frozen over for eight or nine months of the year; and, except for two or three months in late summer, it is said to be unapproachable on account of the very heavy snowfall.[4] Professor v. Hahn[5] found deep snow on the SE. slope of the ridge (10,000 ft. and more) forming the watershed between the Greater Liakhva and the Ksan on the 31st of July. He tells us that the latter river, breaking through the rim of the small crater to which the lake is confined, flows at first gently between low banks, but on reaching the edge of the plateau plunges down in a series of cascades amidst masses of lava and basalt, falling some 2,863 feet in the course of about 4 versts, or 713 feet to the verst; while in the next 4 versts the fall is 1,750 feet, say 437 feet to the verst—a truly formidable place to climb in winter 9,000 feet above sea-level! Klaproth not only did not visit Lake Kel but, seemingly, had never

[1] 'den beiden Dorpatschen Studirenden', i.e. Engelhardt and Parrot; see presently, p. 202. Their journey took place in 1812—only four years subsequently to that which Klaproth claims to have made.

[2] *Loc. cit.*, p. 285.

[3] 'Lake Keli and its neighbourhood' in *Mat.*, vol. xvii, Tiflis, 1893. As Dinnik speaks of 1891 in the past tense, and his journey took place in July, I assume that its date was 1892, though it is not so stated.

[4] The botanist N. I. Kouznetsoff, in his 'Pouteshestvie po Kavkazou lietom 1890' (*Izviestia* of Imp. Russ. Geogr. Society, t. xxvi, p. 421), says that in mid-June the plateau of the Kel lake was not open to exploration.

[5] Expedition to the sources of the Great Liakhva and Ksanka (in the summer of 1903) in *Mat.*, vol. xxxv. The snow line hereabouts is at *c.* 10,000 feet.

heard of its existence. It follows that his claim to have 'reached' (Preface) or 'determined' (vol. ii, p. 285) the source of the river Ksan has no foundation in fact, while his later statement that it 'sprang' from 'Khokhi' is untrue, whatever extension within the bounds of reason we allow to that term.

We will now take the Terek.[1] Leaving Mleti on foot at 8 a.m. (Mar. 16th), accompanied by three local Ossetines as guides and by two sons and a daughter of his host at that place—hasty provision having been made of snow-shoes, consisting of boards 3 feet long and 7 inches wide, which, however, were not used,[2] besides the special kind of shoe called 'Akkite' (*Arkhite*)—Klaproth, keeping to the right side of the Aragva, reached the source of that river 9 versts away after a three hours' march, which he found fatiguing. This might well be, for the distance is really 15 versts at least, the height of Mleti 4,961 feet, the height of the Aragva, one hour short of its source, 8,500 (Dinnik). Allowing only 500 feet for this last hour, to have climbed 4,000 feet odd in three hours 'partly over flat schists, partly over pieces of rock and rounded boulders, torn by the water's force from the mountains' over a distance of 10 miles, was no bad performance, and our traveller might reasonably exult at having 'stood at the source of the Aragon, known already to the ancients, Strabo making it rise in "Caucasus" and fall into the Cyrus'. Hence, after luncheon, the sister and brothers started on their return to Mleti, and, the weather being very favourable and the new-fallen snow all melted away (this in March at 9,000 ft.), Klaproth with his three guides resumed their journey at 1 p.m. 'in the direction slightly north of west, and in two hours, going uphill all the way, attained the summit of the ridge [i.e. of the Main Chain] on which the snow still

[1] Klaproth, *Reise*, vol. ii, p. 276.

[2] Tchoursin describes the snow-shoes used in South Ossetia, as well as in most of the mountainous parts of Georgia, as wooden rings a little longer that the foot, strung with plaited leather straps; and referring to this Aragva journey, *op. cit.*, p. 26, says Klaproth wore them! Klaproth's is the only mention of ski (boards as opposed to racquets) I have found in the literature of the Caucasus—with one possible exception which occurs in *Mat.*, vol. xix, Article 'Sori', p. 88—previous to their appearance in Count Ugo di Valle Piana's paper in *A.J.*, Nov. 1930, p. 287, where he tells us that the first ski-ascent of Elbrous was made by his companion Gasparotto, the previous year, though two Swiss had attempted it in 1913 and attained the col between the two summits. Nor could I elicit any knowledge of such things, actual or traditional, by persistent questioning, I being since 1879 an enthusiastic ski-er. For snow-shoes see *ante*, p. 34 *n.*

lay deep. Here we made a forty-minutes' halt and enjoyed a most beautiful view of the snowy range now steeply confronting us. In the valley ran the Terek; eastward we saw the Gouda or Cross Mountain, over which lies the way from Georgia to Russia, and the snowpeak K'uro.[1] Northward rose the pyramidal Mqinwari [Kazbek] joined by a low ridge to the saddle-peak of the snow-covered Khokhi, whence spring the Terek, Fiag, Arredon [Ar-don], the Liaghwi rivers, and the Ksani.' Now 'Khokh' means a peak, a mountain, in Ossetine, but was not used as the name of any particular height. Vakhusht on his map (No. 3 in Brosset's version) applied it to the whole of the northern 'Side Chain' from the Ar-don up to and including the ridge dividing the Fiag-don from the Ghizel-don valleys—in other words, Kourtati from Tagaouri. From there to Kazbek and the Terek he substitutes the appellation 'Mqinwari', both this and 'Khokhi' applying, so far as he is concerned, not to any individual peaks, even to Kazbek and Tepli, but, between them, to the whole range of which these two mountains form the eastern and western buttresses respectively. Not understanding this, Klaproth made of 'Khokhi' one great double-headed mountain 'very like Elbrous', joined to 'Mqinwari' (Kazbek) by a low ridge; and this notable invention of his own he saw (*a*) from the banks of the Koura, the first night out from Tiflis on this expedition, 'very conspicuously (*besonders ausgezeichnet*)'; (*b*) from the 'source' of the Aragva 'lit by the sun in full splendour (*von der Sonne beleuchtet in voller Pracht*)'; and (*c*) 'clad in everlasting snow (*mit ewigem Schnee bedeckten*)' from the point where he pretends to have crossed the Main Chain.

He knew from the text of Vakhusht—whose maps I assume he never saw—that the various streams together forming the Ar-don rose mostly in 'Khokhi', a spur of which separated them from the head-waters of the Terek. We shall see that while still on the south side of the latter river he believed himself to be on 'the outstretched foot of Khokhi', which implied that Zilga-khokh was part of that mountain, and explains to some extent his statement that 'Khokhi'

[1] Khori-shar (12,376 feet) is the most easterly of the eight several peaks of the Main Chain in that section of it which constitutes the northern boundary of S. Ossetia. But K'uro is the Kuru of Merzbacher's map (4091 m. = 13,422 feet), *c.* 4 kil. ENE. of Kazbek post Station. *Yugo-Osetiya*, 1924, p. 5. See, too, Klaproth's map in French ed., 1823.

gave rise to the two Liakhvas (though not that it gave rise to the Ksan!).

His 'low ridge' would be the mighty wall of the Side Chain, including peak after peak of from 12,000 to 15,000 feet and more, with none but a single glacier-pass between Kazbek and the Terek sources.

Having warmed themselves with some glasses of 'grog' the party descended 'in a north-westerly direction the steep rock-valley down which the roaring mountain-torrent "Utfars-don" precipitates itself into the Terek, whose first right-hand affluent it is'. Here, half a verst away from that river, was the little village of Utfars-kau, where they passed the night. Now his climb for two hours from the source of the Aragva 'in a direction slightly N. of W.', together with the fact that the Tsotsolta (=Urustevsek) Pass is the only one between the Georgian road (Cross Pass) and Zilga-khokh (Freshfield, *Expl.*, ii, p. 270), indicates the Tsotsolta Pass as his viewpoint when crossing the watershed, and the Tsotsolta torrent as his Utfars-don, 'the first right-hand affluent' of the Terek, with a course NW., as to which, ignoring lesser inaccuracies, it is enough to say that the direction from the source of the Aragva to the pass is not slightly N. of W. but nearer NW., while the Tsotsolta torrent, like all other streams joining the uppermost Terek from the south, runs not NW. but east of North, the next stream, Desi, flowing even S. of E.

At Utfars-kau (? Tsotsolta) the blond village-maidens were nearly all of them very pretty and gay, and displayed their skill in a dance not unlike the waltz, than which anything *less* likely it would be difficult to conceive. The girls, he tells us, were virtuous till marriage, but after that would bestow their favours for a Moscow kerchief or other such trifle—an accusation he may have taken, like his 'Khokhi', from Vakhusht, who wrote 'the women of the Ossetes preserve their virginity up to marriage, after which they measure their glory by the number of their lovers', which is repeated *verbatim* by Klaproth elsewhere.[1] Next day, accompanied by fifteen Ossetines, he reached the Terek at the infall of the Utfars-don after half an hour's very trouble-

[1] Klaproth, *Reise*, vol. ii, p. 279. Ourousbi denied the truth of this accusation. Such conduct, indeed, was attributed to the Tcherkess formerly and to many other peoples, but, in any case, it would not be fair on Klaproth's part to give Vakhusht's statement, made 60 years at least earlier, as of his own present knowledge.

some, steep, downhill walking, continuing thence by a still worse path for a good hour, along the uninhabited right bank of the Terek. 'We went ever upward, and were already on the outstretched foot of the snow-peak Khokhi, also called Istir-Khokhi or the High [should be "Great"] Khokhi. At last we came to a spot where large stones in the stream enabled us to cross it directly to the village Ziwratte-kau, where we breakfasted and where the small streams which together form the Terek unite. Rejoiced at having reached the aim of this difficult journey I poured a goblet of Hungarian wine into the stream and sacrificed another to the Spirit of the Mountain which gave it birth. The Ossetines thought this a religious observance and were very devotional. On a large schistose-rock, with smooth side, I caused the date, my name, and the names of all my companions to be inscribed in red paint, then went a little farther up the mountain to the village of Resi.' His Ziwratte-kau occurs in Güldenstädt's list, which he himself published, between Resi and Tep,[1] and in that situation he locates 'the source of the Terek', but it is evidently the same as Siveraut, so named from the mountain (12,415 ft.) rising from it to the NW., which on Freshfield's and Merzbacher's maps, taken from the one-verst map, lies not E. but W. of Resi, higher up the Terek that is, though there is only a mile between Siveraut and Tep, with Resi in between. This is one more piece of evidence against the genuineness of Klaproth's narrative; he and Güldenstädt could hardly have made the same mistake independently. If 'Utfars-don' is the Tsotsolta, Utfars-kau, of course, is the village of that name, but, in any case, the one-and-a-half day's walk from Mleti to Tep and Resi over the Main Chain and along the broken country on the right bank of the Terek, *in the month of March*, was, I believe, a sheer impossibility. It follows that, in my opinion, Klaproth's 'discovery' of the source of the Terek also never took place.

In further elucidation of his wonderful 'Khokhi' he tells us that if you go due west from the Terek source (therefore, according to his narrative, from between Resi and Tep) up the not-very-steep slope of that mountain, you come to the source of the Ar-don. Thus the eastern slope of the Zakka Pass, which is on the saddle between Siveraut-khokh (12,415 ft.) and Zilga-khokh (12,646 ft.), is quite

[1] *Dr. I. A. Güldenstädt's Beschreibung der Kaukasischen Länder*, edited by Klaproth, Berlin, 1834, p. 144.

definitely a part of 'Khokhi', as to which he proceeds to say that its 'conical snow-summit, from the south side of which the Terek takes its origin [so that "Khokhi" is here N. of the Terek sources], is nearly as high as Mqinwari [Kazbek, 16,516 ft.] which stands opposite Stephan-Tzminda, but is not so sharply pointed, ending in two tops which as already stated are joined by a saddle, one being to the north, the other more southerly. This gives it a great resemblance to Elbrus in the Western Caucasus.' [1] The only possible explanation of all this, to my mind, is that his 'double-peak' is in reality made up of the Zilga-khokh–Kaldasan massif on the S. and Siveraut on the N., his whole description being elaborated from the very imperfect cartographical material available in his time, plus Güldenstädt's list.[2] It would be foolish, of course, to dogmatize further as to what elements of truth there may or may not be in his 'most beautiful view' of 'Khokhi' and 'Mqinwari', seen from the main watershed two hours W. of the source of the Aragva. The physical features are there still, and pretty much as they were a century and more ago. Some enterprising traveller will, I hope, be found before many more years are past to verify Klaproth's statements on the spot.

He returns to Mleti and Tiflis down the Terek and over the Cross Pass, mentioning the various well-known names of villages on the left bank of the river, but without a word as to the Kasára gorge, a natural feature sufficiently remarkable to ensure that no traveller who passed that way could fail to notice it.[3]

My conclusion is that, while Klaproth may, *possibly*, have made the journey up the Ksan to Lomisa and thence to Mleti, and even reached the source of the Aragva, returning by the route that later on became the Georgian military road to Tiflis, he neither visited nor discovered the sources of the Terek; nor did he in any sense 'determine' the sources of the Ksan, the two Liakhvas, or the Ar-don.

It will have been noticed that the 'indescribable difficulties' of the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 282. Vakhusht had said that 'Khokhi' was higher than 'Mqinwari', in which, of course, he was wrong. Its highest point would be Tepli (14,510 ft.). The Maikop vase of the third millennium B.C. shows a humped or saddle-backed mountain supposed by some to be Elbrous. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks*, p. 128 (illustrations, p. 23).

[2] The 'indescribable difficulties' of Klaproth's Preface being on the banks of the Tsotsolta torrent within the bounds of his 'Khokhi'.

[3] See *ante*, p. 183 and note 1.

Preface are represented in the actual narrative by a 'fatiguing' three hours' climb to the head-waters of the Aragva; a 'very troublesome' half-hour's descent next morning to the Terek, followed by an hour's 'still worse going' up that river. The weather the first day was 'very favourable'; the second day 'fine but cold'; the natives were friendly throughout; the food supplies were ample; grog and Hungarian wine not wanting.

Freshfield going up the Zakka Pass from Resi in 1868 says: 'The path, a fairly marked one, steadily rose above the Terek, the highest source of which was now in sight, issuing from a small glacier at the base of Zilga Khokh, a fine peak at the point where the ridge over which our pass lay joins the watershed'.[1] That is the more southerly source. Engelhardt, on the other hand, tells us that from Resi his companion, Parrot, climbed up another 235 *toises* (*c.* 1,500 ft.) to the more northerly, and, according to him, both higher and more abundant of the two Terek sources, and there took a barometrical reading, which was checked by Engelhardt simultaneously below. Here are no heroics, no 'indescribable difficulties', no boast of 'discoveries', and in place of wine-bibbing antics we have scientific measurements.[2]

Engelhardt too, be it noted, instead of stealing from the 'Anonymous,' pays him the remarkable tribute: 'Wherever I have been able to test him, he has proved to be such a model of accuracy and truth that I repose the greatest confidence in him and prefer his information as to those peoples of the Caucasus known to him to that of all other travellers.'[3]

[1] *Central Caucasus and Bashan*, p. 216.

[2] *Reise in die Krym und den Kaukasus*, von Moritz von Engelhardt und Friedrich Parrot, 2 vols., Berlin, 1815, vol. i, pp. 181–2. Engelhardt (1779–1842) became a Professor at Dorpat University in 1820, Parrot (1791–1841), the following year. The latter determined barometrically the surface levels of the Black Sea and Caspian, and in 1828 made the first ascent of Ararat. Klaproth's 'Studirenden' is obviously meant as a sneer.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 241.

[4] In Egypt the Great Bear was usually represented as a bull's foreleg, the upper four stars supporting the thigh, the other three the lower limb. Now the four stars were the sons of Horus, and one might like to seek some affinity between them and the sons of our snowstorm goddess. But though Seth, the storm-god, plays his part, snow and Egypt are hard to reconcile. *J.E.A.*, vol. xviii, Pts. iii and iv, Nov. 1932.

X

THE GALGAIS (MOUNTAIN INGOOSHEE)

An ideal guide — Prince Khilkoff — Ingoosh hospitality — Punitive expedition — A mountain Deity — Spoon-divination — Blood-guilt and bride-price — An indignant hero — Towers, square and round — Greeks (?) — A robber's castle — A fearsome divinity — The point of honour — Shamil gains a wife — Tamerlane — Magic horses, magic swords — Seska-Solsa — The split-rock — A human eyrie — Silk-robe and donkey's girth — Tkhaba-erdá — Abkházoff — A notable family — Targhim legend — Mules' water — A drastic remedy.

I HAD long intended, as soon as an opportunity came, to pay a visit to the Galgais and Khevsours at least and, if time allowed, ride over the Main Chain through the country of the Pshavs and Tousheens to Tiflis.

On October 1st, 1901, accordingly, I set out on this expedition, accompanied by Ourousbi, his nephew Islam, and an Ingoosh friend of Ourousbi's, Taghee Koteeyeff, who had agreed to go with us as guide and interpreter for the moderate sum of Rs.2 a day, horse and man. He spoke Russian well and Khevsour sufficiently for my purposes, besides, of course, his own language, in more than one dialect. He proved to be a great acquisition, being good tempered, intelligent, full of information, and, what was vitally important in the mountains, in a position wherever we went to introduce us to the best and most representative people.

It was not a question of rank or class—none existed there—but of people well able to afford that hospitality which not even the poorest could refuse; who, above all, from their position and circumstances, might most reasonably be expected to supply the information I sought.

Heavy rain had fallen in the night of September 29th and the morning of the 30th was very unpromising—not a mountain visible, impenetrable mist all round—but towards 4 p.m. it began to clear, and soon the Table Mountain (Mat-khokh, 9,855 ft.) presented a remarkable sight, being covered with snow down to the wooded foot-hills, with bands of clouds above and below, while overhead the sky grew rapidly clear and bright. Next day the mountains in their robes of freshly fallen snow looked grander than ever I had seen them as we rode up the right bank of the Terek under a blazing sun past a guard-house of *militsioneri*—the mounted-police intended

to deal with brigands, and drawn, very sensibly, to some extent from their ranks. Some 'troops' were Ossetine, some Ingoosh.

Riding at one time close along the river we saw, across it, the motor-car in which Prince Khilkoff, Minister of Ways of Communication, was making the first attempt to cross the Caucasus by mechanical means. We were on the look out for it, as the talk in Vladikavkaz for days past had been of little else. I knew Prince Khilkoff, who was soon to distinguish himself so greatly in the Russo-Japanese War by his remarkable administrative and constructional work on the Siberian railway, but I had no use for Russian officials at that time, unless in connexion with the oil-fields, and then unwillingly, nor, indeed, for any human beings but my mountaineers; and I was well content when one of the prince's party pointed us out to him, probably as a picturesque group of native horsemen, who on that side of the river were likely to be brigands or little better.

The car, as we afterwards learned, surmounted the Cross Pass successfully, but reaching Mleti, the second post-station on the south side, then broke down, and had, I believe, to be towed ignominiously to Tiflis, literally by horse-power. This incident, as we rode along, led to stories of a 'Nart' carriage, which likewise moved of its own volition, the Narts being giants, heroes, even semi-supernatural beings, about whom many wonderful tales were told, as we have seen and shall see again.

We reached Fortaoukh, the first Galgai *aoul*, at 5.40 p.m. In many places on the way during the last few versts the road had been cut through clay thickly set with Terek stones, large and small—the porphyries, basalts, green-breccias, &c., of Kazbek, though at a height of some hundreds of feet above the river—clear evidence, seemingly, of Professor Abich's great mudstream of former times, while the same formation was present in places, especially just south of Fortaoukh, on the farther bank of the Kistinka or Arm-khi, where it occurred in flat terraces.[1]

Fortaoukh was a picturesque *aoul* perched on a narrow space high up between the Terek and the Arm-khi.[2] The houses, owing to

[1] Favre, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–8 speaks of this mudstream, quoting Abich, *Études sur les glaciers actuels et anciens du Caucase*, 1e partie, 1870, but only to doubt its existence.

[2] I use this name preferably because Kistinka is applied also to a smaller river a little farther south.

erosion, had barely standing-room, and on either side one looked straight down, a great depth, to the rivers foaming below. We claimed hospitality—cordially granted—from one of the Akhreeyeff family, a nephew of Tchakh Akhreeyeff, who wrote several invaluable papers on the Ingooshee, his countrymen,[1] and a friend of Taghee's. He declared that his grandfather had been laid to rest—not buried—in the big tomb visible from the house, and he appeared to believe that the Kabardáns dwelt here formerly,[2] as to which I will only say, at present, that the Ossetines, in like manner, affirmed that the Ingooshee once lived in their country, and other tribes followed suit—all agreeing in one thing, viz. that at some earlier date other people dwelt where they did then.

I heard here, in brief, the story of the massacre of the Orthodox Mission in 1831 which led to Baron Rosen's Galgai punitive expedition the following year. The chief missioner was a man of gigantic size; he had got as far as Khoulee with his companions when a Galgai named Khampie, of no less ample proportions, came over an eastward pass proclaiming that they must all be burnt alive!

The tower where the mission took refuge was set alight accordingly, and when the fat priest sallied forth he was promptly cut down with a sword, still (in 1901) in the possession of Khampie's son or grandson. So heavy was the hapless missionary that few horses could carry him; so fat that, as the natives told us with childish glee, no grass would grow for forty years on the spot where his body was burned.[3]

Since four years back the festival of Matsieli, the chief 'saint' or deity of Mat-khokh, not the Virgin Mary as Grabovsky and other writers have it,[4] but an old man with flowing beard,[5] had been abandoned owing to the interference of the fanatical *Zikrists*. Edji,

[1] See in *Gor.*, vol. iii, 'Burial and Commemoration Services of the Mountaineers', printed as an addendum to an article by N. F. Grabovsky, 'Economic and domestic life of the Mountain Ingooshee'; in *Gor.*, vol. iv, 'A few words on the heroes of Ingoosh Tales'; in *Gor.*, vol. v, (*a*) 'From Tchetchen Tales', (*b*) 'Ingoosh holidays', and in *Gor.*, vol. viii, 'The Ingooshee, their traditions and beliefs'.

[2] But maybe he referred only to Kabardán ancestry of his own and other Ingoosh families.

[3] So, too, at the 'Witches' Knowe.' *History of West Calder*, 1885, p. 38 *n.*

[4] *Gor.*, vol. iii, Grabovsky, p. 16. There were three several shrines on Mat-khokh, one of Miater-diala, hence perhaps the mistake.

[5] See a full description of the pilgrimage and pagan ceremonial in Tchakh Akhreeyeff's article, 'Ingoosh holidays', in *Gor.*, vol. v, and another in Dalgat (*a*).

our host, an elderly man,[1] speaking of this complained that there was no longer any feasting or jollification: no *arrack* brewed, no sheep slaughtered, no courteous invitations given. 'Indeed, what is the use of asking people in merely to eat maize *tchourek*? Say what you like, people don't love each other as they did.' He told us how his first-born son was all skin and bone up to the age of three. Lots were then cast in a spoon[2] to decide what saint to apply to, and three times the choice fell on Matsieli. So he gathered together his friends and relations, hired a nurse-girl from Beslan, and carried the child up to the shrine; all the way, that is, to the top of Mat-khokh.[3] The girl took him in by one door and out by another, as the *jretz* (official sacrificer) directed, and immediately the little fellow began to improve. By the time they got back to the *aoul* he was already much better; he grew rapidly well and strong, 'and there he is', said Edji, pointing to a fine well-grown man standing modestly in the doorway, who added solemnly the usual formula, 'I swear to God every word is true!'

In spoon-divination the idea was that one 'saint' or other had been angered and must be propitiated; so, to discover which, recourse was had to a wise woman, a sorceress, who cut slips of wood from a stick and marked them as representing Matsieli and others. They were then placed in a wooden spoon which was swung from side to side. The slips that first fell out a third time indicated the saint in question, in whose honour the offender promised to provide an extra sheep at the next annual sacrifice. The lots were then cast again, and if with the same result the woman declared that the propitiation was insufficient and yet another sheep was promised. Sometimes the spoon was first wrapped in cotton-wool and sunk in a bowl of water. If it turned, as it often did, the inquirer was assuredly in a state called 'kham', i.e. culpability towards some saint.

Ourousbi mentioned that the Ossetines called Fortaoukh 'Kalmako', from *kalm* a snake, whereupon Akhreeyeff said: 'That is so; three

[1] In Leonid Semenoff's article, 'Archaeological and Ethnographical Researches in Ingooshia in 1925–7' in No. 1 of *Izviestia Ingooshskavo naoutchno-issledovatelskavo Instituta Kraevedenia*, Vladikavkaz, 1928, referred to in future as *Izviestia* (Ing.), there is a portrait of Edji 'aged 89', so he would have been 62 or thereabouts in 1901.

[2] See for spoon-divination in two ways, *ibid.*

[3] The ascent is easy, so easy that Professor Zeydlitz rode up and down without dismounting either way.

brothers, Akhree, Lian, and Bor, lived not far off, but there were so many snakes in this immediate neighbourhood that no one dared to settle here, till Akhree at last ventured. The others, seeing that no harm came of it, followed his example. There are very few snakes here now.'

The Ingooshee are said to trace their descent from a certain Mago, who, coming from Syria, stayed first with the Chalybes on the Black Sea coast, next at Tatartoup on the Terek, and finally at Salghee where we shall presently come upon a ruined chapel or shrine called Maghi-erdá. He had with him a tame *serpent*, a small tame bird, and in a box three small stars. Evidently, says Professor B. A. Alboroff, Mago was a Chaldee, a Mage—as implied by his name.[1]

An Ingoosh 'Nart' story, that may well belong to Fortaoukh, tells how when Orzmi's (Ourysmag's) mistress, a married woman, died, he followed her body into the tomb, where seeing a serpent he killed it. A second serpent came forward, and by means of a certain herb revived its mate. Orzmi took the hint, and his beloved was restored to life. The husband then appeared and claimed her, but Orzmi refused to part with her, saying '*Your* wife died!' and married the lady.[2]

Among the Ingooshee the blood-wite was at this time Rs. 310, cash. Formerly it was 12 cows and 3 horses, besides 2 oxen for the feast of reconcilement. The blood-guilty one put a silver coin into a cup of milk, of which both he and the avenger drank—becoming thus sworn brothers—or else the guilty man sucked the breast of the dead man's mother, with the same result. We shall come upon these customs later on and learn more about them. In one *aoul* inhabited by families of little consideration (being descendants of slaves)[3] the blood-wite was only 6 cows and 2 horses.

The *kalim* or bride-price used to be 18 cows or the equivalent. Kounta-hadji[4] established it at Rs. 25 cash, and a 3 rouble sheep for the feast. The Russians once made all the young men and boys swear that they would neither take nor give more than Rs. 105

[1] *Izviestia* (Ing.), p. 367, article 'The Ingoosh "Galierdi" and the Ossetine "Alardi"', an article full of learning which, being no specialist, I cannot venture to criticize, doubtful as some of the arguments appear to be.

[2] Akhreeyeff, 'Ingooshee', *Gor.*, vol. viii, p. 34.

[3] See p. 265.

[4] See p. 264.

kalim, but none kept the oath, and the amount was now greater than ever.[1]

The Russian emperors gave Moslems in their service a gold Eagle instead of a St. George's Cross, for valour. During the last Turkish war (1877) an Ingoosh who was awarded an Eagle refused it indignantly, saying: 'Give me my *djighit* (cavalier, horseman). I want my *djighit*. Why you give me cock-a-doodle?'

October 2nd. At 6.30 a.m. we set out eastward from Fortaoukh by the upper road, which rises gradually to a considerable height, a lower one following up the Arm-khi with its windings. I secured a little-known view of Kazbek before reaching the next *aoul*, from a height of 3,900 feet (see Plate VIIIA), and soon after saw the first of the high towers far away below us. Others we saw at Gorak and Morgoutch, the latter with the Cross worked in the masonry.

At 12.20 p.m. we reached Arzee after a hot ride under a blazing sun through a very picturesque defile, grassy spurs from Mat-khokh running down on the north, wooded spurs from the schistose mountains on the south, every alternate spur on our side being crowned by an *aoul* with towers and other dwellings, the Arm-khi flowing, unseen, deep in the valley below. There were no Crosses on the Arzee towers, of which one was slightly leaning.[2] There were many tombs, several of them of bee-hive form, one of these at Fortaoukh and another here having groined vaulting inside. We received more than one pressing invitation to rest and feed on the way, but there was too much to see and do in the time at our disposal, so we contented ourselves with a scratch meal off our own provisions, during which Taghee told a story of a man who went to see a friend, a

[1] See Ourousbi's own case, p. 267. In 1915, at the Ossetine village of Ardon, resolutions were passed that Church lands should be the property of the village and that no payment should be exacted for religious rites. A solemn oath was also taken that no one should receive *kalim* to an amount exceeding Rs.100 under penalty of banishment with the stigma of theft: *Novui Vostok*, vols. 13–14. According to *Gell.* ii. 24, 14, Augustus tried to limit the expense of matrimony: Smith's *Dict. of Grk. and Rom. Antiq.*, vol. ii, p. 144—at end of article 'Matrimonium'.

[2] Grabovsky, in 1870, gave the measurement of the Arzee towers as, height 10–12 sazhens (70–84 ft.), base a square of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 sazhens (say $17\frac{1}{2}$–21 ft.), *Gor.*, vol. iii, p. 2. I. P. Shtcheblikin in a very detailed description of the Ingoosh towers in general and those of Arzee in particular gives *c.* 85 feet in height on a foundation of *c.* $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet square. *Izviestia* (Ing.), No. 1, pp. 271 sqq.

blacksmith, whom he found asleep in his smithy. Presently a black insect came out of his nostril, crawled down his body, and crossed a basin of water by some iron clips and disappeared down a crack in the ground. When the smith woke up he declared that he had dreamt of finding a vast treasure after crossing a bridge and entering a cavern. His friend thereupon, after pondering awhile, asked permission to build a tower on the site of the smithy and settle there.

This was granted, the tower built, the treasure found, and tradition says it is still there untouched. The principal family now at Arzee is that of Yandee, a name derived from their ancestor Yoand, the hero of this story, who in some versions is identified with Tamerlane.

I climbed into the most westerly of the Arzee towers by a perilous bridge composed of two decaying tree-trunks; then up three stories to the fifth and highest by ladders. The second story—counting the basement as the first—was the loftiest, its roof a groined vault with four equidistant strengthening ribs of stone down the four corners. The entrance was some 12 feet from the ground, and in this and other respects the resemblance to the Irish towers, though for the most part they are round and these square, is remarkable, as will be seen from the sectional drawings facing p. 229. One can hardly doubt that both were used for the same purposes—refuge and defence, which would not of course disallow the hand-bell ringing to church from the top-story openings, claimed, very definitely, as the chief purpose of the Irish towers by Professor Macalister.[1] As to this, having no expert qualification in the matter, I may yet be allowed to express a personal preference for an opinion, according to which the Irish towers were built by the monks 'for refuges from their enemies. . . . The top floor of the tower had always three or more windows; this was the watching room, and on the approach of an enemy the

[1] 'The Round Towers were nothing more and nothing less than the belfries of Christian Churches, which could be, and doubtless were, used on occasion as watch-towers and as keeps in troubled times when they were built.' *The Archaeology of Ireland*, 1928, p. 256. 'The topmost floor is the ringing-loft. The bells were not hung in the tower; they were hand-bells, rung out of the windows.' *Ibid.*, p. 257. The Towers in my Plate are those of Khanee; see p. 218. On another Plate will be found a sectional elevation of the Round Tower of Clondalkin, near Dublin (from George Petrie's *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*, 2nd ed., Dublin 1845, p. 397), together with a similar elevation, plans, and details of a representative Ingoosh 'fighting tower', taken, in part at least, from the towers at Arzee; see pp. 229, 230, and note.

watchman, *by the ringing of a bell* or other signal, gave the alarm to the rest of the brethren.'[1]

Ultimately, no doubt, in both cases the towers derived their origin from a common source in or about the Adriatic. The original builders of the Ingoosh towers were assuredly Christian; and it is significant that they, with the tombs and shrines (or chapels) of like construction, were, in my time at least, almost—not quite—invariably repudiated, in so far as building was concerned, by the people who for centuries past had inhabited those parts. 'They are not ours' was the usual statement, or 'They belonged to the people who were here before us'. But who those people were they could not say, though once an unusually sophisticated native told me 'They were built by the Greeks', an echo, perhaps, of some Russian conjecture but adopted by Tchakh Akhreeyeff. Not unnaturally, a Georgian origin has been attributed to them, but there are no prototypes in Georgia unless we count as one a tower in Ananour on the Aragva. As to their age, they were thought by some inquirers, Vertiépoff for instance, to belong to the eighth or even the sixth century A.D., but so far there was no certainty, nor is there any now, though the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are deemed more likely. They stand four-square, nobly erect, with the ten thousand and more feet of the Jurassic limestones on one side, the higher Central Range on the other, challenging the verdict of modern science which, even now, has not been rendered.[2]

The construction of the Arzee and other Ingoosh towers answered to that of the tombs and the chapels; whoever built these built those —that at least was the conclusion I came to. There were loopholes on each floor and fighting windows at the top, with store of stones still ready to be dropped on an enemy below, and outside, in some cases, it was said, withered right hands or the nails that had held them.

The stones of the walls were of different sizes, as we find in Saxon, Norman, and Early English buildings, and, as in these, they were laid in fairly regular courses, though not mathematically so, the

[1] *Ulster, its Archaeology and Antiquities*, by Henry Cairnes Lawlor, M.A., &c., Belfast, 1928, p. 92. The italics are mine.

[2] See *Gor.*, vol. viii, p. 6. Professor Vs. Miller in the *Mat. po Arch.* quotes from P. I. Golovinski in *Sbornik Svedenii o Terskoi Oblasti*, i, p. 247, to the effect that the Galgais by tradition attribute their towers to the Greeks, whom they call 'Djilati' or 'Djilini'.

cement or mortar being perfectly sound still. The corner stones were often notably larger than the rest. The tower I climbed belonged to the family Aldegouroff. It is interesting to hear that the Ingooshee were famous in old times as builders of fighting towers and of tombs, so much so that they were engaged for such purposes by the Ossetines;[1] but this must refer to the broader, lower, and more massive 'galouans' of Ossetia, where the slender, elegant Ingoosh towers were unknown.

We rode on to Belkhan, which consisted of one house and tower, a castle one may call it, differing in appearance from the rest, and belonging to Ourousbi's horse-stealing friend Bazirko, who to our great disappointment was 'not at home', though he had been there since our meeting the week before on the Georgian road. Ourousbi and I, after claiming hospitality for the night, left Islam there with the saddle-bags and rode up to *Verkhni* (Upper) *Khoulee*, where the massacre of the mission took place. Here, above even the upper *aoul*, is one house and the lower part of a tower, now ruined; and here on the very spot I heard the full story of the tragedy, told by a nephew of the fat priest's host who lost his life—as in duty bound—defending him, his wife getting a bullet through her cheek in the fighting, so that ever after, when she drank, some of the liquid trickled through the hole and down her chin. The family received in reward for their loyalty enough land for 8 *dyms* (literally 'smokes', i.e. households), free and for ever. All the rest of the inhabitants of Khoulee were driven out and their towers and houses destroyed—but, after some time, they were permitted to return.[2] Though nowhere so stated or even hinted at, so far as I know, the presence of the fat Orthodox priest at Khoulee may have been called for by pagan observances specially connected with that *aoul*, for hardly less important than Matsieli in Mountain Ingoosh estimation was Tamazherdá, his brother,[3] whose cave-dwelling was revealed to a man of the

[1] Kokeeyeff, *op. cit.*, p. 41; Yakovleff, *Ingooshee*, pp. 88–90.

[2] An amusing account of Baron Rosen's punitive expedition, already mentioned at Tsori, will be found in Tornau's *Recollections*, &c., published in the *Russki-Viestnik*, 1869. The author, Baron Theodor von Tornau, became a Lieut.-General in the Russian service. Miansaroff characterizes his memoirs as 'some of the best'. There is little foundation for the Bolshevik accusations of gross cruelty levelled quite recently against the Imperial troops employed on that occasion. *Izviestia* (Ing.), p. 52.

[3] According to Vs. Miller, St. Timothy (*Mat. po Arch.*, vol. i, p. 8), but this is denied

Borts family dwelling in Khoulee by the saint himself in form of a goat endowed with a human voice.[1] Tamazh-erdá more usually appeared as a dwarf riding on a pony not much larger than a goat; but when angered he became a giant fifteen times bigger than before, seated on a horse as tall as a tower! The pilgrimage and sacrifices were in his case similar to those made in honour of Matsieli, with the exception that everything had to be carried by hand, the path to the cavern being narrow and perilous. A rude iron cross there, imbedded in a stone, is apparently too far west to be that mentioned by the Anonymous in 1781 in a passage stolen as usual by Klaproth, who, moreover, interpolates the words 'beym Dorfe Wapila', bringing that village to the Assá, many miles east of its actual position.[2] Dalgat, indeed, speaks of three iron crosses in a small stone building. A little to the west of Khoulee was the Ghertchek Pass (7,281 ft.), leading northward to Tarskaya *stanitsa*. We rode back to Bazirko's castle for the night; the old father received us well and said he would give our horses oats, barley, and even wheat—anything he had—but the performance hardly equalled this promise. Meantime, however, Islam beamed again. His solicitude and care for the horses were admirable throughout. He was the very man for the place—not as guide or informant—he was too young for that and the young amongst the mountaineers had to be very, very modest—but as handy-man and groom. What we should have done without him I cannot think. The Ossetines, following, perhaps, the Kabardáns, were very particular as to cleanliness where their horses were concerned. It was held unlucky to start on a journey on a horse that had not been thoroughly washed. A man who rode a dirty horse was an object of derision. 'It was a matter of honour to keep arms and horses clean.'[3]

At and after supper many stories were told. Ourousbi and I were

by Dalgat, who quotes his centenarian informant 'Kazbuik' for the rendering 'winged spirit'. I may remark, however, that the Ingooshee must have acquired the idea of wings from some extraneous source, and from none more probably than a Christian. Dalgat's spelling is Tamuizh, 'Pervobuitnaya Relighiya Tchetchentseff', Bashir Dalgat (B.K.D.), in *Terski Sbornik*, Vladikavkaz, 1893. I will call this 'Dalgat (*a*)' to distinguish it from a subsequent article 'Dalgat (*b*)', in *Etnogr. Obozr.*, Moscow, 1901, vol. xlviii, pp. 35–85. See p. 216 n. and Bibliography.

[1] So, too, in the story of Koloi-Kant, vol. i, pp. 250 sqq.

[2] *Tagebuch*, p. 35; *Reise*, vol. i, p. 613.

[3] *Gor.*, vol. v, 'Oss. Nart Tales', p. 40 n.

Bazirko's Castle

great smokers, and on one occasion, when we were lying out on a bleak mountain-side, we were dismayed to find that neither of us had even one cigarette left! We were so hard put to it at last that we actually cut up dry grass with our *kinjals*, made cigarettes with the blank edges of an old newspaper and—I will not say smoked, but —puffed at them, and vowed that they were better than nothing![1] Telling this story to our host he capped it with that of Akhverdi Mahomá and his pipe. Shamil, it seems, who had made smoking a capital offence, was opposite Mozdok, on the Terek, one day, when he spied a beautiful Armenian being driven in a phaeton on the farther bank. The dread leader, who, like Muhammad before him, had a weakness for pretty women, dared any one to cross the Terek and capture the lady for his harem. Akhverdi offered to make the venture on condition that if successful he might smoke a pipe ever after without offence. To this Shamil agreed, the deed was done, and the fair captive, Shouanet, became his favourite wife.[2]

Tamerlane's son.

Taghee was of the family Barkin-Khoi, of Koumuik origin. He now told us how it was that his ancestor came to settle in the Galgai country. Barkin had three sons of his own, but not content with that stole a son of Tamerlane's when the latter was resting between Kisliar and Khasaf-yourt. He hid him nine years in a copper trunk, during which time Tamerlane roamed the world making canals and dykes wherever he went so that the child if he came on one might find his way home.[3] After nine years the boy was allowed out as herd to Barkin's horses. Barkin's wife, who used to take him his

[1] So, too, at Kut, towards the end of the siege, the British troops were reduced to smoking tea-leaves and grass. E. H. Keeling, *Adventures in Turkey and Russia*, London, John Murray, 1924, p. 33—including a boat-escape worthy of an Argonaut.

[2] See *Conquest*, p. 456, for the lovely lady's not unhappy fate.

[3] There is a 'Tamerlane's dyke' in Tchetchnia (see pp. 17, 41; *Gor.*, vol. vi; and under 'Laudayeff' in Bibliography); and, traditionally, all the way from the Caspian to the Black Sea. Some sources speak of raised walls, most of hollow channels. In English we use Dyke for both, witness Grim's Dyke in South Oxfordshire, between Mongewell and Nuffield, a wall in the open, a hollow in the woodland. Dyke and ditch, *vallum* and *fossa*, indeed, imply one another. Dalgat (*b*, pp. 73–7) summarizes four variants of the Tamerlane's Dyke story and adds a fifth. In one version Tamerlane, after rebuilding the ruined city of Baylakan in one month, dug a canal 20 miles long and 15 cubits broad in another, to supply it with water from the Araxes.

dinner, found him one day weeping, with a horse's skull on a stick before him. She told her husband, who when evening came asked the boy why? 'It was a magic horse (*bogatirski kon*, lit. a hero's horse), but not recognized as such by its master, who so ill treated it that it died.' 'Then you know a magic horse when you see one?' 'Yes.' 'And a *voltchok* blade?'[1] 'Yes.' Then Barkin went to the high-road, where an army was passing, made a *balagan* (wigwam, shelter of boughs) and sat there with the boy, asking him continually about the swords and the horses of those who passed that way; but always the answer was that they were not magic horses, not *voltchok* blades. At last, when the whole army had passed, an ill-dressed, badly armed man, on a sorry-looking steed came lagging behind, and the boy exclaimed: 'There, that's a magic horse, and that a *voltchok* blade!' So Barkin stopped the soldier and offered him a silver-sheathed sword and a good horse in exchange for his own. The man thought himself mocked, as he could not even keep pace with his comrades. Finding, however, that it was not so, he took the sword and horse and went on his way rejoicing, while Barkin rode home with the boy. At Agabos (W. of Ersh) the boy told him that he must let the horse go to the mountain pastures and remain there for three years unridden; and three other horses must be sent with him and all fed the same way. At the end of each year one of the three must be killed and the bones inspected. All was done as the boy counselled. When twelve months had passed a horse was killed and his bones found full of marrow. When the second horse was killed there was very little marrow. The third horse's bones were solid. The boy seeing this said: 'Now let us catch the magic horse and ride him.' It was the Feast of Bairam and races were being run. The boy, whose sword had, meantime, been silver-sheathed and mounted, took the first prize three times in succession on his magic horse, and the third time, shouting to the assembled multitude 'Farewell!' was off like the wind. Barkin straightway pursued him with all his best horses, but when a grey one came near him the boy rode over the rocks, when a bay, he made straight for the sunlight, when a black right up the wind, and in each case regained his lead. When Barkin saw that he could never hope to overtake him he called out, begging him to stop for three words only. 'Now, tell me why it is you act in this

[1] See Suppl. Note on Swords, at end of chap. xvi.

strange way?' Said the boy: 'Grey horses have thin hoofs and the rocks hurt them; bays have thin skulls and the sun frizzles their brains; blacks have flowing manes and tails and the wind stops them.' Then the boy rode off, and came to Tamerlane, but neither knew the other. There were big barracks in that place, where soldiers lived in great numbers, with many swords on the walls and many horses in the stables. When the boy put up his sword on one of the walls all the others came clattering down. When he stalled his horse in a stable all the others broke loose and fled.[1] Tamerlane when told said: 'Of a truth this must be a magic horse and the sword a *voltchok* blade.' So he took a bag of gold coins and sent it round to all his army to see if any one could tell at sight the amount and value. Various guesses were made, but none correct. Then Tamerlane asked if every one had tried, and he was told all but one boy who lay asleep, wrapped in his *bourka*. The conqueror sent for the boy and asked him what the coins were worth. The answer was 'A gun-barrel full of grain in famine-time'. Then he recognized him as his son, inquiries were made, and the whole story came out. Tamerlane marched to Goulree near the Soundja; Barkin fled to the *Barkin poliana* (field) near Tarsky, and later to Kart, where he claimed hospitality of the Kists and built a tower which is still there. Taghee ended, solemnly, with the usual asseveration: 'This is an absolutely true story in every particular, I swear to God!'[2] Tamerlane's armies, I may mention, took Tiflis by assault in the winter of 1386–7, and again in 1393, when all Kartli and Kakheti were utterly devastated. In 1395 he defeated, again, his rival Toktamuish, the Kiptchak Khan, on the Terek.[3]

Later, Taghee told, with great gusto, the story of Khotchbar of Ghidatl and his fiery fate at Khounzakh, much as I have printed it already.[4]

[1] We are reminded of that eerie cavern in the Eildon hills with its long ranges of stalls in each of which a ghostly horse stood motionless, while at its feet an armed man lay not less still and ghostly. But at a blast from a magic horn the dead arose, their armour clashed, the horses stamped and shook their bits—presaging Sheriffmuir! Scott, *Demonology and Witchcraft*, 1830.

[2] This and the previous story of the blacksmith are given as one by Tchakh Akhreeyeff (*Gor.*, vol. viii) and with considerable variations. I think my versions are as effective and in any case they are what I heard myself, without alteration or adornment.

[3] See vol. ii, p. 228; and, for Tamerlane's invasions of Georgia, W. E. D. Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–5.

[4] *Conquest*, p. 483.

We were up at 6 a.m. next day (Oct. 3rd), the weather again being fine. I have to admit that the food here was poor; no mutton, only a chicken, and that a tough one; from notorious robbers I expected better fare, and probably if Bazirko himself had been there we should have done well enough. I heard afterwards that he was very sorry to have missed me, and hoped I would come again. We then rode up to Salghee, took photographs, and came back to the ravine, having missed a curious 'shrine', on a wooded spur, opposite, of which I had bought a photograph from Ragouzinsky. Leaving our horses below, Ourousbi and I walked up, under a very hot sun, to the top of this spur, a long rib of stratified rock, and again took several photographs. We came first to a chapel or shrine called 'Maghi-erdá', built like the rectangular tombs but 34 feet long, by 16 feet broad, by 15 feet high, approximately, with arched groining half-way through the interior and the remains of a stone altar. There were the usual evidences of pagan sacrifice, *tour* and other horns, wooden cups, &c., and a little farther on was an open half-ruined tomb with two skulls and other human remains exposed to view. A heap of stones showed where another tomb had fallen in; and at the farthest and highest point of the ridge was a tomb or 'shrine' inscribed by Ragouzinsky on his photograph (Vertiépoff's) 'Seska-Solsi', 6 feet square with a dividing wall inside. Seska-Solsi (Seska-Solsa, Soska-Solsa) in the Tchetchen legends was one of the bad giants, the Orkhoustoitsi, not a Nart, so not, one would imagine, very likely to have had anything to do with this shrine; but the Ingoosh and Tchetchens took their Narts, at least, from the Ossetines and played strange tricks with them.[1]

The ground fell away abruptly from this point, but near by, on

[1] Dalgat, who had it from an Ingoosh centenarian in 1892, tells us that Soska-Solsa helped only his own relatives, the Orshtkhoes (*sic*). 'All the Orshtkhoes in general robbed and ill-treated other people.' See his article, which I call 'Dalgat (*b*)', 'Stranitchka iz sievero-kavkazskavo bogatirskavo eposa', &c., B. K. Dalgat, in *Etnographeetcheskoye Obozrenie*, 1901, No. 1, Moscow. I must remark, however, that on p. 40 the same writer declares that the Ingooshee count Soska-Solsa a saint, and certainly his Ossetine equivalent, Soslan, held that position until quite recently in Digoria. Moreover, in one Ingoosh tradition Soska-Solsa is the Son of God, Jesus Christ himself, so Akhreeyeff supposed. Speaking generally, the confusion between Narts and Orkhoustoitsi and the conflicting estimates of their respective qualities and characters make any attempt to get clear ideas on the subject extremely difficult; the best I can do for my readers is to refer them to Professor Dumézil's excellent book; but see farther on, p. 251 and note.

various ledges, were a ruined square tower and other remains, one building having a rounded end on the east side, probably the wall of an apse. The position here was wonderfully fine, with the mighty cliffs and pinnacles of Gai Komd to the north, and a full view of Salghee with its towers in between, while to the south rose forest-clad mountains, the slopes of which were sprinkled with freshly fallen snow. The dimensions and nature of the rock-rib itself may best be gathered from the accompanying illustration, in which the ruined tower can just be detected behind the trees on the right.

At Lialakho, to which we came next, was a tomb larger than most. Near it was a rectangular monument built on a base in form of a cross, some 2 feet square and roofed like the tombs.[1] At Khanee, between Salghee and Lialakho, a tower with crosses was in very perfect preservation (see plate facing next page).

We now rode by an upper path, the usual and lower one being out of repair and too dangerous to risk the horses on—one had been lost there lately—to a point some 150 feet above the pass on the ridge Kodjar-Dogoushti or Toumgai, between the Arm-khi and Assá valleys, and there ate our lunch in the open. The height of the pass is 6,000 feet. Before us spread a grand panorama of mountains, the white dome of Kazbek again being visible in the west, and a vast succession of snow ridges sloping down towards us from the ranges on the south, thickly forested from not far beneath the snow-line. The rock-face of Gai-Komd, terminating in a pinnacle 10,444 feet high, rose immediately behind us, not 200 yards away, as a nearly perpendicular wall of over 4,000 feet. Eastward, above the head-waters of the Toba-tchotch—or Azi-khi—was the pass over which I had ridden when coming from Ami that spring; westward beyond the Georgian road were the passes to Sanibá and beyond. On the way down we visited another ruinous church or chapel of similar construction to the 'Seska-Solsa', on a wooded spur above Kart. The length of this building was 30 feet by 9 feet, inside measurement, divided by two vaulted ribs into three equal parts, and with holes in the masonry, some with heads of wooden beams still in them. Apparently, if all were used for flooring, they would divide the building into four stories vertically, but perhaps they supported shelves or galleries only. A further room at the east end was 6 feet

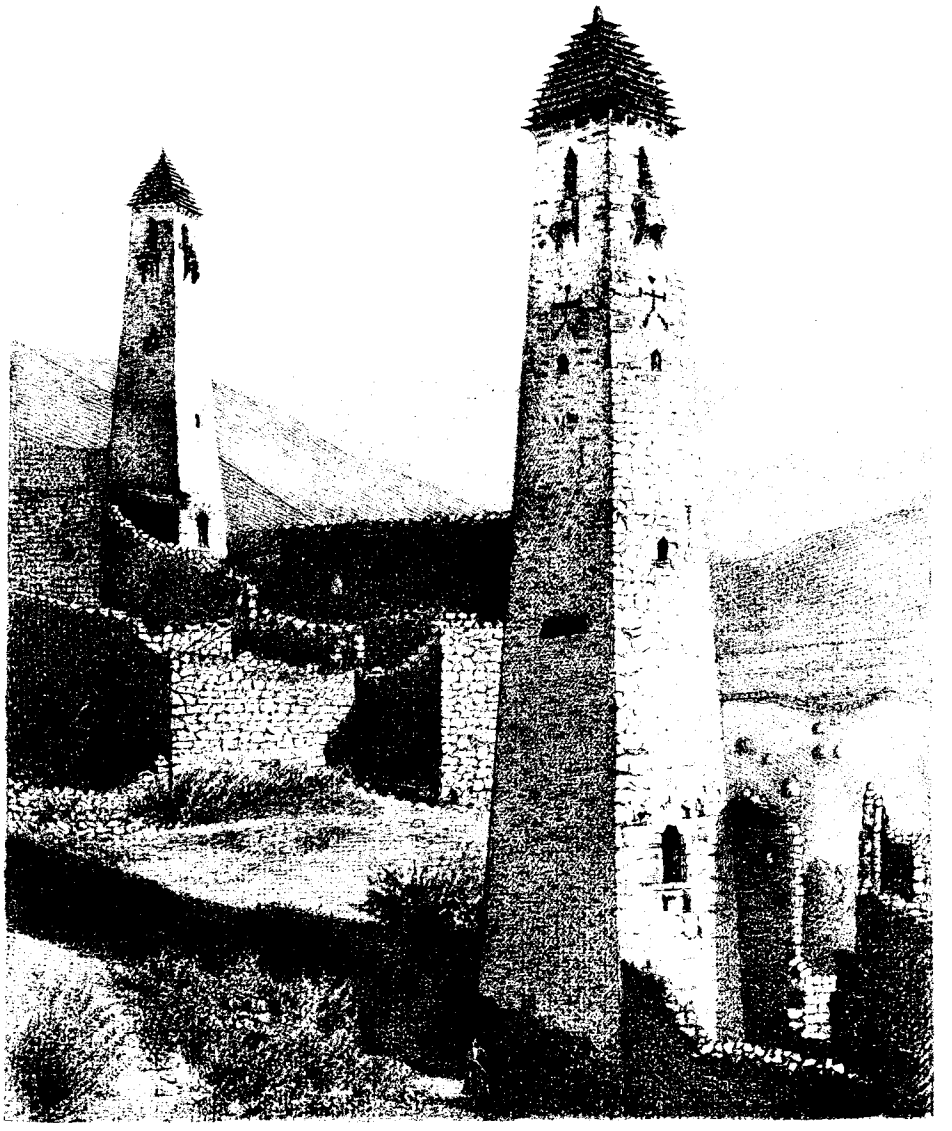
[1] For a similar pillar in Digoria see vol. ii, p. 142.

long and the same width as the rest of the building.[1] We rode down below Kart, to where the Assá defile begins, in order to look at the split rock or boulder with remains of twin castles on it. Unluckily my remaining plates jammed, so I was unable to photograph it, but I made a rough sketch from on horseback and later secured some panoramic films. Turning back and crossing the river we next passed Targhim, notable for its four well-preserved towers, one of them with the cross; and as we rode along Taghee told us the story of the human eyrie visible high up the mountain-wall to the left of the Assá. One Ingoosh, it seems, had killed another whose brother, the avenger of blood, pursued him mercilessly. So he built himself this remarkable dwelling—remarkable, that is, for its almost inaccessible position—and here thought himself secure. But the brother, a cunning fellow, wrapped himself up in a bearskin and crawled grumbling and growling up the mountain side. When the guilty man saw him he went inside his dwelling to fetch his gun, thinking to find an easy prey, and meantime the avenger ensconced himself behind a rock. When his victim came out again he shot him dead.

It was at Targhim that, on one occasion, all the Mountain Ingooshee, moved by some madness, gathered together to choose a prince to rule over them. Till then they had guarded their democratic independence jealously. All came to the meeting with one exception, the most noted man amongst them, and upon him, very naturally, the choice fell. Three times they summoned him to hear their decision and become their ruler. He refused to budge, but at last made his appearance dressed in a magnificent silk *khalat*, belted with a donkey's girth! When asked the reason, he said: 'Well, why not? What is the objection?' It was explained that in the opinion of the assembly a donkey's girth, to say the least of it, went very ill with a silken robe. 'And so,' said he, 'would a prince with the Ingoosh people!' and indeed the Tchetchens and Ingooshee have ever been democratic to an extreme degree, ignoring class and rank though not merit. The attempt to establish princely rule failed.

Riding on up the right bank of the Assá to near its junction with the Toba-tchotch, we came presently to the scattered ruins of

[1] See Champneys (Arthur), *Irish Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 1910, pp. 195–6, for Irish churches with two and even three stories and others with dwelling-rooms at either and, but more usually the west, mostly above the ground floor, but not always.



Towers at Khanee

Khairakh, and amidst them what was left of the Christian (Georgian) church, known by its native name of Tkhaba-erdá, which has usually been translated 'the 2,000 saints', though wrongly, according to the latest authorities.[1] This edifice, long one of the best preserved of Christian monuments in the Northern Caucasus, had quite recently suffered serious dilapidation at the hands of the *Zikrists*, and soon after my visit—so, at least, I heard—such as remained of the sculptured stones were removed for safety's sake to the Museum at Vladikavkaz. Luckily, in 1886 Professor Vsevolod Miller had carefully examined the building, and his conclusions, together with plans, sections, drawings, dimensions, &c., may be seen in vol. i of the Moscow Archaeological Society's noble series on the Archaeology of the Caucasus. A freehand sketch of the building is, unlike the rest of the illustrations, very rough, and can never have been accurate, but it serves to show how rapid was the devastation, due mainly to Mussulman fanaticism, directed not only against Christianity but against paganism; for, in the case of Tkhaba-erdá, as in many others, the native population had for centuries attached to it a whole jumble of superstitious rites and beliefs, in which Christianity had very little part. A photograph, one of M. Vertiépoff's series, shows the roof fallen in, and little of the sculpture remaining; it is, I fear, beyond doubt that Tkhaba-erdá, which according to the Georgian expert, Mr. D. Z. Bakradze, who visited it in 1871, dated—doubtfully, it is true—from A.D. 830, is now not even a ruin.[2]

The church itself, without the annexes on either side, of which the meaning was unknown, measured 56 feet in length by 24½ feet in breadth, with walls 2⅗ feet thick; and the body of it, apart from the chantry, was divided by three pointed archways into four equal parts. The local Galgais took advantage of this to assign each part to a separate *aoul*, or family, whose members there brewed beer and slaughtered the sacrificial animals for the yearly festival, which was held on St. Thomas's day, though perhaps without any original dedication of the church to that saint.

The situation of Tkhaba-erdá, on a flat promontory between the two rivers, with smooth green hills all round, backed by the great ranges, north and south, was an enchanting one; and it is sad, indeed,

[1] 'Saint of the 2,000', i.e. dwellers in this valley, is one, doubtful, alternative.

[2] For Bakradze see Bibliography.

to think that when so much had survived even to our own time, in a few years all should have been fanatically destroyed.

As a matter of course, this, like nearly all old churches in the Northern Caucasus, was attributed to Tamára, but whether or no Mr. Bakradze's reading of the inscribed date—and he himself was uncertain about it—is correct, the original Tkhaba-erdá may well have seen more than one century out before the Great Queen ascended her throne (A.D. 1184).

It was inevitable that the existence of such a shrine as Tkhaba-erdá within 25 versts of the Georgian road should excite the curiosity of travellers. Güldenstädt, writing in early March 1770, expressed his regret that the abundance of snow prevented his intended visit. He had heard of inscriptions, sculptures, and, in a crypt or vault, even manuscripts.[1] The author of the *Tagebuch* gives, as we should expect, an admirable description of his visit to the Galgais and to Tkhaba-erdá in 1781. His route lay up the Kambileyevka and across the ridge to the Assá, the latter part of it, reversed, the way I rode in the spring of 1901 on my way down from Ami. It was a difficult journey in those old times and in his case a dangerous one. He makes particular mention of what I call the split-rock passage where the Assá first cuts through the limestones. From this point the Galgai (Schalcha) valley opened out, but on the west side before it did so was 'the well-known cavern with the iron cross to which pilgrimage is made at the end of the harvest'.[2] The cultivable land was so scanty and so valuable that whole families quarrelled over it and ruined themselves for a scrap 1 foot wide.[3] They kept pigs—proof positive that Islam never prevailed there—and other domestic animals.[4] Of Tkhaba-erdá he gives a good description, both of the building and of the sculpture, with correct dimensions. Books and other Church treasures, including a golden candlestick, and uncorrupted bodies, male and female, were said to be buried in the aforesaid crypt or vault outside the church itself, to be reached only through nine successive doors; he tried to get at them but the attempt

[1] *Reisen*, &c., vol. i, pp. 151, 480.

[2] This I have already referred to at Khoulee; see *ante*, p. 212.

[3] For similar statements see vol. ii, pp. 69–70 and 212.

[4] Zeydlitz, N. K., tells us that in the 'fifties of last century the Galgais still kept large herds of swine, *Izv.*, vol. ii, p. 162 (Excursion to the Galgai and Djerakh valleys).

nearly cost him his life, so angry were the people at such sacrilege. There is pathos, surely, in this passionate veneration of Christian relics by a people long purely pagan, even if the original cult was that of some primitive god or goddess. His guides refused to take him farther, south or east, the danger being too great. As it was he escaped with difficulty over the Ghertchek Pass (7,281 ft.) to the Gherghe river, after once being shot at.[1] Yet with characteristic fairness he adds that the Ingooshee might easily be won over by good treatment, and, indeed, were loyal enough until they were themselves deceived.

Next comes Klaproth, who declares that he was kept from visiting Tkhaba-erdá by Count Ivélitch, Governor of Vladikavkaz, 'a great friend and protector of all the neighbouring robber-princes, with whom he divided the booty they took from the Russians'. This was in 1807.

At Mozdok Jesuit fathers gave him 'in exchange for more useful books' two tattered Greek liturgical manuscripts, on smoothed cotton-paper, which had been obtained by a Capuchin missionary when on a visit to the Ingooshee. He vouchsafes no further information as to what should have been a find of no little importance. Incidentally he gives the terminal dates of Tamára's reign as A.D. 1171–98, instead of 1184–1212, as usual. He attempts to explain this by the Georgian Chronicles in a note to page 9 of his edition of Güldenstädt's *Beschreibung*, &c., Berlin, 1834, where, however, he advances the date of her accession to 1178.

In 1811 the two Dorpat *alumni*—students, Klaproth calls them —Parrot and Engelhardt were in the Caucasus, and being desirous of visiting Tkhaba-erdá entered into negotiations with the Ingooshee settled on the Kambileyevka, who maintained close intercourse with their relatives the Galgais. Difficulties were made, but eventually it was arranged that one of the travellers only should be allowed to make the journey and he must be armed and habited as an Ingoosh. Engelhardt, therefore, set out on September 12–24th, 1811, with five of the natives, besides two interpreters assigned to him by General Del Pozzo, the new Governor of Vladikavkaz, one of them an Ossete, the other an Ingoosh. Incidentally he mentions that Klaproth had described villages as still inhabited, the people of

[1] *Tagebuch*, 1781, pp. 31–44.

which had before his time been transferred to Nazran, and explains, correctly, that Klaproth was merely plagiarizing from the *Tagebuch*. His guides introduce him to the Galgais as an agent of Del Pozzo's, charged to make peace and secure hostages. He gives a full account of Tkhaba-erdá, illustrated by a plan, six views, drawings of some of the sculptures, and various inscriptions, in one of which, strange to say, he, or perhaps his engraver, transforms sundry Georgian letters into Arabic numerals—thus, 77476![1] Finally, we have Vs. Miller's account, profusely illustrated, dating from 1886;[2] a great improvement but likewise not without mistakes. Klaproth, as usual, gets credit for information stolen from the *Tagebuch*; and on the strength of the model of a church sculptured in relief above the west door we are told that Tkhaba-erdá once had drum and cupola. There is no other evidence of that having been the case and as some of the accompanying reliefs, &c., are obviously out of place—the stone bearing one important inscription from which Mr. Bakradze got his very doubtful date 'A.D. 830' is turned on end—it seems likely that the model represents either an earlier state of the building or a different one altogether. This may well be, for, like certain detached bits of sculpture found near by and likewise figured by Engelhardt, this fragment seems ruder in style and workmanship than other carved stones of the church itself. Zeydlitz says positively that the church was built out of the remains of one dating from Tamára's time.[3] I think, rather, that the existing church dated from then, but incorporated fragments of a church older still. However, I am no expert on Georgian or, indeed, any Church architecture.

In addition to these peaceable journeys of scientists and others there were military expeditions against the Galgais in 1830 and again in 1832, in the first of which, at least, Tkhaba-erdá came under notice. The second, under General Baron Rosen, has been referred to already in speaking of Tsori.

Abkházoff's Expedition of 1830.

The expeditionary force under Prince Abkházoff in 1830, against the Kists, first, and after them the Tagaour and Kourtati Ossetines, numbered 2,065 men, mostly infantry (of the Sevastopol and Rifle

[1] *Op. cit.*, Plate VI. [2] In vol. i of *Mat. po Arkh.*, Moscow, 1888.
[3] Zeydlitz, *Izv.*, vol. ii, p. 162.

regiments), with 4 three-pounder mountain-guns and 4 small coehorns. The troops left Vladikavkaz in two columns on the 8th of July, the right, under Abkházoff himself, along the left bank of the Terek, then across a bridge 10 versts higher up and so to 'the Djerakhs and Kists', meeting considerable opposition. The *aoul* Obin was taken by storm and also the bridge over the river Kistinka (Arm-Khi) after a very difficult march. Most of the villages were empty, but in some the people made an attempt at defence. They soon, however, submitted, and on the 14th of July, at Targhim on the Assá, took the oath of allegiance, the Ak-sakals (White-beards) touching with their left hands the regimental colours while with the right they dipped a finger in the ink and made marks where their names were written down by interpreters. The modern science of finger-prints would have lent these 'signatures' a higher value.[1]

Meantime, the left-hand column, led by General von Blaramberg, who is my only authority for the expedition,[2] marched along the right bank of the Terek, crossing the Konkur, then by narrow paths through thick forest and up the beautiful valley of Tarsk to bivouac on a height commanding the whole surrounding country. No tents or other luxuries were taken; soldiers and officers alike slept wrapped in their cloaks on the thick grass, by starlight and moonlight. There was no road and the way was very difficult, just narrow paths along the slopes of the mountains or the banks of the mountain torrents. Blaramberg rode in front with the guides, friendly natives, and

[1] In a very interesting contribution to *The Times* (Jan. 9, 1933) by Sir John Moylan mention is made of 'the use in India of an inked finger-tip as a method by which illiterates could make their mark *(tepsai)* and the practice of Chinese bankers in using a thumb impression to identify a bank-note with its counterfoil'.

[2] *Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des Kaiserlich Russischen General-Lieutenant Johann von Blaramberg, Nach dessen Tagebüchern von 1811–1871 herausgegeben von Emil von Sydow*, &c., 3 volumes, Berlin, 1872. In a dedication to his children the author states that his family came from the Netherlands, from Lierre, SE. of Antwerp. In 1570 every member of it with the exception of two boys was executed by order of Alba. From these two descended the author and the French line of Blarambergs, some of whom were renowned as miniaturists. Unluckily, during the Terror, the French Blarambergs burned all their family papers to escape the guillotine. He gives many details of family biography, and signs himself Jean Moret de Blaramberg. Professor Rostovtzeff tells us that a French emigrant Blaramberg 'was a man of great energy and wide vision: we are indebted to him for some interesting publications, and above all for the foundation of the most important museums in South Russia—those of Odessa and Kerch.' *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, Oxford, 1922.

showed them where the guns must be taken to pieces and carried on men's shoulders. It was wild and beautiful scenery, through which Russian troops now made their way for the first time. On the height of Bogotur they had the sublime spectacle of a thunderstorm beneath them, they having attained a height of 1,000 feet above the plain. Thence they descended into a defile intending to storm the height of Sugu-lam which the enemy, seemingly, meant to defend. But when the sharp-shooters outflanked them they fled.

The last day of the march before rejoining the right column was the most difficult. The night was spent on a lofty rock-plateau only 12 versts from Abkházoff's camp. It was cold, though in July, and there was no wood for either camp or watch-fires. They started again at 5 a.m. and only at 10 p.m., worn out by the 17 hours' march, reached the camp at Targhim. Their way, of course, lay up the valley of the Assá. In places guns and horses had to be lowered over the cliffs by ropes.

On the 15th of July the troops rested, but von Blaramberg and some others employed the time in visiting ruins of Christian churches, fording the Assá.

'All the churches visited were built in the Byzantine [? Georgian] style; we could see still the remains of the altar iconostases and of Greek crosses carved on the walls, as also of bas-reliefs over the doorways, displaying the figure of the Virgin Mother. The mountaineers stand in some awe of these ruins, which they look upon as holy. Unfortunately I lost my sketch of the church-ruin at Targhim'—probably the one described above on page 217, as von Blaramberg forded the Assá from Targhim to visit it.

On the 17th the united columns began the return march to the Terek. The village Survan (Shan) was burnt, as the inhabitants had sent in neither their elders nor hostages in lieu of them to Targhim. At Obin the advance-guard was met by flint-gun fire from the one remaining tower which stood at the edge of a deep ravine and was built up in three stories. Von Blaramberg received orders to blow it up and succeeded in doing so, the defenders all being killed except one, who was rescued from the ruins and exiled, eventually, to Siberia. He was a giant Kist, a renowned robber named Markus Bekayeff, who talked Russian fairly well.

The Kists had been quite confident that the tower, which was only

approachable on one side, could never be taken. They defied the Russians, holding up casks of beer and loaves of *tchourek* to show that they were amply provisioned! Except in Obin, Survan, and Baïna the inhabitants remained in the villages.[1] Strict discipline was maintained and none were hurt. The Terek was reached on July 20th after a very hard march, thanks to the rain, and as the weather showed no sign of improving the expeditionary force returned to Vladikavkaz, to set out again after a brief delay on its further task of subduing the Tagaour and Kourtati Ossetines.[2]

We reached Puÿ at 5.25 p.m. and I was welcomed most cordially by Bounakho, at whose house I had spent a night that spring. He had been absent, then, himself, but his wife recognized me at once, though I now wore the *tcherkeska*. Conversation, as usual, soon turned upon local customs, and Ourousbi said that the Ossetines, like the Ingooshee, killed sheep and cattle by compass, turning the victim's head to the south; otherwise neither the so-called 'Orthodox' nor the Muhammadans of these tribes would touch the flesh though starving. He related the case of an ox which had fallen ill of cattle plague and had to be slaughtered. It was a heavy beast, too heavy to be turned the right way by the two or three men present, so no one would eat of its meat—which was perhaps just as well! Taghee chimed in with '*eto otchen khorosho*'! (That 's very right!)

The castles on the split rock were said to have belonged to the Khatagazi family, but somewhat doubtfully; I heard this again, however, at other places;[3] they now dwelt on the plains, and, having taken to brigandage, some of them had been killed, others exiled to Siberia. I take from Professor N. Yakovleff,[4] as follows, the local

Targhim legend.

There were once three brothers, Eghee, Khamkhee, and Targhim, whose father dwelt in the valley of the Assá. When dying he called his sons and asked them what they were able to do and what occupation each one would choose. The youngest, Targhim, said 'I can make wooden churns'. 'Then I give you my house; live here and be

[1] It was from Baïna (Baïn-seti) that the Matsieli pilgrimage started.

[2] *Ante*, pp. 146–8, 193. [3] See p. 248. [4] *Ingooshee*, 1925, p. 99.

a farmer.' The next son, Khamkhee, said, 'I can make bows and I love the chase'. So his father allotted him the surrounding mountains. The eldest son, Eghee, said, 'Well, for my part I want a place by the river where I can keep my horse clean and entertain guests, nothing more', and his father gave him the meadows on the bank of the river Assá. Here, then, in the chief valley of Ingoushetia the brothers built their towers and held in their grip the whole route from the mountains to the plains. All who passed that way or drove cattle through their territory must pay them tribute in the form of live-stock or ammunition. Thus, for each man and for every head of cattle they took one bullet and one charge of powder.

'Little by little the brothers and their descendants became rich, the population increased, and the villages were named after them Eghee-Kal, Khamkhee, and Targhim. In alliance with the neighbouring families, the Berkinkhoyeffs, Yevloyeffs, and the Ferta-Shoyouli, the descendants of the three brothers, or "families of the three villages", extended their sway by force of arms over a whole series of other tribes, the Feppintsi, Akkintsi, &c.' On one occasion a man of Akki (i.e. Kei or Kii) with his band refused to pay the tribute or toll. Eghee thereupon mounted his battle-steed and, followed by his men, attacked the insolent rebel, and drove him into the Assá, where he was drowned. Seven of his men were also slain and three of Eghee's; a blood-feud was declared and settled by payment of 12 cows for each of Eghee's men killed but 6 only for each of the Akkintsi, which demonstrated clearly the great superiority of the former—each of whom was worth two of the enemy!

Evidently, though Professor Yakovleff says nothing about it, the families holding the 'three villages' must have owned or controlled the castle on the split rock.

Of Targhim's fate in recent times he writes (describing an illustration) 'Four "fighting-towers" of four families, descendants of Targhim, are here seen, together with "dwelling-towers", some of them in ruins. As a result of migration to the plain in 1921 there were left only three households [*dvori*] in all the village '.[1]

Elsewhere he tells us, ' Be it noted that the mountain *aouls* present at the moment a picture of almost complete desolation. With the migration of the major part of the population to the plains the

[1] *Ibid*, p. 97.

Ingoosh mountain fastnesses [*lit.* ' nests '] have suffered greatly. . . . . Some *aouls* appeared to be abandoned, the impression being enhanced by the half-ruined towers and dilapidated dwellings ', but famished dogs, and in their wake a few human beings, showed that the place was still inhabited. However, ' where there had been 60 households there were now 12; in another *aoul* where formerly there were 30 there were now 7.' [1] But in summer they come back, some of them, for the mountain pasturage.

As grace before meat the Ossetines take in one hand the thigh-bone of a sheep with the flesh on it and pray aloud, but the Ingooshee take the head, as Edji did, by the way, at Fortaoukh. The oldest or most honoured guest asks a blessing, and safe journey for any traveller present, wealth and prosperity for the host.

Formerly, said Ourousbi, the shepherds in Ossetia got the tit-bits to eat, but now, as often as not, only the neck, the worst part of the animal. This is given them in a bag to take to the mountain pastures. The Ingooshee will not boil the lower jaw and neck the day the animal is killed.

Taghee, with some slight embarrassment, asked permission to pay a visit to friends at the next house, as he 'wanted to change his clothes, mend his shoes, &c.'—there was really a pretty girl there!—but our host said that in that case he must pay the fine or forfeit, established by custom for those who forsake their company—a goat, or the equivalent. However, he had his way after some bantering and was let off the fine.

Of Tkhaba-erdá it was said that the stones used to build it were brought on mule-back over the mountains, all the way from Tiflis. This is doubtless true, in so far as concerns the sculptured stones, though not the rest, whether, as alleged, of Tamára's time or earlier. The mules were not allowed to drink during the journey, but on arrival rushed off to a spring near by, which was still called 'mules' water'. Bounakho said that the split rock fell from the cliff above and destroyed an *aoul*, and this Professor Inostrantseff confirms. He declared, moreover, that the glaciers on the mountains just south and a little east of Puÿ had retreated in his own time, he being thirty-five years old or thereabouts. Geologists had said that there were no glaciers for 300 versts east of the Terek; but in fact there were many,

[1] *Novui Vostok*, Nos. 20–1, 1928: I. Borosdin, *V gornoi Ingoushetti*, p. 322.

though none large, the biggest being Kibisha at the head of the Kistinka.[1]

Stories were told of Seska-Solsa and Koloi-Kant of which one was decidedly reminiscent of Ulysses and the Cyclops, the hero in this case escaping in the skin of a he-goat. From Bartabos you could see the place whence Koloi-Kant took the stone to shut his cave with. It lay, now, on the mountain side, and was so huge that 300 sheep could take their stand upon it. Taghee said that the Cyclops part of the story was legend, but the rest true; and Bounakho confirmed this, saying: 'It is true, every word of it; there 's the cave with the stone, to this day.' We shall presently have one version of the story in full.[2]

Coming back to actual times, we heard that the horses of the students murdered in spring near Vladikavkaz were eventually traced to Kii in the wild district a little north of Ami. Ten Cossacks with an officer were sent after them, but a detachment of them was set upon by the whole community and beaten, the stolen horses, meantime, being driven off. The Chief of the District then went to Kii and obtained the surrender of six men, who were now in prison, but whether they were the murderers or not seemed uncertain.

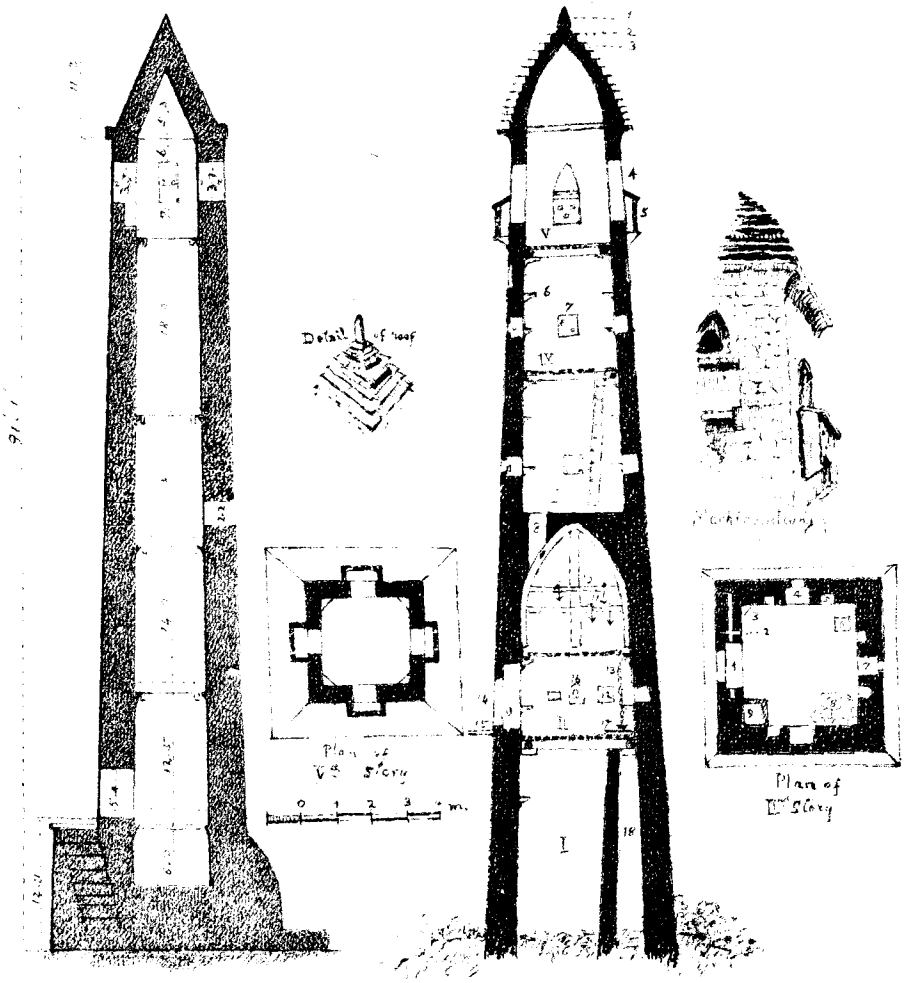
The Malkists, said our host, had one good custom at least; that of killing any man who showed marked superiority. 'They say he wants a bullet, and he gets one!' I remembered something similar being told of the Mordvá on the Volga, who doubtless got it from their predecessors the Bolgarians, whose 'most singular custom was that of hanging all men distinguished for learning', this being reported by several Arab writers and excused on the ground that such men were more worthy of serving God than man![3]

Earlier still, much earlier, Hanno the Carthaginian suffered banishment for having tamed a lion, on the supposition that 'a man so

[1] See Rossikoff's article 'The conditions of the glaciers of the North Central Caucasus. Report for 1893 and 1894', in *Zap.*, vol. xviii, pp. 279–322 (for Kibisha, p. 312).

[2] See pp. 250 sqq. The Polyphemus legend, in its main features, comes out strongly in Dalgat's story of the giants (Dalgat (*b*), p. 45) and even more so in Djantemir Shanayeff's Nart story of 'How the giant caught Ourysmag' (*Gor.*, vol. vii, 'Popular Tales of the Ossetines', p. 9). Dalgat tells us (*ibid.*, p. 48) that 'up to now (1901) five variants of the Polyphemus story have been written down in the last ten years amongst the Mingrelians, Tchetchens, Ossetines, and Daghestanis'. He analyses them and compares them with the original.

[3] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, part ii, div. i, p. 439. School and regimental ragging are sometimes urged by similar feelings.



Sectional Elevation of Round Tower of Clondalkin Near Dublin

Sectional Elevations, Plans and Details of Ingoosh Fighting Tower (? Arzec)

talented and so ingenious would have it in his power to persuade the people to anything'.[1] One can conceive that the method had its advantages!

The barometer seemed steady enough, so that though the sky was a bit cloudy I hoped no change would come yet awhile; but the hope was vain. Our supper was of boiled chicken, roast chicken, chicken broth—all very good if a little monotonous. Our host excused himself for having no sheep at hand; but I made him believe that I was tired of mutton. He told me that at Shan, a little south of Belkhan, there was a hunter, Barsouk Agapeeyevitch Khaouteeyeff by name, who had killed 24 *tour* there that year. The best time for them was September and October.

KEY TO DIAGRAMS

I. *Vertical section of Fighting Tower*

1. Summit stone.
2. Stone slab.
3. Top of roof.
4. Look-out window.
5. Machicolations.
6. Corner-stone.
7. Recess with loopholes.
8. Passage through vaulting to third story.
9. Arch-rib.
10. Beams to hang provisions on.
11. Hooks for meat.
12. Recess.
13. Hearth-chain.
14. Entry.
15. Beam to rest ladder on.
16. Listening window.
17. Hearth.
18. Masonry shoot for grain.

II. *Plan of second story*

1. Entry.
2. Slot or groove for bar or bolt.
3. Corner-stone.
4. Listening window.
5. Recess for ammunition.
6. Opening down to first story.
7. Recess with loopholes.
8. Hearth-stones.
9. Grain-shoot.

III. *Occupants of Tower*

I. First story: prisoners.
II. Second story: guard and garrison.
III. Third story: garrison and family.
IV. Fourth story: garrison and family.
V. Fifth story: garrison and sentinels.

[1] Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, viii. 21 (Bostock and Riley, vol. ii, p. 271).

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Ingoosh Fighting Towers, with pyramidal roofs[1]

These towers were built of local stone (? Lower Jurassic limestone), single blocks measuring as much as 1 metre in length at the foundations but diminishing steadily in size as the building rose. The cutting and dressing of the stones, whether inside or out, was less careful than the fitting of individual blocks. The corner-stones were large. The external dimensions of the towers were 5 metres (*c.* 16½ ft.) square—or a little more—at base, diminishing evenly to half that size at the fifth story, the total height being 26 or more metres (*c.* 85 ft.).

There were five stories, as a rule, of which the lowest, although above ground, was in effect a dark and almost airless dungeon, into which any captives the owners happened to hold at the time were thrust, heavily ironed, when the latter sought refuge in the tower. The entry to the dungeon would be covered, but two or three apertures in the walls made breathing possible. The grain-shoot was, usually, a lengthened cone in shape, of a capacity up to *c.* 3 tons. This bottom story had a strong wooden flooring resting on wooden baulks along the four sides of the towers. The entry to the tower was by a doorway some 12–16 feet above the ground, reached by a removable ladder. The sill-stone of the doorway was single, the lintel an arch cut in a single stone—straight, pointed, or round—or in two or more stones. The jambs were usually of very large stones unequal in size. The massive door was of wood, double leaved, and held shut by a wooden beam or bar sliding in a groove or slot in the masonry. In some cases the door had a huge wooden lock externally. The second story, to which the doorway led, had a groined and vaulted roof, with projecting arch-ribs starting at 2 metres above the floor in each corner, to meet in a keystone above, the height of the story being up to 7 metres (6·08 metres in the tower here figured). The arrangement and uses of the second story will be evident from the diagrams. The third and fourth stories were simpler. The flooring of the third story was of stone and rested on the vault. The fifth or fighting story was the most important of all. Its four tall windows

[1] These particulars, together with the diagrams they refer to, and key, are taken from the extremely interesting Report of I. P. Shtcheblikin in *Izviestia* (Ing.) 1928, on his expedition of 1926–7 to Mountain Ingooshia with L. P. Semenoff.

or openings, each with its outstanding masonry-work machicolations, commanded all approach to the foot of the tower, and heavy stones were kept ready in quantities to be dropped or hurled on the enemy—likewise boiling water—while from the various loopholes, in all but the lowest story, the defenders could use their firearms in almost complete security. The fifth story, like the second, was arch roofed but without ribs. At Arzee the height of the fifth story from floor to keystone was 6·3 metres, the inside square measurement being 2·42 metres, the thickness of walls 0·43 metre. The walls of the tower curved outwards at the top in a cornice so that the first step back of the roof was vertically in line with the wall. The roof was pyramidal in form, sometimes straight lined but more often—and more elegantly—slightly convex. The number of steps varied: at Arzee it was 12, not counting the cornice. In the masonry of all types of towers there were usually blind interstices which combined to form crosses and 'mounds', as at Khanee (Plate facing p. 218), rhomboids, simpler crosses, &c.

XI

THE KHEVSOURS (1901)

Up the Assá — A Khevsour shrine — The Holy Tree — Matchless blazoning — Akhieli — A gallant priest — Seclusion of women — Childbirth customs — Bride-stealing, a convention — Adultery, how punished — The sacrificial sword — Religious observances — — A Khevsour rider — Driven back by snow — A round tower (?) — Four-horned sheep — A wretched hovel — The new church — Many bridges — A railway menace.

NEXT morning (Oct. 4th) we started at 8.30 after firing my Winchester five-shooter and Browning automatic several times at various marks, much to the delight of our host and others. We rode at first a mile or two up the right bank of the Assá, then crossed a bridge and went on through a broad, dry river-bottom, thick set with bushes and trees, wild-hops and *berberis*, the latter a narrow-leaved bush growing 12 feet high, with yellow or orange berries, bunched along its branches. Rain soon fell, and, increasing, continued all the way to our destination, Akhieli. We soon entered the Nelkh defile, cut by the Assá through the palaeozoic schists,[1] very rocky and very bad going, so that we were continually either walking our horses gingerly over perilous bridges or fording side-streams; climbing up and down rock-staircases or crossing slithery screes that alternated with grass and scattered pines.

The scenery was wild, and, in this light at least, gloomy. Nelkh, a few versts upstream and hidden away in a side valley, a mile or two to the east, was the last (most southerly) of the Mountain-Ingoosh *aouls*. At 11.50 we crossed a bridge where opposing rocks met within a few feet, and huge shallow caverns, on either side, were evidently much used by travellers.

The mountains were all misty after passing Amgá, where I photographed a shrine dedicated to Tseti-soel, the 'Holy Tree' of Mtskhet, a curious construction of loose stones, roughly built, the roof pointed in gross imitation of the tombs in Galgai land. *Tour* and other horns, also bells, adorned it. Another shrine close by, dedicated to St. George, with a separate belfry, had an arch of similar construction about 8 feet high. This is figured by von Déchy, and by Merzbacher after him.

[1] So Inostrantseff calls them, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Tseti-tskhoveli.

Now the story of the 'Holy Tree' is this:[1] At the crucifixion the seamless coat fell by lot to some Jews of Mtskhet who had gone to Jerusalem purposely to gloat over the death of our Lord. When one of them, Elioz by name, brought the coat to Mtskhet his sister met him, bathed in tears, threw herself on his neck, took the coat from him and there and then died, clasping it to her heart. Three great sorrows had killed her—the death of Christ, that of her mother, who had died on hearing at Mtskhet the noise made by the hammering of the nails that fastened Him to the Cross, and the fact that her own brother had participated in that crime.[2]

She herself was buried with the coat still clasped to her breast at a spot stated to have been at the foot of a cedar-tree brought as a seed or sapling from Lebanon. Three centuries later (A.D. 328) when St. Nino, who has been identified in modern times as the St. Chrétienne so popular in the Champagne country of France,[3] but whose real name—Nino or Nina meaning merely 'the Nun'—was shown by the learned Lemm, chiefly from Coptic sources, to be Theognosta,[4] converted King Mirian II, and he set about building a church, the cedar was cut down to make columns for the support of the roof.[5] An exceptionally large column was intended to stand in the very centre of the church, but by no manner of means could it be raised on end. The King, being informed, came with numbers of people and apparatus of suitable kinds, but with no better result. The King went away, but St. Nino remained to watch and pray, and towards midnight she had wondrous visions. Suddenly—as one of her companions, Sidonia, tells the story—whilst the saint prayed a Young Man, shining resplendent, approached, wrapped her in a mantle of flame, and had uttered but three words when she fell to the ground. Thereupon the

[1] Brosset, *Hist. de la Georgie*, vol. i, p. 107 sqq.

[2] In Miss Wardrop's Life of St. Nino in *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*, vol. v, Oxford, 1903, p. 28, the third cause of the death of Elioz's sister is given as 'disappointment that she had not been present with her brother at the Crucifixion'. In a footnote is a variant 'longing for the tunic', but p. 78 of the Armenian version translated by Conybeare, in the same volume, has 'her brother's accord with the Jews', agreeing with Brosset.

[3] *Vyess Kavkaz*, 1903, Historical Section, p. 51.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[5] And, evidently, the coat was found; but the MS. here, as Sir Oliver Wardrop tells me, is defective. Brosset, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 115, 116.

Young Man put his hand to the column, raised it with ease, and set it upright on its base.

'Astonished, I, Sidonia, came near and said, "What is it, oh my Queen?" "Bow your head," said she, and began to weep, fearing greatly. Then she arose and made me too rise, and we went our way.'

When the King came, towards dawn, to where the church was building, behold a beam of light which rose from the meadow to the sky above. He hastened his footsteps and ran. His courtiers followed him, as, too, did the whole populace, and presently a marvellous spectacle was presented to them. The column all glowing with light took position, hovered awhile, bolt upright, then settled gently on its base untouched by the hand of man! Other miracles at once followed—the blind saw, the sick rose from their beds and walked...

Such was the origin of the Holy Tree, or Column, of Mtskhet, which under the name of Tseti-tskhoveli, corrupted in the mountains to Tseti-soel, is venerated to this day.

The original church (at Mtskhet) with all appertaining buildings was desecrated, pillaged, and reduced to bare walls by Tamerlane on his second invasion of Georgia in 1393.[1] But a new church was built and the Holy Coat remained its chief treasure until in 1625 Shah Abbas I, having ravaged Christian Georgia, sent it as a gift to Tsar Michael Feodorovitch, the first Románoff, who enshrined it in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow,[2] not witting, probably, that, as the way is with relics, there was a duplicate in existence. For in Trèves Cathedral, walled up, when not on exhibition, within the High Altar, is another 'Holy Coat' said to have been a gift from the Empress Helena. 'The first mention of it occurs in 1190. In 1844 it was publicly exhibited to a million of devotees.'[3] According to Novikoff there was yet another at Bari.[4]

Meantime the Coat has long been blazoned on the arms of the Kingdom of Georgia. This was first done when the Bagratides ascended the throne towards the end of the sixth century. Their arms bore: the sling that killed Goliath; David's harp; a pair of scales,

[1] Brosset, *Hist.*, Part i, S. Pétersbourg, 1849, p. 656.

[2] Murray's *Guide to Russia* (1893) described it as 'a portion of the robe of our Saviour'. A record of the gift was published by the Moscow F. O. Archives in 1891.

[3] Murray's *Handbook to the Rhine.* In 1933 the number was *c.* 2,300,000.

[4] *Drevnaya Vivlioteka*, vol. v, p. 411. A good copy of this notable Russian eighteenth-century work, in 31 vols., has recently been acquired by the London Library.

Tseti-Tskhoveli

emblematic of the wisdom of Solomon; the lion on which rested his throne; *our Lord's coat*, with the inscription *Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout*, and, finally, St. George slaying the Dragon[1]—surely a matchless blazoning!

Between Amgá and Akhieli, Taghee enlivened us with the story of the recent murder of three Ingooshee, he thought here, but later we heard that it was at Kolotani, the first *aoul*, counting from the north, inhabited by Khevsours, up an eastern defile a little short of Amgá. They had come to buy sheep and had Rs. 273 with them. 'Were they killed for the money?' 'God knows!'

No Khevsour of Akhieli, it seemed, would go alone to Ingoosh territory for a million roubles. There were perpetual blood-feuds between the two peoples, and any one rash enough to travel alone in the hostile territory would assuredly be killed. According to Taghee there had been 27 murders along the valley in the last few years. They went down the Assá in parties at least twenty strong, generally more, armed to the teeth; but they preferred to cross the Djouti Pass (10,269 ft.) and go down through Tsno to Kasbek.

We rode on, reaching Akhieli at about 2 p.m., and found lodging with the Orthodox priest,[2] George Gavrilovich Valyaruri, in a ruinous, dirty house, of two rooms, one the school and church (there was a new church, however, nearly finished), the other the deacon's room, the latter a remarkably filthy fellow from Imeréti. The best feature of the house was an open chimney, and as wood was plentiful we were able to keep up a roaring fire. The priest, a good-looking, gallant man in the prime of life, spoke Russian, though not too well. He was very friendly, the only priest of Khevsour birth in Akhieli, and the only educated Khevsour—so I was told—in all those parts. A Lieutenant Bielayeff had been here in 1899, had taken photographs, collected information, songs, &c., and on his return to Russia published a small book which I have never seen. His guide was David, who spoke to us in Russian, as we dismounted, offering to

[1] A *Short History of the Georgian Church*, translated from the Russian of P. Ioselian and edited with additional notes by the Rev. S. C. Malan, London, 1866, p. 15 (author's note).

[2] The Georgian Church in 1811 became a separate though not independent part of the Russian Orthodox Church.

guide us over the pass next day, to which we agreed. Our host showed me a letter from Bielayeff asking after David, as the latter had not answered three letters and he feared he had been killed by the Ingooshee, he having shot one of them.

While the rest of us settled ourselves in as best we could, Taghee went off through icy sleet to the river, to wash before prayers, which he then recited on a long bench, one half of which formed my bed, the other the deacon's, the latter kindly taking the end where the rain came freely through the roof. The priest, seeing the Mussulman praying devoutly, said: 'That 's right! I like that! It does me good to see it!'

Presently, in spite of the weather, we took advantage of the priest's offer to show us the village and some of its more notable features. There, for instance, close by, at the edge of the open land was the stone hovel, built like the rest without cement, roughly but strongly, where the women and girls were obliged to remain at their monthly periods, as they formerly did in many other parts of the world, and still do in some. There were some half a dozen of them gathered round the doorway chatting unconcernedly and evidently much interested in our heterogeneous party. They were eager to be photographed. Dr. Radde in his monograph gives a coloured sketch of just such a scene.[1] Not half a mile away and plainly visible, in the open country, was the similar 'birth house' to which every woman about to have a child had to retire, there to remain, along with her babe, until forty days had elapsed and she could be considered 'clean' again. Women relatives might take her food and water and deposit them outside the hovel, but nothing more—no contact was allowed on any consideration, no propinquity even. The husband's part was to prowl around at night with friends, and if the unfortunate woman cried or groaned, fire off his gun to scare the Evil One.[2] I asked if there happened to be any woman there then, but our priest said 'No', and explained that though the custom still continued it had

[1] See Suppl. Note, p. 247, and Plate facing p. 246.

[2] So, too, 'there are few magistrates in India who have not been asked for leave by some happy father to allow guns to be fired from his house-top to drive away evil spirits from the mother and her child'. Crooke, *op. cit.* i, p. 169. Prince Eristoff says it was to frighten the woman herself and so ease the pangs of labour—but my version seems more reasonable. See his 'Of the Tousheen-Pshav-Khevsour District', *Zap.*, vol. iii (1855), p. 114.

been made illegal by the Russian Government, under penalty of Rs.30 fine (at that time £3), and, more than once, he had gone off and brought a woman back, by force, to his own house.[1]

Asked as to bride-stealing, he said that it was still the custom but had become a mere convention. The girl's relatives roused the whole community and started a mock siege of the ravisher's house, threatening death and destruction in the most violent terms, whereupon an old man came out to beg forgiveness, reminding them that bride-stealing was their immemorial custom and offering to kill one or more sheep and provide a lavish feast for all concerned, whereupon the simulated anger turned to rejoicing. If a man chanced to beat another man's wife he must also beg forgiveness, kill a sheep, and provide a big vat of *arrack* for the insulted husband and relatives. In cases of adultery the man would be killed, without fail, the woman's nose or ear cut off. In the printed accounts I have read, this savagery is said to be a thing of the past, 'if it ever existed', but our host told us that his own uncle, having served a sentence of imprisonment in Tiflis, came back to find his wife living with another man (divorce and remarriage being easy and frequent). He cut off one of her ears, her nose, and her right hand; but that was some time ago. If a girl was unchaste she was set upon a donkey, face to tail, and carried through the *aoul*, spat upon and jeered at. 'The same with us,' said Ourousbi. If a girl had a child she was driven out of the community and the child killed, unless some charitable person took pity on it. A young man could not marry a girl once seduced by another man, but an old man or widower might. All this too, according to Ourousbi, was much the same in Ossetia.

Of marriage customs I learnt from Taghee that with the Ingooshee —not the Ossetines or Khevsours—the chief bridesmaid had to provide a sheep's heart, roasted, and hide it in the bridal chamber. Bridegroom or bride, whichever first overcame their natural shyness, would search for this dainty and when found the happy pair would eat it together. This was supposed to ensure concord. A disappointed Ingoosh lover would sometimes endeavour to cast a spell of impotence on his successful rival at marriage by half-withdrawing his *kinjal* from its sheath—or a cartridge-case from the breast of his *tcherkeska*—and returning it, three times; but if detected he would be killed out of hand.

[1] See further, Suppl. Note, as above.

We now came to the house of the 'sacrificer'[1] attached to the chief sanctuary in Akhieli. What interested me here, chiefly, was the sword we had already heard of—Ourousbi and I were keen upon swords—consecrated to his office. The *jrets* informed us that nothing would induce him to touch the sword or even go near it except on the established festival days, of which this was not one. The consequences to himself, if he broke this rule, would be terrible.[2] But with a little persuasion he allowed Ourousbi and myself to satisfy our curiosity, at our own risk. We entered the house, therefore, and brought out the sword which, to our disappointment, had a silver sheath inlaid with Russo-Georgian silver coins, 40 *kopek* pieces of 1829! The haft also was of silver, and not much older. But on drawing the blade we found it to be long and straight, of very fine steel (said Ourousbi), five fluted, and with GENOVA deeply stamped lengthwise a little below the hilt. We were told it would cut a gun-barrel in two, or a young bull's head off, at a blow. It was valued at Rs.300 and was said to be a gift from Heraclius II, the great King of Georgia.

We had brought food with us, knowing the poverty of the land, but for supper our host insisted on adding at least a chicken. Ourousbi pointed out that unless Taghee killed it himself he would not—as a Mussulman—be able to eat of it. He was at once, and heartily, given the requisite commission and presently the chicken squawked.

After supper we gathered round the fire—our host and his brother, Khevsours; the Imerétan deacon; Ourousbi and Islam, Ossetines; Taghee, an Ingoosh; myself, an Englishman. The wind howled outside, the rain came through the roof, the horses stabled on the balcony munched their hay and barley noisily. I sat, note-book in hand, gathering all the information I could, and, amongst other subjects, as to the price of blood. The figures given me by our host were these: 60 cows for a life: 15 cows for each ear cut off: 30 cows for an eye:

[1] In Russian, *jrets*, in Ingoosh *tsain-sag*, in Khevsour *khutsi* or *decanos*, the latter being, according to Urbneli, the assistant only, while Eristoff makes him the superior, and gives a horrible description of the scene at an important religious festival 'worse than any slaughter-house'. *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

[2] So, too, it was with the Byzantine *regalia*, which 'déposés sur l'autel, l'empereur même ne peut les revêtir qu'aux jours de solennités'. So much so that Leo IV, the Khazar, 'fut frappé d'un ulcère mortel pour avoir ceint la couronne sans la permission du patriarche'. Rambaud, *Hist. de la Russie*, Paris, 1878, p. 72.

5 cows for a thumb, and 4, 3, 2, 1 for the fingers successively. Our host showed us a great scar on one of his fingers, and told us that he had received 4 cows for it.

For a wound on the open part of the face as many cows were payable as grains of barley would lie in the wound. On scalp or bearded parts, the penalty was much less, which suggests vanity!

A thief if caught must pay seven times the value of the article stolen.

The priest's brother was a hunter. He told us that we could get *Capra aegagrus* near Shatil. Taghee gave him 3 ball cartridges for his Berdan rifle, which pleased him greatly. 'They are worth a full-grown sheep,' said he.

The Khevsours never ate pig-meat, one of several observances they are said to have derived from their Mussulman neighbours, probably very long ago.[1] Taghee said that there were still some amongst the Ingooshee who did eat it, which was one point in favour of their having formerly been Christians. The Christianity of the Khevsours was almost entirely nominal, and as they were, beyond any reasonable doubt, Georgians by race, it is evident that they must either have been stranded in the recesses of the mountains before complete conversion to Christianity, in the fourth century, or have become paganized by surrounding tribes in course of time, perhaps both, for we know that pagan beliefs, superstitions, festivals, &c., were taken over to a great extent by the early Christians and many are retained in so-called Christianity to this day. It may well be, therefore, that the Khevsours merely exhibited the same phenomenon on an extended scale. The subject is much too large and difficult to be more than touched upon here; but the reader should bear in mind, especially, that the worship or veneration of saints or shrines bearing Christian names amongst the Khevsours implied, as a rule, no other present connexion with Christianity; having uttered which caution I will resume my narrative.

The favourite saints or shrines—for in most cases the virtue

[1] Scott tells us in *Waverley* (chap. xx and Note U) how 'pork, or swine's flesh in any shape, was till of late years, much abominated by the Scots', who cannot have derived their dislike from the followers of Muhammad, though they may have done so in some roundabout way from the Jews. In 1705 in Edinburgh, at the height of the struggle for the Union, national hatred expressed itself in the form of ballads against the English 'pork-eaters', which were everywhere in demand. Trevelyan, *Ramillies*, p. 261.

seemed to rest in place, not in person, a point to be noted[1]—were St. George and St. Michael. At Christmas two days were devoted to feasting and beer-drinking, at New Year a whole week, in mid-Lent five days. On Holy Thursday guns were fired off and bonfires lit, when the children jumped through the flames and the head of each household seizing a flaming brand carried it round his house waving it in the air, and then hurled it as far away as possible, crying 'There, you devils, now my house is sanctified; you may have that log but don't you dare to come inside!' There was no celebration for Trinity Sunday, but St. Michael had a week's feasting from July 26th. The death of the Virgin Mary was commemorated during three days from August 28th: the Elevation of the Cross, on one day, September 27th.

On such occasions every house must prepare a bucketful of *arrack* and pour it all into a huge vat at the shrine. There it remained until some one offered a sheep, which the sacrificer killed and in return presented the giver with 3 bottles of *arrack* (a local custom), which must be 'drunk on the premises' by him and his friends. After that, any others could buy *arrack* at the rate of 40 *kopeks* the *tung* (about 3 bottles), but again to be drunk there and then. Not for any money, or other consideration, might even a spoonful be taken away. On festivals it was a case of 'free drinks' all round.

One woman only—an old one, beyond child-bearing—mother or sister of the *jrets*, had access to the shrine, to bake bread, &c.

Before the harvest sheep were killed and a festival held, but nothing after, whereas the Ossetines, as Ourousbi told us, made a feast in honour of the sickle at the end of harvest, killing chickens and brewing beer, and the same when the treading out of the corn was ended, in honour of the pitch-fork. I heard here, too, of the strange way in which the sacrificers attained to office—through their own dreams, but for this and very much else relating to this wonderful people I must refer my readers to other writers—I was about to say to 'the recognized authorities', but where there is so much downright contradiction that well-worn phrase is hardly in place.[2]

[1] The Khevsour shrines were called *Khati*, a name equally applied to spiritual beings who carried out the behests of the saints and deities regarding human beings. See Urbneli, *Zap.*, vol. xiv, 7, pp. 147, 182. Also Nioradze (*op. cit.*, 'Einleitung', p. 10).

[2] See Suppl. Note, p. 246. The attainment of priestly office through dreams is or was widespread. See Hartland, *R. & B.*, pp. 106–10 *passim*, and 114, where, too, a burning-log defiance occurs.

I slept moderately well in spite of filthy surroundings—I was not bitten—and very mixed company. Poti disturbed us in the night: we all thought he was being stolen, but it turned out that he was merely making a brave attempt to get at the priest's small cabbage-patch—unique in Akhieli.

Early next morning (Oct. 4th) we woke, not unexpectedly, to very bad weather, the worst possible for our purpose; for not only was sleet still falling, but all the mountains round were veiled in mist. My own men took a gloomy view of the situation from the first. Taghee especially seemed inclined to hold back—I had not then realized his secret longing to introduce me to his father and to his home down the Assá, which would be impossible if we crossed the Main Chain, for, in that case, we should come back by the Georgian road. But the local people declared that all would be well. Then various difficulties arose. David failed to put in an appearance, and, on sending for him, we learned that he had been taken ill in the night. Our gallant host thereupon said that he would guide us himself, but his horse had lost a shoe which must be replaced. It was 7.30 a.m. before we could make a start, but when we did so I was agreeably surprised to see another Khevsour come riding out of a stone-walled compound to join us. He was sent, it appeared, by David as a substitute, and though not in chain armour, what with *bashlyk* and *bourka*, a banderol of brass-rimmed cartridges, silver-studded belt and pistol, two swords, short and long—not sword and *kinjal*, a less orthodox wear for Khevsours—a round, iron shield, slung at the saddle-bow, and, last but not least, a bay horse stepping daintily, its bridle studded with beads of turquoise blue and cowrie shells[1] set alternately—well, he was a

[1] *Gwelis tavi*, 'snake's head', in Georgian. Used in India on the harness of elephants and horses. *Mat.*, vol. xiv.

'The cowrie shell, which is worn round the neck by children as an antidote to the Evil Eye and diabolical influences, is supposed to have such sympathy with the wearer that it cracks when the evil glance falls upon it, as in England coral was thought to change colour and grow pale when its owner was sick. The cowrie shell is, with the same object, tied round the neck or pasterns of a valued horse, or on a cow or buffalo' (Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 17).

'As an antidote to the Evil Eye blue beads are specially valued, and are hung round the necks and pasterns of horses and other valuable animals' (*ibid.*, p. 19).

'Blue is used as an amulet, evidently because blue eyes are considered dangerous.' See the Abkhaz version of Prometheus, vol. ii, p. 236. And 'the prophylactic virtue ascribed to cowries is probably in the first place due to their resemblance to an eye' Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, vol. i, p. 439.

gallant figure and a picturesque. Our priest was unarmed, but he rode a fine horse and rode it well—'*nastoyashtchi djighit*', a real *djighit*, said Ourousbi, admiringly.

We forded the river, rode through the village of Kviris-tsminda (5,766 ft., von Déchy) and began the ascent of the lower Arkhotis Pass; but already I could make out that there were differences of opinion amongst my companions as to the advisability of continuing the attempt. The way was rough and hard, but that alone would have mattered little. The trouble was that ever as we rode upward the snow became deeper, at first filling the interstices of the rocks and stones, but before long covering all but the biggest of them, making it most difficult and dangerous for the horses; while above and around us the mist thickened. We stopped to rest the horses at some 2,000 feet above Akhieli, and arguments grew warm. We went up another thousand feet, and more than one man protested openly. But the gallant *padre* was loth to give in. Eventually, at considerably over 3,000 feet above our starting point, and so far as altitude only was concerned not far from the summit, the snow being over the horses' knees, even he agreed that it would be folly to go on. 'We shall certainly lose the horses, probably ourselves', said he, and his brother, the hunter, nodded affirmatively. Twice on the way down, none the less, they called a halt and half-heartedly suggested trying it again. When we reached the spot where a path went off towards another and higher pass, not I think an easier one, there were more arguments. The annoying thing was that every one tried to put the onus of a decision on me, which, considering that I was absolutely the least competent of all to judge the position in any way, seemed rather mean. The only thing I could say, and I repeated it more than once most emphatically, was that I was perfectly willing to go wherever they chose to take me.

Von Déchy[1] speaks of a round tower at Kviris-tsminda, 'the height certainly above 24 metres [79 ft.]. This form is rare and so far as I know has not been observed amongst the Khevsours', but his accompanying illustration shows a tower, rectangular above, with the usual pyramidal roof; rounded, indeed, below the top story, but apparently on one side only. In Dr. Radde's Museum, in 1903, I noted a small-sized model of a genuine round tower (No. 1175) labelled 'Khevi'

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 95.

Khevsour rider

which is Georgian for 'valley' and a frequent village name amongst the Pshavs as well as the Khevsours. But on Brosset's Vakhusht map (No. 3, 'Karthli au nord du Kour') 'Khevi' is the name given to the country on the left bank of the Terek, in the Kobi bend. Here, there once stood a fortress, Arsha, whence, before his accession, Khusraw-mirza (Rustem-khan) rescued a Georgian noble and his wife, a grand-daughter of Abbas I, who were, apparently, cut off by insurgents.[1] Possibly Radde's round tower had to do with Arsha. Or was it the 'unique' cylindrical tower of unknown origin in the village of Galouat (Galouat-kau), above Edisa, in South Ossetia, which the inhabitants declared was built before they (the Southern Ossetines) came there? This was said to be the only one of the kind in all Ossetia, though feudal castles of the Georgian nobility were also sometimes round, but of different construction.[2] In any case, I could hardly have failed to notice a round tower at Kviris-tsminda, had it existed.

We were back at Akhieli at noon, and I took the disappointment philosophically, knowing very well that, whichever way we went or wherever we stopped in this miraculous country, with its wonderful tribes, I should find matters of absorbing interest to occupy every waking moment of every one of the days—too few, alas—that I could devote to it and them.

Our host's horse had cost Rs.150 and was what we used to call in Peru a 'pacer'. For my sturdy Karatchai I had paid only Rs.60, but I was glad to find that we could keep up with his Reverence anywhere except on slippery rocks, to which Poti was not yet accustomed.

After lunch we went again to the sacrificer's, where I sketched his 'sacred' plough, rather an effective implement I thought for such a place; also the upper part of the sword and the cross on the tower, for Akhieli had its tower, though not to compare with those of the Galgais. This interstitial cross was unlike any other I had seen, in that the whole upright was not longer than either of the wings, which detracted very much from its 'crucial' appearance, and I was

[1] W. E. D. Allen, communicated privately. And see for Rustem his *Hist. of the Georgian People*, p. 170.

[2] L. M. Melikset-Bekoff in *K. arkh. i etnol. Tualskoi Osii*, Tiflis, 1925, p. 257. A writer in *Bulletin Kavk. Ist.-Arkh. Instituta*, No. 5, p. 2, declares that it is a mistake to identify 'Dval', 'Tual', with South Ossetia (as Melikset-Bekoff does).

hardly surprised to find that the local people, including the priest, would not hear of its being called a cross, declaring that, in their opinion, it was meant to represent a man! It is probably only a coincidence, though in view of the 'crusader' story rather a notable one, that this Akhieli cross is not unlike that put forward by de Mély as the cross of the first Crusaders.[1] We next visited a store-house for the barley belonging to the community, adjoining a brew-house much like that at Dzivghiz,[2] with huge copper vat and wooden tubs made from hollowed tree-trunks, 2 feet across. Near by was the shrine, with a fine pair of *tour* horns, and a pair, or rather a quartet, of domestic sheep's horns all growing out of one skull.[3] The hops for the beer were obtained from Vladikavkaz.

I noticed that men, women, some with babies in their arms, and children of both sexes sat contentedly out of doors, heedless of snow or rain, and no wonder, when one saw the alternative! We went into one house—all were alike—and at first could see nothing at all. Presently a fire was lighted, stirred into life rather, on the floor, and I saw that the whole interior made one large room, divided in the middle by a wattled fence 3 feet high, on one side of which were cattle—oxen, goats, and two or three sheep—on the other the whole family.[4] Over the fire hung a chain and kettle, as in Ossetia. There were rudely carved cupboards, benches, and stools, but everything black with soot and dirt, the air cold and damp, the smell abominable. The streets outside were filthy, a sort of stony farm-yard all the way, in which men and women and children walked or stood about bare-footed in slush and snow. It is true that even the smallest urchin had his pipe and pouch, not pinch, of home-grown tobacco, as they had in England in the seventeenth century 'instead of a breakfast'.[5] All the houses were dry-built—without cement, that is—the roofs flat, with, on some of them, stacks of hay.

The church was not quite finished; its cost was being defrayed to the amount of Rs. 3,500 by the Society for the Advancement of Christianity, and the Government had given permission to cut timber

[1] *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, vol. iii, p. 5.

[2] See *ante*, p. 157.

[3] '. . . a ram with 4 horns protects the other sheep from the Evil Eye', Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, vol. i, pp. 100, 438, and see my vol. ii, p. 218 note.

[4] Much as in the hovel Dr. Johnson visited beside Loch Ness. Boswell's *Tour*.

[5] Buckle's *Miscellaneous and Posthumous Works*, 1872, Art. 2108 (vol. iii, p. 365).

in the Crown forests to the value of Rs.100; not much, but as the church was of stone and the roof of iron very little wood was required. The priest's stipend was Rs.500, of which the Government contributed Rs. 300, the above-mentioned Society the balance. In addition, he had a right to ask R.1 for a marriage, the same for the burial of a woman, R.1.20 of a man, and 30 *kopeks* for a christening. These Christian rites were being adopted to some extent in obedience to the new law, but the heathen hierarchy went their way unmoved and with the people it was they who counted.

Priest and deacon had hurried back to evening service at dusk, it being Saturday, and we with them. They warned us to move our horses from the balcony lest the bell should frighten them. We did so and the two men gabbled away at a great pace in Georgian for a considerable time, without any congregation assembling. When, during a brief pause, I ventured to remark upon this fact, the priest's answer was 'Well, that is their look out; this is mine'. At last an old man, then two younger ones, and four or five boys, all or most of these, I understood, of the priest's own family, gathered together, and meantime Taghee could be seen through an open doorway praying his prayers, standing or squatting on my bed in the next room, while the four unapocalyptic horses, on the balcony once more, resumed the munching of their provender.

It had been agreed that if the weather improved next day we would try the pass again, but we woke (Oct. 5th) to conditions far worse than before. So bidding good-bye with hearty thanks for his kindness to our most worthy host, we started at 7.30 a.m. on our return down the Assá. Ourousbi and I had differed during supper the first night as to the number of bridges we had crossed since leaving Puÿ. I thought 30, he 20 or 21 at most. We now took the trouble to count them and found that they numbered 27 in a distance of 10 miles; and as they consisted mostly of small fir-trees laid across the stream and loosely covered with earth and branches, we were bound to dismount at nearly every one, for the horses' sake. In the Nelkh defile the path between the bridges was in places so dangerous that there also one had to dismount; so that altogether in those 10 miles we got off and on our horses not less, I should say, than 35 times, both going and coming.

We reached Puÿ at 11.20 a.m., having out of consideration for

Bounakho stopped to lunch off our own provisions at the twenty-seventh bridge. We called upon him, however, and drank tea, after which we remounted and rode on down the Assá. Riding up the valley I had again noticed, inscribed on the rocks at conspicuous places, the date '1891', for we were following closely the line of the projected railway over the Main Chain to Tiflis, surveyed in that year.[1]

Once built, obviously, a stream of traffic would ebb and flow this way between Europe and Asia. The Khevsours would be but three days off from Vienna, let us say; tourists would swarm, and I visioned—with horror—a Winter Palace Hotel at Amgá, a Ritz at Akhieli, a Savoy at Kviris-tsminda. I leave it to the imagination of my readers to draw the resulting combinations and contrasts! Luckily, so far (June 1937) the railway has not been built, and the state of the country up to August 1929, when G. F. Tchoursin, since dead, paid a visit there, remained much as it was in my time;[2] but Nioradze two years later[3] drew a different picture, attributing very considerable 'progress' to Soviet influence.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE. *Khevsour bibliography.* Abercromby says, p. 188, 'having no interpreter I could learn nothing in person', so he gives us ten pages of translation from one of the earliest and best accounts of the Tousheens, Pshavs, and Khevsours (*Zap.* iii, 1855), omitting, however, to mention the author's name—Prince Raphael Eristoff. Those who cannot read Russian will find much of interest there in regard to the religion, and very curious birth, marriage, and death customs of the Khevsours. In the same series (*Zap.* xiv. 1, 1890) is a good article by N. Khoudadoff, followed by a drastic review of Dr. Radde's well-known monograph (*Die Chewsuren und ihr Land*, Cassel, 1878; Russ. translation, *Zap.* xi. 2, 1881, and separately), by Prince Eristoff, who in the same volume gives many extracts, in Russian, from a series of articles in the Georgian journals *Droeba* and *Iveria* by 'Urbneli' (pseud. of Khizanoff). The information is, much of it, new and important, but to some extent contradictory, like all else, indeed, on the Khevsours. Züssermann's personal account (*op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 205 sq.) is of interest. Doubrovin (vol. i, part 2,

[1] Inostrantseff, *op. cit.*

[2] *Bulletin Kav. Ist.-Árkh. Instituta*, No. 5, p. 27.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

Khevsour women

pp. 283–318, 1871), more especially, and Merzbacher (vol. ii, chap. xxxvii, 1901) gather together most of what had been written on the Khevsours by others up to their time, the last named, incidentally, in a very long note, undertaking, not altogether vainly, to vindicate Radde. To deal fully with the Khevsours would take a volume, and not a small one.

I have already (p. 59) mentioned *Begräbnis- und Totenkultus bei den Chewssuren*, by Dr. Georg Nioradze, Stuttgart, 1931. It contains several illustrations and a considerable bibliography.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE. *Segregation of women, &c.* The Khevsour customs described are, of course, but faint reflections of what had been going on from time immemorial all the world over. I might quote instances from Japan (Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan*, p. 162), Kafiristan (*Encycl. Britt.*), the Voguls (Adam Brand's *Journey*) and numberless others; but it will suffice to refer to the *Golden Bough*, even the abridged edition (pp. 207–10; 595–607), and Westermarck (*R. & B. in Morocco*, vol. i, p. 230, and elsewhere), for almost unbelievable records of the monstrous lengths to which the haunting terror of menstruous blood, and to a less extent of other sexual discharges, has carried the human race. In lighter vein is the following description by Reineggs of child-birth in Georgia in his day: 'Since the aerial spirits, in their opinion, delight in frequenting the mother and her newborn child, and are wont to harm them grievously, the husband's sword or dagger must always lie hidden under his wife's pillow. Over the coverlet a red fishing-net is spread, to which, between all the knots along the edges, are attached leaden pellets to ensure its hanging down equally on both sides, and not shifting in such a way as to allow of an aerial spirit slipping in underneath it. In this state the poor tormented woman is compelled to remain 40 days, before she dare leave her bed to breathe the fresh air. But a female would be exposed to the most dangerous situation possible, according to their prejudice, if, during her lying-in, she cut her hair or pared her nails.'[1]

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 17. I have amended the published English translation in accordance with the original German *Beschreibung*, &c., Part 2, p. 112. (See Bibliography.)

XII

THE INGOOSHEE (1901)

The split rock — Pleasant quarters — Tchetchen tribes — Koloi-Kant — The death of Seska-Solsa — The food of the Narts — Hadji Maali saves the 'abreks' — Blood-feuds and reconciliation — Strange customs — Batal Hadji — 'Cheptel' — How to steal a bride — Ouroushi's 'kalim' — An Ossetine wedding — Fathers and children.

AT the entrance to the defile cut by the Assá through the lofty range of the Upper Jurassic limestones, and called after Targhim or Ersh according to whether it is viewed from north or south, respectively, is the split block or boulder already mentioned. Professor Inostrantseff writes: 'On the slope of the mountains Ghen-lam will be seen a quantity of huge limestone blocks which crashed down at the time of the great land-slide which here destroyed and buried under its mass a whole village. One of these blocks, of gigantic dimensions, lies on the bottom of the narrow valley, split in two halves, and, on it, half-ruined, are the "towers of Sandukeli".'[1] Whence this name I know not. That given to me at Puÿ was 'Khatagazi'.[2] I took photographs, looking both up and down the valley, of this picturesque monument, but the light was not too favourable. Riding on, we met my Khamkee friend, the Russian head-clerk, and exchanged greetings. This limestone range, as Inostrantseff tells us, stretches north-westward to the Black Sea, south-eastward to Daghestan.[3] In the defile the formation, in certain places on the right or east side, presents a 'series of nearly vertical walls rising one behind another, like scenery in a theatre'. Further on I noticed, too, that the limestones were stratified at all angles, from purely horizontal to purely vertical, and as, wherever the surfaces allow of it, a varied vegetation flourished and the whole scale of things was gigantic, the result, in sun and shade with blue sky overhead, was not only beautiful, but grand.

From somewhere near where the path or road I took in spring goes off to Bartabos, Taghee pointed out the place on the right bank where Koloi-Kant used to pray, putting his forehead and hands on three separate stones, which would make him a Mussulman! It is true that another legend brings the Prophet in person to Tkhaba-erdá!

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 19. [2] See *ante*, p. 225. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

A little lower, at Ersh,[1] we stopped at 5 p.m. to take lodging for the night with a relation of Taghee's; and, after recent experiences, we were able fully to appreciate the delightful cleanliness of an Ingoosh *saklia*, and realize how attractive mud walls and floor could be when kept in perfect order. In one small room devoted chiefly to saddles and harness a bright wood-fire burned on an open hearth. In the larger guest-room the usual deep shelf went round two of the walls, and on it were four mattresses, rolled up, twice as many felt rugs of different colours, folded, and, of course, the corresponding great snowy pillows. On another wall was a tinned copper dish 3 feet in diameter.

Lodging with the owner of this pleasant place was a Crown-forester, one of the Akhreeyeffs, who had killed a good-sized bear the previous day. He told us that wild boars were plentiful, and likewise chamois, the latter much higher up, of course, where there was too much snow, at present, to allow of approach. The pay of a forester was only Rs. 14 (28*s.*) a month, and as there was no allowance for food or provender, and a horse had to be kept, honesty was somewhat at a discount.

The puzzling distinctions between the various Tchetchen tribes was a subject I once more tried to get clear upon. It seemed that 'Makal' was the Ossetine name for Ingoosh, and Makal-don (another name for the Kistinka or Arm-khi) meant 'Ingoosh water'. Taghee and our host agreed that the Ingooshee no longer used the name 'Kist' for any but the 'far' Kists, inhabiting the defiles of the upper Tchanti Argoun below Shatil. But, according to Grabovsky, the mountain district of the Ingoosh *okrug* in 1865 comprised six communities (*obshtchestva*): Djerakh and Kist, between the Terek and the watershed of the Assá, on which is the Kodjar-Dogoushti Pass; Galgais and Tsorintsi (people of Tsori, Gouloi, &c.) beyond; and, north of the limestones, the Akkintsi and Meredjintsi. In 1866, however, these last two were for administrative convenience withdrawn from the mountain Ingoosh district. The Malkists in those days, apparently, were out of ken of the law. They were, or recently had been, known as *nemirnie* (hostile).[2] The trouble was that there was no general name in definite use for these closely related tribes, or rather

[1] Also called Ershee, an off-shoot of Khamkhee, Zeydlitz, *Izv.*, vol. ii, p. 160.

[2] *Ante*, p. 89, note 2, and p. 114.

communities. 'Kists', as we see, no longer applied except to the 'Far' or 'Mal'-Kists. Galgai, on the other hand, seemed to be roughly used for all between the Terek and Gouloi.[1]

At supper Ourousbi once again explained at some length the burdensome nature of the Kalim or bride-price in Ossetia, but of this later.[2] In the matter of hospitality I learned that the limit of free and unquestioned entertainment was three days; after that a guest who remained was expected to take his part in household or other work, on a parity with the host and his family.[3] But most of our time was devoted to local tales and traditions, especially to the story of Koloi-Kant; and as I have but a few rough notes of my own on this subject and the story is a favourite one in all those districts, possessing, too, many points of interest, I will give it, as well as I can in English, word for word as it stands in Tchakh Akhreeyeff's Russian version.[4]

The Legend of Koloi-Kant and Seska-Solsa.[5]

'There were once three brothers of whom the youngest was Koloi-Kant. From his earliest years he did no work, but only grew stronger and stronger, living at the charge of his elder brothers. When, how-

[1] *Gor.*, vol. iii, 'Economic and domestic life of the Mountain Ingooshee.'

[2] See *ante*, p. 75, and *post*, p. 267 sq.

[3] This three days' grace goes a long way back, thus: 'Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord, but let him not stay more than one day, or, if need be, a second as well; but if he stays three days he is a false prophet. . . . If he who comes is a traveller help him as much as you can, but he shall not remain with you more than two days or, if need be, three. And if he wishes to settle among you and have craft, let him work for his daily bread.' *Didachè*, xi. 3–6, as quoted by Halliday (*Pagan Background*, &c., p. 66). And so too 'Howeitat hospitality was unlimited—no three days' niggardliness for them—of the nominal desert law'. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert*, p. 124. For other instances see Westermarck, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 547.

[4] *Gor.*, vol. iv, 'Tchetchen tales, legends, &c.'.

[5] This story differs considerably from that of Polyphemus in Homer, but there are too many points of resemblance—shepherd, giant, cave, great stone to close the entry, favourite goat (for ram), the thrusting of rocks into the ground in anger (instead of hurling them at the escaping enemy), the river (instead of sea) that baffled pursuit—to allow of any doubt as to the identity of 'Koloi-Kant', more especially when, as already stated, the missing features are present in other Caucasian versions. See *ante*, p. 228, note 2.

There is a Galgai *aoul* Koloi; 'Kant' signifies 'a fine fellow'. In Ingoosh when two names come together, as in this case, the first is that of the father, the second that of the son. Thus, Seska (or Soska) would be the father of Solsa; but according to Dumézil, we have here a compound of the Tchetchen 'Sosryko' and the Ossetine 'Soslan', both Narts, which in fact are doublets. *Op. cit.*, pp. 5, 110. See also my vol. ii, pp. 153–7.

ever, he felt strong enough, he took to work, and having a passionate love for sheep became a shepherd. At that time all three brothers had only 20 sheep between them, and one he-goat that could talk as men do [the Ram of Phrixus?], and was called Koloi-Kant after his master. When the latter went for the first time to pasture his sheep he lost his way, and crossed several mountains. For twelve whole years no word of him reached home; in that time his flock increased so greatly that it could no longer be counted, nor was it possible for any one to see the whole of it when feeding, so much ground did it cover.

'It was Koloi-Kant's habit to drive all his sheep into an enormous cavern having an entry like a gateway; but instead of doors he used a flat stone so large that it took 60 men to move it; whereas Koloi-Kant could put it in place with one hand.

'Now, Seska-Solsa, with the 60 Orkhoustoitsi,[1] had a mind to go raiding; but first, as on other occasions, he paid a visit to Botoko-Shirtga for advice as to where to look for booty. "I suggest Koloi-Kant", said Botoko-Shirtga, "his sheep are numberless; but I warn you beforehand that you will not get the better of him; he is too strong."

'"What's that you say, Shirtga, putting me to shame before the Orkhoustoitsi? Is it possible that I, Solsa, who have never yet found my match for strength, valour, or cunning, cannot vanquish one shepherd?" So he went with his comrades to Koloi-Kant, with the intention of driving off his sheep. When they came to the cavern where Koloi-Kant then was, they moved away the flat stone at the entrance with their united strength. As soon as they were inside, up

[1] In this story the Orkhoustoitsi, in contrast to the Narts, are wicked giants, who apply to the semi-supernatural being, Botoko-Shirtga, for advice and help when they want it, but at other times mock him. Botoko-Shirtga had the power of visiting the other world and returning at will, and it was through him that the mountain men first knew for certain that the food and other articles they consecrated to the dead in very fact reached and profited them in the world beyond the grave. For, after one of Botoko-Shirtga's many deaths, they stingily sacrificed in his honour but a couple of hens and a cock; yet on his reappearance they had the impudence to speak of the many oxen, sheep, &c., they had devoted to his memory. Whereupon he informed them gravely that he had seen nothing of all that in the land of the dead, but merely two hens and a cock! From that moment animal sacrifices were resumed in full vigour. Dalgat (*b*), p. 36. Botoko-Shirtga is the 'Syrdon' of farther west, not a Nart but a malicious, semi-supernatural jester, and, so to say, servant, of the Nart heroes, he of the Labyrinth (vol. ii, p. 148).

came the he-goat who talked like a man, and began butting them. "What are you doing, don't you see that they come as guests?" said Koloi-Kant, who had just woke up; and he began chasing the goat away. At that moment the sixty Orkhoustoitsi, and Seska-Solsa with them, rushed at him from all sides. Koloi-Kant shook his shoulders and spattered all the Orkhoustoitsi against the walls of the cavern, and gave Solsa such a box on the ear that he span round like a top. They hardly escaped alive.

'Solsa came back to Botoko-Shirtga and admitted that there was one man in the world stronger than himself and that was Koloi-Kant; "but one of us two must die," said Solsa; "it is not possible for both of us to live at one and the same time." Solsa then asked Botoko-Shirtga to devise some means of lessening Koloi-Kant's strength, or say how else to vanquish him.

'"There's one way only" said Botoko-Shirtga, "and that is to seduce Koloi-Kant into a love affair with some woman, when, if he spends two weeks in intimate relations with her, he will lose some of his strength. So that, if you want to defeat your rival, Koloi-Kant, send your sister to him; let her try to establish relations with him. Two weeks later you can go to him with the rest of the Orkhoustoitsi, and bind him without fear, and drive off all his flocks." Solsa took this advice. He sent his sister to Koloi-Kant. Koloi-Kant received her [honourably] as an unknown guest and when evening came killed a sheep for her.

'Having supped they lay down to sleep separately, but after a while Solsa's sister rose, went to the place where Koloi-Kant lay and wanted to lie with him, saying that Fate evidently meant them to be husband and wife. "Be off with you," said Koloi-Kant; "you must know that I pledged myself never to marry, never to have anything to do with a woman. Go right away to-morrow, but if you insist on a favour from me, I will willingly give you even half my sheep so only that you leave me in peace."

'But she remained another night and again came to Koloi-Kant's bedside, and was once more driven off by him. The third night, when she came to him, he could no longer master his feelings, and permitted her to lie with him. From that moment Koloi-Kant gave the rein to his passion—all his time was spent with Seska-Solsa's sister. He gave up feeding his sheep, the he-goat taking his place and driving

them to [and from] the cavern—the goat with human speech. The more time Koloi-Kant spent with Solsa's sister, the more his strength wilted. He could no longer jam the stone close up to the cavern entry; day by day, indeed, the opening widened so that after ten days a man could easily make entrance. Meantime Solsa had not forgotten Botoko-Shirtga's counsel; at the end of two weeks he went with Botoko-Shirtga and his comrades, the Orkhoustoitsi, to Koloi-Kant, and the passage-way being free they entered without any difficulty and found Koloi-Kant asleep across Solsa's sister's knees. The Orkhoustoitsi promptly bound him with a rope made of horse-hair and it was only then that Koloi-Kant awoke. Once awake, however, he struggled so hard that the rope cut his flesh to the bone. Then the Orkhoustoitsi killed his favourite goat and made a *shashlyk* of his flesh, and Koloi-Kant begged them to give him one bone, at least, of his own goat. The Orkhoustoitsi, without exception, refused him even one; but not so Solsa's sister, who said: "I, even I, will give him what he asks", and handed him a thigh-bone. Then Koloi-Kant, taking the bone from her to whom his weakness was due, made a flute of it and played upon it in plaintive style.[1] Now, this song reached the ears of Koloi-Kant's eldest brother's wife, when, towards evening, she was milking her cows in the yard; said she, "that music is certainly played by my husband's youngest brother; some misfortune must have befallen him". So she went in and told her husband and brother-in-law. Immediately they set out in that direction where dwelt the Orkhoustoitsi, being convinced that it was they who had carried off their brother and his sheep. Already they were close up to the Orkhoustoitsi, between the Djerakh and the Dariel gorges, when the Almighty, foreseeing that if Koloi-Kant's brothers overtook them human blood would be shed needlessly, changed the course of the river Terek, so that Koloi-Kant and his brothers with Solsa's sister and half the sheep remained upon the right bank, the Orkhoustoitsi upon the left bank with the other half of Koloi-Kant's flocks, this by way of *kalim* (bride-price) for Solsa's sister.[2] Koloi-Kant,

[1] 'This tune is known to the mountaineers under the name of "Koloi-Kant" and is a favourite with shepherds.' Akhreeyeff's note.

[2] One may note the Deity's humanity and His laudable respect for local custom. The localities are transposed, for the Narts were, properly, dwellers in Ossetia and Circassia, the Orkhoustoitsi east of the Terek.

seeing that the Terek shut him off from the Orkhoustoitsi and being desirous of displaying both his strength and the anger he felt against them, snatched up a long flat stone, and struck it into the ground, crying that he would do the same by them if ever he caught them. The Orkhoustoitsi by way of retort struck a similar stone into the earth.[1] Then, having threatened each other and proved their strength, they parted; the Orkhoustoitsi went off to Sanibi [Sanibá] and Koloi-Kant with his brothers and Solsa's sister, whom Koloi-Kant took to wife, returned home. Having come to his native *aoul*, Koloi-Kant [mindful of his former experience] wished to try what strength was left him after marriage. With this object in view he climbed up to the top of a mountain and set up there three rocks or stones of colossal dimensions.[2] From that day forth no one ventured to disturb him or sought to drive away his sheep.'

I cannot resist the temptation to add here Akhreeyeff's version of the death of Seska-Solsa. The Orkhoustoitsi, it seems, accumulated so many offences against the Deity that He was driven at last to plague them out of existence. When they sowed corn, grass came up. When in place of bread they ate meat, it putrefied in their kettles. So, to end it once for all they decided to commit race-suicide and chose a most desperate means—*they melted down copper, red copper, and drank it!* Now Solsa was the last to die, and dying he was tormented by a thirst so terrible that he called to a crow flying overhead to bring him water. 'Why', said the crow, 'I thought you dead already and I came to pick your toothsome eyes out.' So Solsa cursed the crow and promised a cupful of drink to whoever should kill him. Next came a wolf, slouching along, and to him Solsa proffered the same request; but the wolf said, 'I didn't come here, O Solsa, to help you, but to tear out your entrails and gobble them up; I thought you no longer living.' And Solsa cursed the wolf and vowed to give three goblets full of drink to the man who should slay

[1] 'The stone said to have been set up by Koloi-Kant stood on the right bank of the Terek, but when in 1856 Russian troops came to the Djerakh defile the soldiers broke it up for whetstones, while the stone set up by the Orkhoustoitsi remains to this day on the left bank of the Terek, close to Fort Djerakh.' Akhreeyeff's note.

[2] 'These rocks or stones make a semblance of a fairly high tower, each stone being more than 14 feet high. Between the second and the third are small stones by way of supports. It is the fact of these small stones being there as supports that occasions the native belief that they were so placed by human hands.' Akhreeyeff's note.

him! Then a wood-pigeon flew by and for the third time Solsa uttered his prayer. Now the wood-pigeon went off and brought back water in his [soft] red-leather slippers; so Solsa thanked him and stroked his neck; and that is why the wood-pigeon has a neck of burnished gold to this day and sings ever, '*Kok solsan kok; kok solsan kok*'.[1]

In a somewhat different version the Narts are destroyed by fire from Heaven;[2] and in a South Ossetine variation the corn, ripe for cutting at night, is green again at dawn, wherefore the Orkhoustoitsi, having split the points of their arrows, shoot down the ears, as many as they can, and gather them in the morning.[3] In yet another, North Ossetine, version[4] the grain shows at night as luminous points against the sky, an easier mark, maybe; but in neither case is the supply of food obtained sufficient to stave off death by hunger for long. The heroes die, but the magic grain in course of time takes to growing normally as maize, which is thus distinctly recognized as a comparative novelty. It is still known as 'food of the Narts', but this must be a late accretion if it be true that maize only became known in Europe after the discovery of America, and, as one authority says, was unknown to the Ossetines as late as the end of the eighteenth century. The evidence on this latter head, however, seems to be purely negative.[5]

Next morning (Oct. 7th) we left Ersh at 7.45 and rode on down the Assá, which was here deep. At one place where the river formed an elbow and the road was in bad order, the horses were driven across while we scrambled round on foot. A little later we forded the river just below where some sulphur springs come in and make their presence unmistakably known by their stench, though the water remains transparent.[6]

[1] I'm a 'pigeon, Solsa's pigeon; pigeon, Solsa's pigeon'.

[2] *Gor.*, vol. ix, 'Ossete Nart Legends' by Gatsir Shanayeff.

[3] Tchoursin, *Osetini*, 1915, p. 5.

[4] Dumézil, p. 14, quoting M. S. Touganoff, *Kto takie Narti?* (Who were the Narts?), in *Izv. oset. instituta Kraevedeniya*, Vladikavkaz, 1925, vol. i, p. 377, one of several recent works published in the Caucasus which I have, fortunately, though very late in the day, been able to procure.

[5] Kokeeyeff, *op. cit.*, p. 44. He suggests 'millet' for maize.

[6] Inostrantseff, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

We rode down through the second of the limestone defiles of the Assá, bearing the native name Tsorkh, and passed, also, between high banks, first of the Lower, then of the Upper Cretaceous systems, to debouch upon more open country near Alkoun. The scenery had again been wonderfully fine, and the fact that we rode sometimes near the river level, sometimes 200 or more feet sheer above it, with a wealth of beech, ash, and lime trees on either side, enabled us to see it to very great advantage. At Alkoun we saw an old Russian fort, used as a station by the mounted police, with an antiquated iron cannon in the stable. Just beyond we met a party of *Zikrists*, armed with pick and shovel, coming to mend the road. These fanatics, as always, impressed me strongly by their fierce and gloomy looks, which helped me to realize the many terrible episodes in which they or their predecessors had figured.

The country now opened out; there were wide stretches of maize and other crops, and beyond them, on either side, forest. At 11.30 a.m. we reached Mouzhitchi and rode up to the large and substantial red-tiled wooden house of Taghee's father, Hadji Maali Khoteeyeff, who made us heartily welcome.

It was a moment Taghee had been looking forward to ever since we turned our backs on the Arkhotis Pass, and I quite understood his feelings. Ourousbi was a friend and a man of some note in the country; I, in turn, had won Taghee's regard, and he was proud to present the pair of us to his father, and his father to us; for Hadji Maali held a high place not only amongst his own tribesmen but far and wide, and for qualities that were undoubtedly worthy of honour, though also for one deed, at least, that in more civilized countries would have stamped him a criminal. We must not, however, judge all men by our own standards; and, in any case, qualities and motives may go to the accomplishment even of a crime that of themselves compel admiration.

Hadji Maali had eight sons, including Taghee, by three wives. Several of them lived with him, some married, these having each his separate room and the use, of course, of the common rooms. But the children increased so in number that the house grew small, and a party of Russian carpenters—shuffling, dirty fellows—were then engaged in adding to it. The soil here was rich; maize and other crops gave abundant yields; fruit-trees, too; and the Hadji was

evidently well off. We soon sat down to a substantial meal, and, of course, a fat sheep would be killed for supper, and many other good things provided. When we had stayed our hunger for the time being, I asked the Hadji, at Ourousbi's suggestion, to tell us the famous story of how he saved the *abreks*, and, after a little persuasion, he spoke as follows—in substance that is; for I could not remember every point when it came to jotting it down on paper that night, far less can I do justice now to the narrator's eloquence and sense of humour.

How Hadji Maali saved the abreks.

'Well, Iván Ivánovitch, this is how it all happened. One winter evening, when it was already dark, guests arrived—four of them, not our people, nor Ossetines, nor Kabardáns, but Abkhaztsi [Abkhazians],[1] and on foot, which was strange, as you probably know, for Taghee tells me that already you understand many of our ways and customs. I had my suspicions, but a guest is a guest. They remained with me very quietly for ten days, saying little, even amongst themselves, and hardly leaving the house before sundown. By this time, of course, I knew very well who they were—the men who had robbed the post at Armavir[2] and in the fight that took place had killed three employees. The affair made an uncommon stir, and the authorities throughout the Caucasus, military, police, and what not, were searching for them high and low, so that the chances against them were very great. But it is no custom of ours to question a guest, so I said nothing, though I felt very uneasy.

'On the 11th day, we being all together in this room, one of them told me that they wished to sleep that night in my bedroom'—the Hadji pointed to it—'I agreed, and later their leader took up my Koran and asked me to become their sworn brother. I consented and was sworn to fight, and die if necessary, with and for them. Then they

[1] These unfortunate people were expatriated in large numbers by the Russians in 1877. They would come back from Turkey from time to time singly or in small parties, seeking their lost homes, but they were of necessity outlaws, *abreks*.

[2] An *aoul* on the left bank of the river Koubán, 60 miles west of Stavropol, not the ruins of Armavir the old Armenian capital on the river Araxes. The origin of this modern Armavir is an interesting one. It was founded by Crimean Armenians who had taken refuge from Tartar oppression with the Circassians 250 or more years ago. When the Circassians became converted to Islam they in turn began to persecute the Armenians as Christians, and, eventually, in 1840, the latter sought refuge over the Russian border.

admitted frankly who they were and the same night went away, where to I never knew. In May they came back without any warning and said that I must now take them as far as the Turkish frontier, so after a few days preparation we started. I took them first, not up the river, but round about, travelling by night only, to the Galgai country you have just been through and up past Tsori and Gouloi to the Malkists. There we stayed with the *starshiná*, who provided us with a guide. The Malkists, I must tell you, took us over places where the way was so rough and so dangerous that they had to carry us, at times, on their backs, and others so high and steep and snow-covered that they let us down, sliding, on our *bourkas*.[1] At Shatil the *starshiná* gave us two guides. On the other (south) side of the mountains a *preestaff* [district-officer] entertained us to tea. Knowing who we were? Oh, yes! At Doushet [on the Georgian road] the *preestaff* stopped us on the bridge, but we had papers with us from the Khamkhee police office passing us on to Tioneti on legitimate business, oh, quite legitimate! Then came a most troublesome adventure. Nearing Mtskhet we came plump upon a body of 30 soldiers drawn up across the road under command of a Russian officer who was quite drunk. We had to dismount and for several hours he kept us there, alternately threatening and cajoling, even embracing and kissing us. No doubt he had strong suspicions, but he was too muddled to focus them. At last one of the *abreks* lost his temper and struck him across the face with his whip [*nagaika*]. This sobered him a bit and he shouted to his men to shoot us down like dogs, yet not a man obeyed—they were themselves tired out and disgusted by his performances. We remounted hastily and rode on, and had not gone far when who should come riding by but Prince [Bagration] Moukhransky. Here was a new danger, seemingly, but it turned out quite otherwise. He insisted on taking us all to his country house near by, *as guests*, and there entertained us royally [he was a descendant of the Kings of

[1] Züssermann in 1848 was let down in the same way by the Khevsours from the top of the Velketi Pass (8,748 ft.) above Khamkheti, now called Datvis-Dshvaris-gele, on the way to Shatil, probably the pass crossed by Hadji Maali in the opposite direction. General Chodzko, in 1850, started glissading down from the top of Mount Ararat on some sort of sledge, but finding the slope too steep took to a *bourka*. *Izv.*, vol. iv, p. 167. Abich slid down the flowerful, grassy slopes on the N. side of the Arkhotis pass seated on a *bourka* and found it rough going! *Aus Kaukasischen Ländern Reisebriefe von Hermann Abich*, Band ii, Wien, 1896, p. 94. For Leo III see *ante*, p. 34, note 2.

Georgia!] and helped us forward in every possible way. You suppose that he, at least, knew nothing about us, Iván Ivánovitch? O yes, but he did; who we were and all! We rode on to Tiflis after dark and stopped at a *doukhan* on the outskirts of the city, and now came perhaps the greatest of many dangers. We were bound to take to the railway, for the authorities, putting one thing with another, were either hot upon our tracks or soon would be, and we must make the Turkish frontier with all possible speed. It was necessary, therefore, to abandon the horses, for take them with us we could not, while any attempt to sell them would have been madness. So in the morning we pretended that we were going for a walk to see the town, slipped off to the station and, hardly expecting such luck, got away unnoticed. But this led subsequently to my own undoing. With other adventures and hair's-breadth escapes too numerous to relate we reached the frontier at last, and my four *abreks* took leave of me, with heartfelt protestations of gratitude. They also forced upon me a gold watch as a memento. Then I started back and driving one day into Akhaltsikh in a phaeton I fell into an ambush on the bridge! The *doukhanshtchik* [innkeeper] at Tiflis, it seems, had, after a while, reported the disappearance of five strangers leaving their horses behind them. Then, so far as I was concerned, the game was up. The police knew I must come back, and come back alone, and they made ready for me everywhere.

'The ambush was composed of both police and soldiery. They had me out of the carriage in no time and proceeded to rob me of everything I possessed—the *abreks*' gold watch, my silver one, a silver belt, gold-inlaid, and, of course, all my money. But when one of them took hold of my copper kettle my patience came to an end. I seized it, a tussle took place for its possession, and wresting it free I raised my arm and brought the kettle down bang on the head of the police-officer himself, felling him to the ground. At that the soldiers intervened, seized and stripped me, put me in irons, and the whole crowd of them haled me to prison, where I lay for 18 days. On the second day they brought me back my worn old trousers and *beshmet*, as a special favour of the Chief of the District [*Natchalnik Ókrouga*], *who had been present himself at the capture and pillage* and had said not one word. Think of that, Iván Iván'itch!

'Then I was forwarded by *étape* [i.e. from one convict-station to

another] to Vladikavkaz, tried, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, though I acknowledged nothing and had a plausible lie ready to explain my presence at each of the many places where I knew it could be proved. It so happened, however, that soon after came the coronation of His Majesty [the late Emperor Nicholas II] and in accordance with the usual manifesto my sentence was halved. So I got off with one year in prison after all!

'When I was let out, Kakhánoff, who knew me well, for I had served 11 years in his Soundja regiment, asked me in a friendly way to tell him all about it, which I did, Iván Iván'itch, much as I have told it to you now. Kakhánoff, himself, was honest enough, but bribery and corruption were rampant round him, the chief culprit being his nephew Zolotarieff, who took Rs. 170 from me—all I could raise at the moment—to get me off, but did nothing for it. At last he took Rs. 5,000 to procure a fishery concession for some one at Rs. 35,000; it went to another candidate who had bribed him higher, for Rs. 25,000, whereupon there was a big scandal leading to Kakhánoff's downfall.' The date of this *abrek* adventure was 1896.

The good Hadji, a man past middle age, with a pleasant, open face, bearded as became a pilgrim—he had been to Mecca this year and wore a white *tchalma* round his *papakha*—told his story impressively, but I was—wickedly no doubt—amused at the calm way in which he recounted the many ingenious lies he had told to account for his proceedings. Born some few centuries earlier he might well have taken his place amongst the better sort of Nart heroes.

In the second gorge or defile Taghee had pointed out the spot where two years previously or thereabouts an Ingoosh *stárosta*, a very popular man named Inal, had been ambushed and murdered by *Zikrists*, followers of Batal Hadji, because he refused to allow one of their band, who had been driven out of his community for ill conduct, to return. Inal's brother was with him and shot the assassin, wounding him severely. His companions attempted to carry him off, but failed, and the brother then killed him. Now, this was quite fair, a life for a life, and no further bloodshed called for—

Romeo slew him, he slew Mercutio.

But other relations of Inal, exasperated by their loss, shot and

wounded another of the *Zikrists* in his own yard,[1] and when he died endeavoured to make out that it was from a disease he was known to suffer from and not from the wound. The Russian authorities then intervened, a post-mortem was held, and the body kept for that purpose three hours, untended. This was a deadly outrage in native eyes and roused the *Zikrists* to fury, so that they swore to kill Inal's brother, though he, personally, the first avenger, was in native eyes blameless. It was then that Hadji Maali intervened and, in almost impossible circumstances, effected a reconciliation.

After supper I begged the Hadji to tell me this story, too, which he did, as follows:

Hadji Maali, Inal's brother, and the Zikrists.

'The only thing to do, Iván Iván'itch, was to go straight to Batal Hadji and ask him to become my sworn brother. He agreed, willingly, and sent for his wife[2] that I might suck her breast, but I refused, gently, saying that we were both old and it was not seemly, though the custom. So we swore on the Koran instead. Then for a whole year I worked uninterruptedly for reconcilement, but the exasperation was so great that I hardly hoped to succeed. Eventually, however, Batal Hadji helping, the affair was arranged on the basis of a payment of Rs. 310 cash, 3 horses, 3 cows, 3 sheep, and Rs. 60 more as compensation for the widow, to be handed to her on her accepting Inal's brother as her own son under oath. He, as our custom is in such cases, must go to the dead man's tomb with the cattle and horses, and wait there, holding a white flag and imploring pardon out loud; and so he did, but the family forbade him under threat of death, there and then, to touch the tomb [lying full length on it would be a necessary part of the performance] until all the negotiations, to the last detail, were ended; and, owing to the said uncommon exasperation, this took two more weeks. You must know that the relatives had sworn three times on the Koran, most solemnly, never to forgive, but we induced the Moullá to declare the oath invalid. Finally I offered, from myself, an extra horse, with a full-grown ox tied to his tail, having 10 *arshins* [*c.* 8 yds.] of white silk wound round his horns, and a full-grown sheep tied, in turn, to his,

[1] See *ante*, p. 117.

[2] Instead of 'mother', who was probably dead?

the ox's, tail. The *Zikrist* family was at last won over; the reconciliation took place as arranged, and next day, very handsomely, my horse was returned to me as a gift.'

Hadji Maali told me, further, that he had already reconciled seven blood-feuds since his return from Mecca that year and had more cases in hand. The relationships brought about by breast-sucking—in one case mother, sister, and daughter of the dead man were all three concerned—and in other ways, had, he told me, all the force of real affinities; they entailed, that is to say, all the corresponding inhibitions. Thus in the *Tagebuch*[1] the murderer of an only son flies to the mother and, dagger in hand, compels her to give him her breast. Other relatives demand blood-revenge, but the woman, whose right it is to decide, says 'now that he has sucked my breast, if you kill him I lose *two* sons', and the murderer's life is spared. When Seska-Solsa, once, meditates a rape, the intended victim secretly prepares a dish of porridge, mixing with it her own milk. He partakes of it and the woman's honour is saved.[2] Adoption by breast-sucking was also used to put a stop to adulterous intercourse. The lovers, under compulsion, became mother and son.[3] Adoption of this kind, though for other reasons, goes very far back in history. On a fragment of a bas-relief of the Fifth Dynasty found by Barsanti in the Chapel of Unas a goddess gives suck to the king, adopting him as her son;[4] and Hathor's milk makes the drinker her son and free henceforward of the western regions, inhabited by the gods and by the souls of the dead.[5]

Hardly less remarkable was the Ossetine custom by which the blood-feud ceased if the murderer managed to steal his victim's son, adopt him, and bring him up.[6] Ellis[7] attributes this custom to the

[1] p. 59. [2] Dalgat (*b*), p. 37. [3] Karghinoff, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
[4] Maspero, *Guide*, &c., 1908, p. 45 (Engl. ed.).
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 135. [6] *Tagebuch*, p. 59.
[7] *Memoir of a Map of the Countries comprehended between the Black Sea and the Caspian; with an account of the Caucasian Nations, and Vocabularies of their Languages.* London: printed for I. Edwards, in Pall Mall, 1788, p. 24. The author (George, not William Ellis, as Pallas, whom he visited in St. Petersburg in 1786, in his edition of Güldenstädt's *Reisen*, &c., 1787, vol. i, Intr., p. v, and again on p. 160 n., erroneously calls him) was one of Walter Scott's most intimate friends. Two cantos of Marmion were written at Ellis's house near Sunningdale and one of the intercantonal rhymed epistles in that poem is addressed to him.

Circassians, amongst whom fosterage was the rule positive for the son and heir of a chief. Our 'Anonymous', writing of the Ossetines more generally, tells us that 'they entrust their sons to strangers, often to whole villages and districts, to be brought up'.[1] Yet another method was for the woman to take the man she meant to adopt under her chemise and then make pretence of giving birth to him. Whether or not he was a murderer and, if so, the murderer of her son, the brief summary of an article at my disposal fails to inform us. This method obtained amongst the Armenians, the Azerbaidjan Tartars, and the Karapapakhs (Black-[sheepskin-]caps), while the Kurds had recourse to simulated birth, followed, to 'mak sicker', I suppose, by breast-sucking.[2]

The sacred hearth, or hearth-stone (and in the Caucasus the still more sacred chain above it), gave the right of sanctuary as in ancient Greece (cf. Ulysses in the house of Alcinous) and the Highlands of Scotland up to the '45 at least,[3] but I have not come across any case there of a murderer thus seeking safety in the house of his victim.

A common form of reconciliation between men, in less serious cases, was, as already mentioned, to drink out of one cup in which had been placed a piece of gold or silver, whether coined or not, and this was kept by the injured party (the avenger) as a reminder. A relic this, perhaps, of the Scythian oath so well illustrated by Professor Rostovtzeff.[4]

The Hadji had also done much in the way of finding and restoring to their owners stolen goods, especially horses, sheep, and cattle; and he promised, if possible, to get back a grey ox stolen from Ourousbi two years previously and said to be then at Datikh, not far off.

He also spoke of his family tower at Kart, affirming that it dated only from three generations back. His father had been present at the Khoulee massacre in 1831, which led to Baron Rosen's expedition next year.[5]

[1] One more point in common between the mountaineers of the Caucasus and the Scottish Highlanders. MacLeod, *op. cit.*, p. 19. John Splendid, when the 'Argyle' fails lamentably, opines that it would have been far otherwise had he been 'sent a fostering in the old style.' Neil Munro, *J.S.*, p. 23.

[2] *Izviest. Kavk. Istor.-Arkheologh. Inst. v Tiflisye.* Leningrad, 1930, p. 18.

[3] Munro makes good play with this in *The New Road*, 1930, p. 183.

[4] *Iranians and Greeks*, pp. 104, 106 (quoting Herodotus); and see under 'Communion' in his Index.

[5] *Ante*, p. 110.

Of Batal Hadji, in whom by now I had come to take a great interest, I learned that he was really successor to Kounta Hadji, who led the rising in Tchetchnia in 1862–4,[1] but part of the sect had split off from the rest, maintaining that Kounta was still their leader, not dead and gone, but present with them yet in spirit form. They were extreme fanatics, danced and howled, and at Mecca had been beaten by the sheikhs for making too much noise.[2] Batal's followers numbered 100 families, and they, too, were fanatical, though not quite to the same extent as the Kounta-Hadjintsi. 'For instance,' said Hadji Maali, 'they might give you bread or water, but they would throw what remained to the dogs, nor would they on any account accept food or drink from you; but Batal Hadji himself is very hospitable, and treats a guest well, giving him even wine or *vodka* and cigarettes, though, being a Hadji, he neither drinks nor smokes himself. At harvest-time his followers, men and women, do all the work for him, gathering to the number of two hundred to husk the maize and winnow the wheat. Batal has the useful faculty of knowing beforehand when a guest is coming and what sort of guest, troublesome or the reverse.[3] He lives at Sourkhatchee, near here, but spent five years at Kalouga, exiled by Kakhánoff. His wife was held in greater esteem than any other Ingoosh woman; unhappily she is just dead.' Hadji Maali had in fact been to condole and had spent a night at Batal Hadji's house lately. He meant to make the Mecca pilgrimage again in two years' time, for the Prophet had said: 'Take your son there, and if you have no son take your servant,' and he had both sons and servants.

He spoke of a local custom of giving cattle out to feed for three years, after which the owner received back two-thirds, including any natural increment there might be, the remaining one-third with its increment becoming the property of the feeder. Similarly, an ancestor of his once took nine Khevsour men and nine women and

[1] See *ante*, p. 80.

[2] According to Doubróvin *Zikra* meant the repetition scores and even hundreds of times, ever louder and louder, of the great affirmation *Lia-illiakhi*, &c., *op. cit.*, vol. i, pt. i, pp. 320–1, or more correctly *Lā lāha illa 'llah*. For a brilliant description of such a scene see *Taha the Egyptian*, by M. Cathcart Borer, Pitman & Sons, London, 1937.

[3] I find a parallel to this in *Waverley* (chap. xvii): 'Donnacha an Amrigh, or Duncan with the Cap, who foretold, through the second sight, visitors whether coming as friends or foes.'

Hadji Maalis niece

fed them, and when the fourth year came he set free six of each sex, besides all children born to them, and kept the rest as slaves. From them were derived in course of time a considerable number of serfs who were eventually emancipated by the Russian Government and were now well off, occupying an *aoul* in Galgai country, perhaps the people already referred to as paying an unusually small blood-wite.[1] The Khevsours were so poor, formerly, that they brought their girl-children down from the mountains and sold them for 9 measures of barley and 9 of millet each; it was that or death, for when, as often happened, their wretched harvest failed, there was no food to give them.

It is surely a matter of considerable interest to find the 'cheptel' custom—of the Basques, in particular—amongst the Ingooshee; more especially in view of Professor Marr's recent development of his Japhetic theory. I have found no allusion to it myself in Caucasian literature, nor to its extension to human beings anywhere.[2]

Next morning (Oct. 8th) we were up and out before 7 o'clock, the sun shining brightly. A girl came past from the well, carrying a copper jar on her back. With permission, readily granted (by her male relatives), I took her photograph, and Ourousbi, helped by her uncle, the Hadji, and others of the family—showing how emancipated these people were in some respects—'staged' a bride-stealing performance, such as he and others had so often spoken of; indeed,

[1] *Ante*, p. 207.

[2] See *Les loisirs d'un Étranger au pays Basque* (non mis dans le commerce), *Chalon-sur-Saône*, 1901, dedicated to Julien Vinson by Wentworth Webster. On page 251 comes 'Les assurances mutuelles du bétail et le cheptel parmi les fermiers et paysans du S. O. de la France et du N. de l' Espagne', a considerable article with many references, as—for 'cheptel'—to *Ducange* under *Catallum* 'Posséder par Catallum, c'est a dire posséder à *chate vel à chatel.* Avoir la moitié des produits', especially of animals given by one man to another to be kept, on condition that half of any progeny goes to each of the two contracting parties. Ducange gives an example of A.D. 1382. But under Gasalia (Languedoc), which means the same as cheptel, he has an example of A.D. 1247, and since then references to the custom have been found of the ninth and tenth centuries.

This custom is intimately connected with that of Mutual Insurance of cattle (Webster, as above).

In modern French ' cheptel ' is the usual word for the live stock and even dead stock on a farm. It is used in this sense by a writer in *Prométhée* (No. 74, Jan. 1933) when describing the desperate measures adopted by the Caucasian mountaineers against their Soviet oppressors.

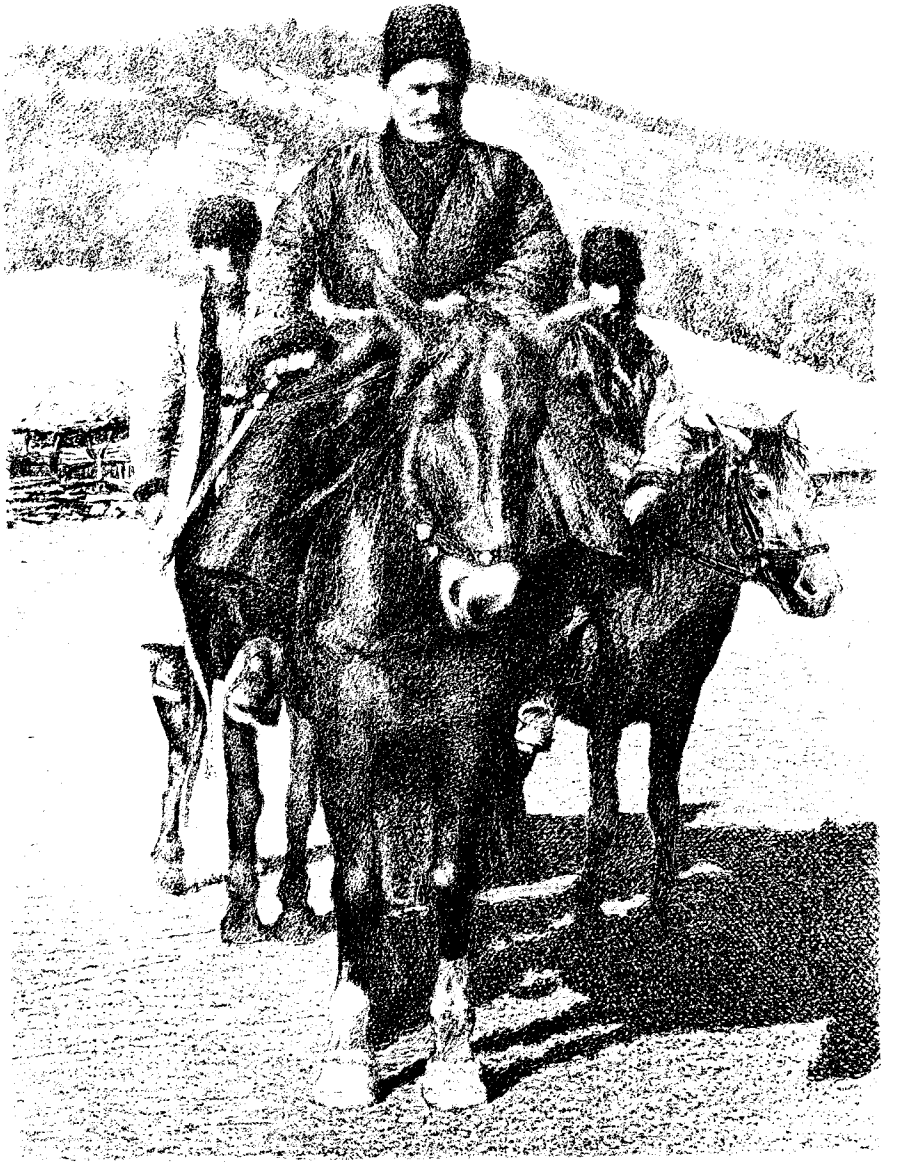
Ourousbi was evidently considered an expert in such matters. Saddling and bridling his horse, he mounted; then, twisting the left stirrup-leather, thrust his foot through it above the iron. This brought his left knee well above the peaked saddle-bow. It was supposed, of course, to be the elopement of a willing bride, and the girl took her part, laughing and blushing, with evident enjoyment. Taking his right hand and setting her own right foot on his, lowered out of the stirrup to meet her, she was up in a trice and swung round so that her back was against Ourousbi's left knee, while his arms went about her, the left hand holding the reins, the *nagaika* hanging from the right. Then away at a mad gallop round the spacious grassy enclosure with wild cries, once, twice, a sudden halt, and the next moment the girl stood demurely with downcast eyes on one side, Ourousbi flushed and laughing on the other. He explained to me that the willing bride was easily managed, but the rape of an unwilling one was a very different matter. He was then persuaded to tell the story of how he had helped to carry off a Kabardán princess, but that I reserve for its own scene of action.[1]

The Hadji and all the men about had, of course, been allowed to examine my Winchester (sporting) five-shooter. I now let him fire a shot or two with it at a 13 *vershok* (40 inch) beech-log lying in the yard, which, to the general astonishment, the bullets went clean through.

I think the Hadji had just told me, in all seriousness, that what struck him most during his pilgrimage was the tomb of Adam's wife at Jidda, 'her navel as large as a bucket, Iván Iván'itch!'[2] when, at 9.30 a.m., horsemen suddenly appeared and amidst general and evidently pleasurable excitement Batal Hadji rode in, accompanied by his fourth son and two of his fanatical followers, who scowled savagely at Ourousbi and me. He was an old man, rather stout, with a good face and a very courteous manner. Recognizing Ourousbi, who offered his condolences, he leaned over, embraced and kissed him, while tears came in his eyes. He shook hands with me, allowed

[1] Vol. ii, pp. 221 sqq. My photographs on this occasion unfortunately failed, with the exception of that reproduced on the preceding plate.

[2] Dr. Hogarth, in a letter dated Jidda, Jan. 10th, 1918, wrote 'our first mother is supposed to have been about 100 feet high, and there is a dome at her head, another at her waist, and a third at her feet'. *R.G.S. Journal*, Apr. 1928, so Hadji Maali's comparison can hardly be supposed an exaggeration.



Batal Hadji

me to photograph him, and told me that I should be very welcome if ever I came his way. Then, Hadji Maali having mounted and bidden me good-bye, offering to take me himself to Galantchodj and to the Malkists next year, the two rode off in haste to visit a third Hadji who, it seemed, had shot himself accidentally with a pistol and lay dying, not far off.

Ourousbi, Taghee, and I then started, at 10 a.m., and riding up quietly through very fine woods some 1,600 feet to the top of a pass (3,927 ft. above sea-level) had a glorious view of the forest-covered slopes of Mat-khokh, and the snowy ranges beyond, from the Basti-lam to Djimarai-khokh. We reached Vladikavkaz, 22 miles, at 3.45 p.m. and, thinking things over, I came to the conclusion that though my intention to cross the Central Chain had been defeated, I had little to regret.

Ourousbi's kalim.

Next day (Oct. 9th) I reminded Ourousbi of his promise to tell me all about his *kalim*, and this he now did, adding a good many details as to his own marriage and others touching birth and death customs still prevalent amongst his countrymen, the Ossetines. He said:

'My *kalim*, Iván Ivánovitch, amounted to Rs. 650 [£65] made up as follows: Rs.300 cash, 1 horse valued at Rs.100, another at Rs.70, a pair of oxen Rs.120, and 2 cows Rs.60. Besides this I had to choose five young men of my friends and ride with them to Ardon,[1] where my bride lived, carrying gifts for her—an accordion, &c.—for her mother, and for all her older relations except her father. This was called *Siakhsi-tsid*. I was then entertained by them with feasting, dances, and so on; after which I was allowed to see the bride freely. Having returned home I had to send the *khun*, which was a gift of beer, *arrack*, bread, a turkey, and other eatables; also a complete costume for the bride and a shawl or kerchief for her mother. This cost me another Rs.60. Then I had to invite all the men of the bride's family who, to the number of thirty, though not all at once, came to Sanibá, where I handed over to them the Rs.300 cash and allowed them to choose from all my cattle and horses the animals agreed upon for the *kalim*—and of course entertained them. This is called *Eerad-eesha* (*kalim*-taking). They then went back to Ardon to prepare the

[1] Ardon was a 30-mile ride from Sanibá and not a very easy one.

bride, and on their part gave her a silver belt with other ornaments and a chest of clothes, including everything necessary for from two to three years, not omitting even threads and needles. The bride had in turn to provide gifts for all my relations, and mattresses, pillows, &c., not only for herself and for me, but for the guests who might happen to visit us; also household articles such as dishes, pitchers, &c. of copper, all of which taken together fell not far short in value of my own gifts.[1]

'Her father had to invite all the relations on both sides, sixty or more, and entertain them for two whole days, after which came the wedding, ending with a grand *djighitovka* in course of which the bride was brought to my house in Sanibá. Every guest before leaving gave from one to ten roubles, which were put together and presented to the bride's mother. One of the girl friends made a flag embroidered in silver thread, which was attached to a stick and carried in the procession. For this she was paid four or five roubles.'

The wedding, with these nominally Christian Ossetines, took place in a church if one happened (as in this case) to be convenient, after which the bride was brought back by the groomsman to the house of her parents and into the *khadzar* or combined kitchen and living room common to all members of the household, where beside the hearth-chain the guests all gave her their blessing. The procession was then formed and started for Sanibá with firing of guns and pistols, shouting, whistling, &c., and the *djighitovka* above mentioned, the young men, particularly, careering about and performing all sorts of tricks on horseback. How far the procession went in its entirety I omitted to note, but not, I suppose, the whole way.

Arrived at her new home, Ourousbi said, the bride is taken to her own room by her girl friends, while the bridegroom retires with his 'best man' to the latter's dwelling, no communication being allowed between the couple. Next day, too, only the girls keep her company until evening, when she is brought to her new hearth and chain and bows humbly to her mother-in-law. Honey is then given to both bride and groom, after which the *fatá*, or bride-veil, is taken off by the groomsman amidst songs and merriment. Then the bride is taken back to her room and the young men devote themselves assiduously to watching for the bridegroom and endeavouring to prevent

[1] A custom doubtfully attributed to the Hittites.

him from gaining access to his bride.[1] If they catch him the groomsman has to buy him off by killing a sheep and making a feast.

For a whole month the husband can only visit his wife furtively and at night, spending his days in the groomsman's house, nor may he show himself to his own father or other older relations.[2] At the end of the month all the young people gather together again, *arrack* and other good things are sent to the bride's father, and the husband is brought openly to his bride, after which, at last, they may live together. All this time the bride may not show herself to any of the older generation of her husband's family, but her own female relations and girl friends may go and sit with her. At the end of six months, or sometimes a whole year, another ceremony takes place; she is again brought to the hearth and from that time takes part in the household work, but never in the whole of her life can she speak to the older men of the family. If the wife of a younger brother is occupied at the hearth, in cooking or otherwise, an elder brother may not enter the room until she has finished her work.[3] If she wants clothes or anything else, her husband may not buy them, that being the duty of his elder brothers, if he has any and they live in the same house—as is customary. The wife may not speak to her husband in the presence of older persons, not even of his mother.

Neither husband nor wife might take their children in their arms, or by hand, or give them anything, in the presence of older members of his family. 'So far is this carried,' said Ourousbi, 'that once one of my children fell into the water and might have been drowned, but as older men of the family were present I did not dare to call attention to the fact, much less take the child out of the water myself. Luckily one of them saw what was happening and saved it.[4]

[1] Compare the description of the wedding in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, together with Scott's note of wedding customs. Fatal results of the exasperating custom of 'listening-in' round the bridal-chamber, on the part of young men, are illustrated in the article 'Crime', *Gor.*, vol. iii, p. 6.

[2] 'In Sparta the bride, after marriage, remained for some time in her parents' house, where the bridegroom could visit her clandestinely.' Smith, *Dict. of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, 'Matrimonium', vol. ii, p. 132.

[3] Sisters-in-law might not even be seen by Mongol princes. Howorth, i. 350.

[4] So, too, Kosta Khetagouroff, the Ossetine poet, saved a child from falling off a high house-roof by stamping on its garment, but called a woman to pick it up as it would have been against custom for him to do so; and one of the Abayeffs, having in identical circumstances saved a child, called to its mother—his own wife—'Here, come and pick

'You must know too, Iván Ivánovitch, that with us it is the custom for the husband to undo his wife's stays on the wedding night, and her girl friends maliciously tie them up with as many knots as possible. It was already near dawn before I could manage to undo them all and I was growing anxious, for if one is compelled to use the *kinjal* there is great derision next day on the part of all the neighbours of both sexes, whereas if one succeeds in undoing the laces without cutting them the stays are shown to the public with pride; I was just in time!'

Many other interesting details are given by Shanayeff[1] and Gateeyeff.[2] The latter has a long list of deities appealed to at marriage to favour the young couple—for example the Ram-god is addressed as follows: 'O Firi-dzouar, we pray thee look down on us and grant that this our bride may give birth to boys healthy and fat as sheep!'

'When a child is born,' continued Ourousbi, 'the mother keeps her room a whole month afterwards, and during that time only women go near her. Her husband may not enter the room.' In this we have a faint reminder of some of the remarkable birth-customs prevalent at early stages amongst the majority of civilized peoples, and still in vogue at that time (1901) amongst the Khevsours, as Ourousbi and I had just seen.

'At a man's funeral his horse is led behind the coffin, and dedicated to him at the grave. In former times it was the custom to watch three days by the dead, and food and drink were put beside them. On hearing of a death the whole village leaves off work and sits around. Each of the young men takes it in turn to dig at the grave so as to have a hand in it. Once only in my recollection was an old man laid in one of the over-ground tombs, not buried as all are now. All the women of the family gather and beat their foreheads and knees alternately with the palms of their hands, so [suiting the actions to the words], and cry *dadai-wow-wow! dadai wow-wow!* A passing rider must dismount, take off his *bourka* if he has one on, give up his arms and join in the funeral. Then, resuming them and remounting, he must raise his *papakha* and say "Heavenly Kingdom" [? may the deceased enter it], turn to the right and go his way.'

up your puppy!' Tchoursin, *op. cit.*, p. 40. But in this respect a change had taken place. In more than one of my own photographs Ourousbi carries a friend's baby, and certainly no one's indignation was excited. See, too, Plate facing p. 110.

[1] 'Marriage of the Northern Ossetines', *Gor.*, vol. iv.

[2] 'Superstitions, &c., of the Ossetines', *Gor.*, vol. ix.

I asked whether it was still true, as Klaproth says, that the male relatives uncovered their heads and haunches and whipped themselves until the blood came. He said that he had never heard of it, but it was true that the women scratched their faces; as also that a widow generally married her brother-in-law. He confirmed Klaproth's statement, taken like so much else from the 1781 *Tagebuch*, that to be killed by lightning was thought very lucky, a special favour of St. Elias; all the people would gather, and feast, and sing songs, and the men would ride races for prizes given by the dead one's relatives.[1]

On the other hand, Ourousbi knew nothing of people intoxicating themselves with rhododendron fumes[2] and, during the sleep that rapidly ensues, finding guidance in dreams for their future conduct.[3]

[1] On this subject see *ante*, p. 184. Also, Dubois de Montpéreux, i. 137; and at much greater length Gateeyeff, 'Superstitions, &c., of the Ossetines', *Gor.*, vol. ix, p. 30.

For the dedication of horses to the dead, which presumably derives from the actual sacrificial slaughter of former times, see Tchoursin, *Osetini*, Tiflis, 1925, pp. 90–1. Closely connected with the dedication is the horse-racing just mentioned. Tchoursin (*loc. cit.*) gives interesting details for South Ossetia but connecting also with the North. 'The races are often over long distances: from Gori to Tsinval (Tskhinvali), 33 versts; from Tsinval to Kousdjita (Koshki). Not long since funeral races were organized from Ananour to Trousso, across the Georgian Road Pass, a distance of 100 versts or so; and also from Vladikavkaz to Trousso defile.'

The prizes were the clothes of the dead man, a horse and saddle, a rifle, &c. The winner also got a leg or thigh of the ox slain for the funeral feast, as well as a horn full of *arrack* or beer. Fresh horses were put ready at various places on the way.

These races in honour of the dead were in vogue with the Ossetines and Tcherkess, the Abkhaztsi, Khevsours, Tousheens, &c. So far Tchoursin. In one Scythian barrow, Ulski, figured by Professor Rostovtzeff in *Iranians and Greeks* (Oxford, 1922), p. 47, the skeletons of no less than 360 horses are indicated. Sir L. Woolley's recent finds at Ur will be in every reader's memory. The Khevsour horse-race on similar occasions is described by Nioradze, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–6.

Dubois, vol. v, p. 71, shows from an inscription found at Phanagoria that 'Games such as horse-racing, wrestling, fighting, in vogue at the tomb of the dead amongst the Ossetines and the Tchetchens, were customary on the [Cimmerian] Bosphorus 350 B.C., just as they had been round the tumulus of Patroclus at the time of the Trojan war'.

These long-distance horse-races in honour of the dead are mentioned by Vakhusht, p. 441.

[2] 'The honey that maddened Xenophon's soldiers during the retreat of the Ten Thousand was collected from either *Azalea pontica* or *Rhododendron ponticum*.' Le Maout and Decaisne, *A general System of Botany* (ed. J. D. Hooker), p. 517.

[3] Klaproth (*Reise*, vol. ii, p. 602), borrowed like much else from Reineggs, upon whom he falls frequently and heavily for mistakes and misunderstandings, omitting to

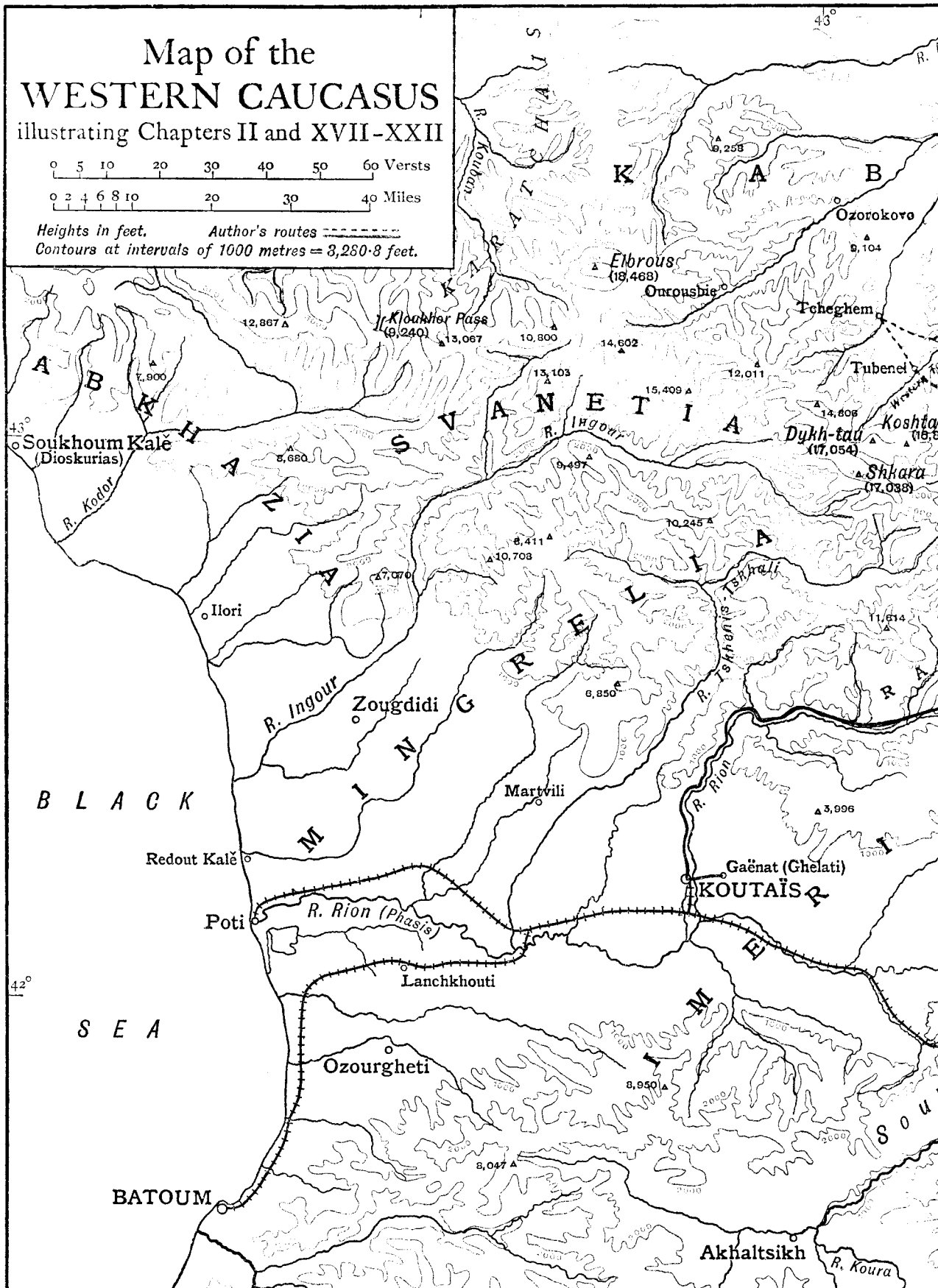
It still happened that the avenger killed a murderer, cut off his ear, and brought it to the victim's grave. He denied that after marriage 'il est honorable pour une femme d'avoir beaucoup d'amants', which Klaproth took from Vakhusht. As to snuff only old women took it. Women old and young still used buttermilk as a hair-wash. In the Nar district (east of Khurkh and the Ar-don) pig-meat was eaten, but in no other Ossetine districts. Augurs, *Dushnee nakor*, still existed, but not *Kuriss-meh-zohk*, Klaproth's 'sorcerers, who on the eve of St. Sylvester's day fell into ecstasy and remained in a trance after which they related what they had seen'. Falling stars were still venerated as *Stalé a takhti*, 'flying stars', and *Dzouar a takhti*, 'flying Crosses' or 'Saints', and at the new moon the sign of the Cross was still made in the air with daggers (*kinjals*)—as with naked swords by the primitive Germans at sunrise when taking possession, symbolically, of newly inherited fiefs.[1]

Karghinoff ('Blood-vengeance of the Ossetines', *Mat.* xliv, p. 190), correcting Kovalevsky, declares that the higher value attached to male births is due to the fact that the family having more males is better off in regard to blood-vengeance. Girls, as Kovalevsky failed to see, are of no use in this respect, whereas for work, labour, &c., they are far more valuable that boys. Consequently, they bring in to their own family in the shape of *Kalim*, when they marry, money to the amount of from 600 to 1,000 roubles. (The reference to Kovalevsky will be found in *Zakon i obuitchaï na Kavkazye* (*Law and Custom in the Caucasus*).

As to speech and other taboos, I cannot do better than refer my readers to Sir James Frazer's *Man, God, and Immortality*, pp. 139 ff., but especially p. 142.

give him credit for much that is original and interesting. Miansaroff tells us that 'Reineggs' work, for the time when it was written, is one of the most circumstantial, most informative of all the productions of foreign writers on the Caucasus, and even now may serve specialists, able to distinguish between the *data* of past and present times, as a useful book of reference'. This was written in *c.* 1875, but it still holds good—is confirmed, indeed, as recently as in 1935 by Poliyevtkoff (*op. cit.*, pp. 165–8). We know from Klaproth himself that Reineggs' book was published from a rough copy found after his death, which ought, surely, to make us chary of condemning the unlucky author.

[1] Grimm, quoted by How and Wells, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 283.


Map of the
WESTERN CAUCASUS
illustrating Chapters II and XVII-XXII
0 5 10 20 30 40 50 60 Versts
0 2 4 6 8 10 20 30 40 Miles
Heights in feet. Author's routes
Contours at intervals of 1000 metres = 3,280·8 feet.
43°
42°
R. Kouban
KARATCHAIS
KABARDA
Elbrous (18,468)
Ozorokovo
Ouroushie
Tcheghem
Tubenel
Dykh-tau (17,054)
Shkara (17,038)
Koshta
Kloukhor Pass (9,240)
ABKHASIA
SVANETIA
R. Ingour
Soukhoum Kalé (Dioskurias)
R. Kodor
Ilori
Zougdidi
MINGRELIA
R. Tskhenis-Tskhali
IMERETI
Martvili
R. Rion
Redout Kalé
Poti
R. Rion (Phasis)
Gaënat (Ghelati)
KOUTAÏS
Lanchkhouti
Ozourgheti
BLACK SEA
BATOUM
Akhaltsikh
R. Koura

THE CAUCASUS

Based on a photo-relief Map by G. G. Mets, Fellow of the Russian & French Geographical Societies.

The original, on gypsum, was recommended by the Russian Ministry of Public Instruction for use in all Secondary Schools.

Scale of Miles
0 20 40 60 80 100 120

Scale of Versts
0 30 60 90 120 150 180

Roads ═══ Railways ———

Heights in feet