

identifying the true summit from the eastern end of my base-line (cf. *Geogr. J.* vol. xxxv. p. 632).

Mr. Collins' results are, it need hardly be said, decisive and final, but it is difficult to account for the apparent great height of the peaks seen by Slingsby and myself from the Rgyong La (*Alpine Journal*, vol. xxv. p. 487 and *Geographical Journal*, vol. xxxv. p. 336 and plate p. 640) and for the remarkable corroboration obtained from Sella's photographs taken on the Sella Pass (*Alpine Journal*, vol. xxv. p. 448, and *Geographical Journal*, vol. xxxvii. p. 21 and p. 94). From the Rgyong La I could do no more than take a compass-bearing to these peaks, and it is conceivably possible, though for many reasons extremely unlikely, that the peaks which we then saw and photographed, are somewhat further to the E. and beyond the containing wall of the Siachen Glacier.

Dr. and Mrs. Workman visited the upper Siachen Glacier last summer and are again engaged upon a further exploration of it this season, so that we may shortly expect a comprehensive account of this long-neglected region.

CAUCASICA.

By DOUGLAS W. FRESHFIELD.

IN recent years there has been a lamentable falling-off in the number of English mountaineers visiting the Caucasus. As far as our countrymen go its exploration has been abandoned. Various causes have contributed to this sad neglect; first among them must be reckoned the exaggerated reports of disorder in the mountain districts, and next the counter-attractions of the Canadian Far West. If the Rockies or the Selkirks take twice as long to reach, the English traveller, when he gets there, finds himself in a country free from any political troubles or embarrassments and among people speaking his own language. The climber, however, will, when he leaves the main routes, find more difficulty in getting through the valleys, and, on the whole, less formidable peaks to conquer. If there are still any delusions abroad such as that 'there is no rock-climbing in the Caucasus,' or that 'all the good things have been done,' the sooner they are dispelled the better. The Caucasus is still worthy of Virgil's description 'saevis cautibus horrens.' It will always be a noble playground for the gymnast as well as a superb resort for the lover of mountain landscape.

In the finer portions of the range the combinations of peak and valley scenery, of snows, forests, and flowers, exceed anything to be seen elsewhere on this side of the Himalaya. The heart of the country can be reached viâ Odessa and on by steamer to the south side of the chain, or by rail to the north, in less than a week from London.

The visits of Italian and German mountaineers during the past two years to the Central Caucasus are proof, if any be wanted, that there are no longer any political hindrances in the way of travel. It seems to me, therefore, to be time to call the attention of our members to a regrettable gap in the lists of their annual performances which are now issued.

I am taking as a peg on which to hang this admonition an excellent skeleton guide-book to the western and central portions of the chain which has been issued (unfortunately only in Russian) by the Crimea-Caucasian Mountain Club, Mr. Merkulof's 'Guide to the Mountains of the Caucasus.'*

This contains much useful information for travellers. After a chapter on the equipment most suitable for the country, with a special section for mountain climbers, and some general directions, twenty-nine routes are briefly described, with distances, heights, &c. Among these are included the ascents of well-known summits, such as Elbruz, Kazbek, Dykhtau, Ushba, Koshtantau, and Ararat. Finally, a short list of maps of the Caucasus is given, the most important being that on the scale of one verst to the inch drawn from surveys of the military topographical department, which has also been reduced to the 5-verst scale. These maps are, unfortunately, only to be purchased by permission of the military authorities, but they may be inspected at the rooms of the Russian Geographical Society, and the Russian and Crimea-Caucasian Mountain Clubs, while many of the sheets are in the collection of our own Geographical Society. The map accompanying Mr. Merkulof's Guide (1 : 840,000) extends from Novo Rossisk to Vladikafkaz and Tiflis, with an inset going to the neighbourhood of Ararat, and contains much valuable information, though its scale is too small to admit of accurate mountain detail. The forested and bare regions are distinguished, distances are marked on all roads and horse-paths, and in addition to the heights given on

* *Guide to the Mountains of the Caucasus*, by V. A. Merkulof. With a special Excursion Map of the Black Sea Littoral and the Central Caucasus. St. Petersburg: M. D. Lomkovski. Price 1 rouble. 1904.

the sheet itself, tables are printed on the margin of the heights of the chief peaks and passes of the Western and Central Caucasus, and of the lower ends of the principal glaciers. The heights in some cases vary, though as a rule very slightly, from the table published by Mr. Woolley in the last number of the *Alpine Journal* (No. 195, p. 97), and it would be desirable to ascertain from which of the more recent Government publications they have been taken, the 1-verst or the revised 5-verst map. These are not always in accord.

The information given in the text is mainly of a practical nature, and is put into the most concise form. Having regard to the absence in the recent literature of Western Europe of any descriptions (other than a chapter in M. de Déchy's *Kaukasus*) of the ranges W. of the Klukhor group and the valleys radiating from the Black Sea Coast, it has seemed to me worth while to obtain the author's permission to translate and print in these pages the routes traversing the districts outside the scope of the Topographical Notes at the end of my *Exploration of the Caucasus*. This consent has been kindly given, and I trust the result may be to attract attention to a region which abounds in magnificent forest scenery and fine peaks ranging from 9,000 to 13,500 feet.*

In the central portion of the chain some fresh ascents have been made recently by German travellers, mainly in the Kazbek group and near the sources of the Terek. These are chronicled in the 'Österreichische Alpenzeitung' for 1910 and 1911. The glacier scenery in this part of the chain is fine, but the valleys are bare and sterile, and the scenery as a whole lacks distinction. The district, however, offers exceptional facilities to explorers owing to its vicinity to the Darial road. In the same periodical Mme. Kuntze chronicles some fine ascents in the range N. of the Uruk valley, sometimes called the Bogkhobashi Group (see also *Alpine Journal*, vol. xxv. p. 462-4).

* In the *Alpine Journal*, vol. xxii. pp. 507-20, will be found a very interesting account of ascents made in the Klukhor group, to the W. of the Pass of the same name, in 1904, by the late Mons. von Meck, formerly President of the Russian Mountain Club of Moscow, and Dr. Andreas Fischer, my companion in the Caucasus in 1889, news of whose untimely and much-to-be-regretted death in a snowstorm on the Aletschhorn has just reached us.