

HIMALAYAN NOTES.

UNDER KANGCHENJUNGA.

THE *Geographical Journal* for April last contains a spirited account by Captain Boustead of a repetition of Mr. Tombazi's climb from the Talung valley to the 19,300-ft. gap at the eastern base of Kangchenjunga and at the head of the Zemu glacier. (See 'A.J.' 38, 150.) My party at first named it the Cloud Gap from the frequent scarves of mist that rushed through it before spreading themselves across the great cliffs of Kangchenjunga.

Captain Boustead's impression of the difficulties of the ascent from the Tongshyong glacier to the Zemu Gap altogether coincides with Mr. Tombazi's experiences. The climb is obviously formidable at all times for laden coolies, and probably dangerous in bad weather. The best that can be hoped is that, when better known, it may serve as a supplemental access to the upper Zemu and the Green Lake camping grounds for parties who have sent part of their goods round by Lachen. It is to be hoped that before long a track will be cut through the dense jungle between that village and the foot of the Zemu glacier—which Mr. Odell recently found impassable to a weak force of coolies.

Like Mr. Tombazi, Captain Boustead did not cross the ridge and descend on to the Zemu. The access to the pass on that side is up a gently-sloping snow corridor, interrupted by but few crevasses, which is well shown in the photograph by Dr. Kellas ('A.J.' 26, 114). So easy is the going that Dr. Kellas, who was prevented by mists from reconnoitring the southern slope, was able to walk up the last 1100 ft. in an hour.

Dr. Kellas in the course of his comprehensive explorations climbed also to the broad saddle between Simvu and Siniolchum. A party of mountaineers camped at the Green Lake might do well to follow his suggestion, cross the Simvu Saddle, descend to the Talung valley, and return by the Zemu Gap. Dr. Kellas considered the upper portion of the glacier descent from the Simvu Saddle practicable; but there may be serious difficulties in the gorges between the two passes. Graphic descriptions of the obstacles they present may be found in Sir Claude White's volume 'Sikkim and Bhutan' and in the narratives of Messrs. Shawcross and Raeburn, 'A.J.' 22, 591, and 34, 33. The expedition would afford the best opportunity for reconnoitring Siniolchum, which from this quarter did not appear to Dr. Kellas to be wholly impossible. Simvu may turn out relatively easy. As this massive mountain stands directly between Siniolchum and the Zemu Gap, I venture to doubt Captain Boustead's identification of a peak he saw from the gap as Siniolchum!

Captain Boustead gives the height of the Guicha La as 18,000 ft. in place of 16,430 ft. This is probably a slip.

Captain Boustead acknowledges the valuable help he received

from Mr. Shebbeare of the Indian Forest Department, a member of the 1924 Mt. Everest Expedition. Mr. Shebbeare, we learn, 'has established a sort of *depôt* in his house at Darjeeling of Whymper tents, cooking pots, Alpine rope and cookers.' May we hope that we shall soon hear of the creation of a Mountain Club at Calcutta, and of some steps being taken to open up Jongri and the Zemu region as Riffel Alps for holiday adventurers!

Both Mr. Tombazi's and Captain Boustead's trips to the snows were made in early summer, before the monsoon. Their unfavourable reports of the weather encountered suggest to me that the relative drawbacks and advantages of early summer and autumn for mountaineering in Sikhim cannot yet be held to have been conclusively determined. It might be worth while for some pains-taking enquirer to go through the recent records of travel in the eastern Himalaya with this question in view. The meteorological records of Darjeeling would not be conclusive, since the clouds that burst on the foothills do not always reach the snows or get beyond the southern flanks of Kangchenjunga. I cannot forget the month of almost perfect weather that followed the great storm of September 24 in 1899. I am therefore disposed to believe that the periods of settled weather in the autumn are longer than in the period preceding the monsoon. By mid-October it may be too cold to climb the highest peaks, but up to 20,000 ft. we found the temperatures very endurable, and for week after week the peaks were, up to midday, practically cloudless.

D. W. FRESHFIELD.

CAUCASIAN NOTES.

TRAVEL IN THE CAUCASUS.

IN January last Professor G. Nikoladze of the University of Tiflis was good enough to call at Lowther Lodge with the object of giving the Geographical Society and myself some particulars of the recent (January 1924) formation of a Geographical Society at Tiflis and of its activities during the past three years. It would appear from his account that the Central Caucasus is now open to travellers, if provided with the necessary passports from the Central Government at Moscow. At any rate the Georgian parties he led through the mountains met apparently with no hindrances.

In 1924 and again in 1926 Kasbek was ascended. Several other mountain districts were visited with scientific objects. In 1925 a more extended tour was undertaken under Professor Nikoladze's guidance by a party consisting of seventeen men and ten women, all members of the Society. The expedition started on August 4 from Kislovodsk. Passing through Uruspieh they first attacked Elbruz. Despite broken weather, fourteen men and five women attained the E. summit, the first ascent since 1913.

The party next crossed by the Dongusorun Pass into Suanetia and visited most of its glaciers and villages. They found the district under the control of a Suanetian Soviet and had no difficulty with the inhabitants. There had been some fighting after the revolution, but the villagers had since been disarmed. From Kal a portion of the party proceeded directly to Kutais by the Latpar Pass, while the remainder descended the gorge of the Ingur and then, following its tributary the Nenskra and crossing the Khita Pass, entered the valley of the Seken river in Abkhazia. This valley, formerly deserted, they found thickly populated by settlers from Suanetia. The tourists finished their arduous journey of 700 kilometres on foot at Sukhum-Kaleh on the coast of the Black Sea. They took numerous photographs, and in the Nenskra valley were lucky in acquiring two gold coins, one of Alexander the Great and the other of his lieutenant Lysimachus, King of Thrace.

D. W. FRESHFIELD.

NEW ZEALAND NOTES.

LETTER from Mr. Arthur P. Harper to the Editor, January 20, 1927.

‘ . . . Porter and Kurz should be having some good weather this season, but I have heard nothing from them since they left for the Alps. I have not had time to go S. so far this year, but may do so at Easter.

‘ At present, I am having a great fight on the guides’ behalf, to get them better conditions, both as to pay and general treatment. Luckily our Prime Minister is interested in this, and on his return from England I may be able to get some results. If I don’t, there will be no good guides at the Hermitage next year. Porter and Kurz are going to assist after their season ends; the former fully supports my scheme and admits that the outlook is very bad so far as the future guiding is concerned.

‘ Last January I went to the Franz Joseph and took my 16-year-old daughter over Graham’s Saddle to the Hermitage, doing a peak on the way; three days, of which the last was 22½ hours (not bad for a 16-year-old), and both going strong! We returned *via* the Copland Pass, which I crossed first, and alone in the 1894-5 season. The Prime Minister asked for a full report, and most of my suggestions are being carried out, including the erection of a hut on the Chancellor Ridge of the Fox glacier, a hut which I advocated in my book “Pioneer Work”¹ as long ago as 1895. One has to wait

¹ The Government have issued another edition of their booklet on the Alps, which I have amended and brought up to date. I am sending you a copy.