

THE MOUNTAINS OF ALBANIA.

BY C. M. SLEEMAN.

ONE September evening in 1926 our party found itself on the top of Ljubotin,¹ a mountain of the Shar-dagh range in Jugoslavia. We had reached this fine mountain (its name signifies the Thorn-shaped One) from Kačanik, a village some 20 miles N.W. of Skoplje, and had arrived at the summit just before sunset. Spread out before us was a great blaze of light, and far into the W. we saw range after range of hills stretching into what we knew must be Albanian country. We felt then that, apart from all other interests, Albania must be visited if only for its mountains.

Balkan mountain travel has its own peculiar fascination: of this we had already had some experience in several wanderings through the mountains of Jugoslavia, Bulgaria, and northern Greece; but, as investigation soon showed, the matter of attacking Albania was a tougher problem. The few travellers who have been through the northern parts of the country from Prizren to Scutari have given descriptions of magnificent Dolomite-like peaks rising up away to the N. of their routes, and there are some accounts of journeys made into the valleys and across some of the passes of the northern mountains; but all the available literature and the maps are vague and not very helpful from the point of view of mountaineering. In Vol. 17 of the ALPINE JOURNAL W. H. Cozens-Hardy has an article on 'The Mountains of Montenegro and Albania,' but, as he only saw the mountains of the latter country from across the Montenegrin frontier, his account is rather an inspiration to would-be travellers than a description of things done. However, his account of 'the inaccessible cliffs of a nameless Prokletija peak surrounded by all the ranges of the Accursed Mountains' is stimulating reading; also what he has to say about the difficulties which beset a traveller in getting to Gusinje at the foot of these peaks should be irresistible to anyone who likes little excitements on the way to the mountains. I shall give a list of some of the literature dealing with Albanian travel later on.

¹ Our aneroid measurement made the height of this mountain 8090 ft.

Albania forms a strip of country about 220 miles long and 70 miles across. Save for a region of plains along the Adriatic coast the whole country is hilly. A main range runs roughly from N. to S. along its eastern frontier. The Shar-dagh forms a part of this range which continues S. to the still higher hills of Korab. Continued S. past the Lake of Ochrida this range is prolonged in the Pindus Mountains ² of northern Greece. In southern Albania in the neighbourhood of Berat ³ there is the massive lump of the Tomor Dag. North of this in middle Albania the country is hilly, but has no conspicuous summits. It is not until we go N. of the Lim that we reach the magnificent wilderness of dolomitic peaks. These mountains build the southern end of the Dinaric Alps. South of the Drin we encounter serpentine and gabbro rocks and the scenery changes completely.

Probably the easiest way of approach to the northern mountains would be *via* Cattaro, Rijeka, the Lake of Scutari and Scutari; but as W. T. Elmslie and I had been spending the earlier part of the summer (1929) in northern Greece we arranged to meet L. A. Ellwood, the third member of our party, at Ochrida and to cross the Jugoslav-Albanian frontier near Struga on Lake Ochrida. This gave us the opportunity of travelling N. through a large part of Albania and seeing a good many places on the way. Incidentally I may mention that the Lake of Ochrida ⁴ is well worth visiting for its own sake. While the scenery of its shores is in no sense magnificent it has a peculiar kind of beauty which grows upon one by degrees, and is rather due to colour and atmosphere than to anything of a tangible nature. The shores are neither steep nor forest-covered and the hills only rise gently away from the lake; but the sandy red rock gives a very distinctive brick-red colouring, and this warm colour combined with the heat haze over the dead calm waters made one of the most beautiful pictures of lake scenery I have ever beheld. We spent a very pleasant

² So well seen from Ljaskoviky on the Koriča-Santi Quaranta road.

³ Captured by the Italian 'Valona' troops in July 1918, recaptured by the Austrians, finally abandoned by the latter on the Serb advance of September-October 1918.—*Editor*.

⁴ While entirely agreeing with Mr. Sleeman, we should like to point out that Lake Prespa, to the E. and only separated from Ochrida by a high ridge, is even more beautiful. The S., E. and W. shores of the former were occupied by the French, the N. shore by the Bulgars in 1916-18.—*Editor*.

couple of days in Ochrida bathing in the lake and visiting the monastery of Sveti Naum⁵ down at its S.-E. corner. Then, on July 19, we hired a motor car in Ochrida and set out to cross into Albania, hoping to reach Elbasan, about 52 miles away, the same evening. At Struga we encountered the last outposts of the Yugoslav gendarmerie, and here we spent several hours of a sweltering afternoon fussing over formalities which no one seemed to understand. At last we were able to proceed, and in a short time we came to the Albanian frontier. There we passed under an odd but appropriate structure built over the road—more like a triumphal arch than anything else; and then another long wait ensued while we satisfied the Albanian guards. It was already beginning to get dark and it was late at night before we got to Elbasan. We had only heard of the existence of the road when we were in Ochrida, and a very convenient route it is, with a surface not too bad compared with most of those in the Balkans. We had contemplated doing this section of our journey by mule, and had read in the 'Admiralty Handbook of Balkan Travel' of most hazardous passages to be accomplished; but, as it was, we were spared these excitements. The road was hilly and passed through deep river gorges; but as it was dark long before we reached Elbasan, we unfortunately missed a great deal of this magnificent scenery. During our stay in Albania we travelled considerable distances by car, and for the most part the roads were quite fair, though the surface, judged by standards at home, would be considered perfectly appalling. Most of the cars were aged American vehicles, but apart from frequent punctures they usually did the work all right. It must be remembered that there is not a mile of railway in the whole country, so when one can get along in any kind of car it is well worth doing so.

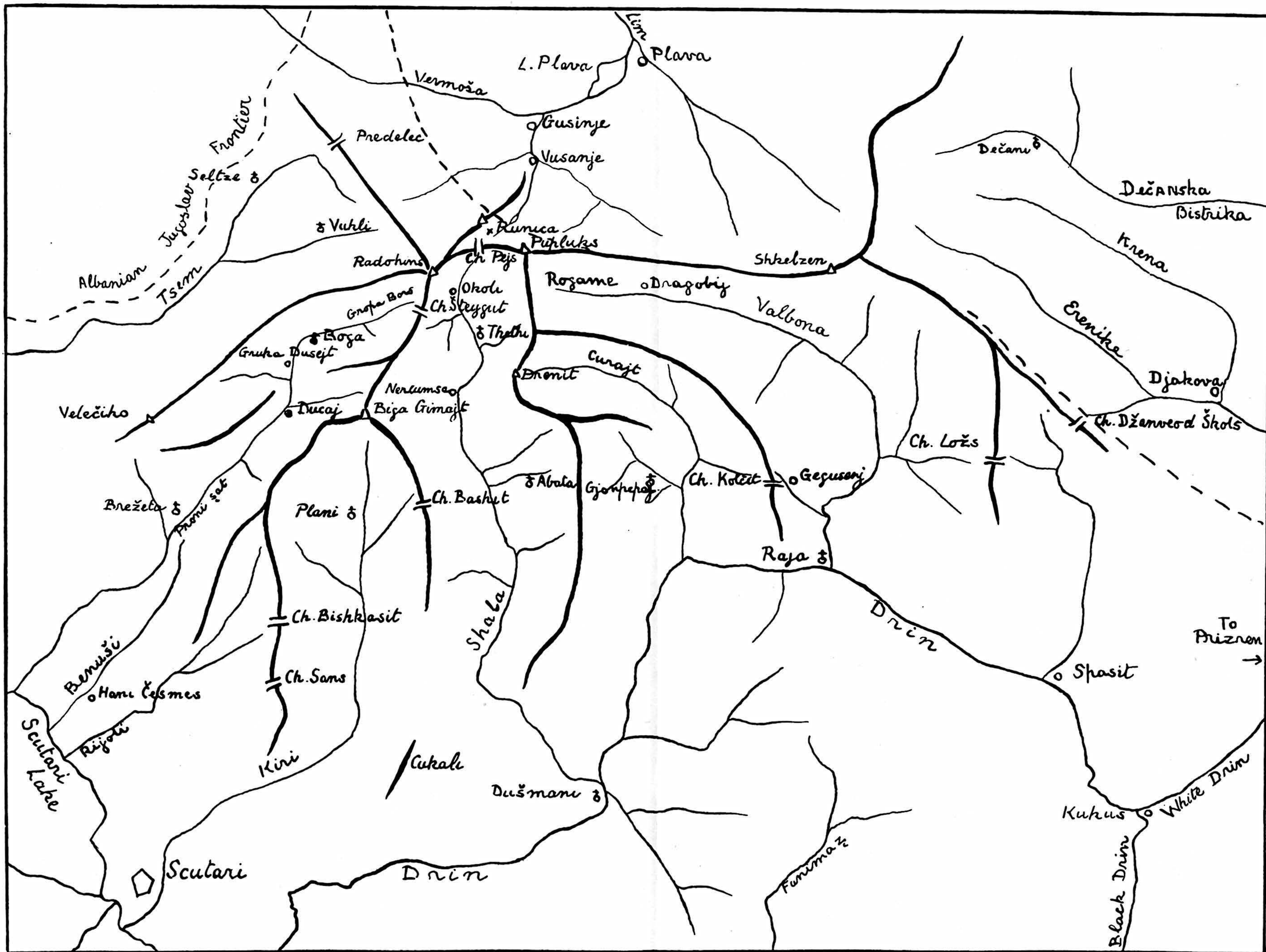
On leaving Elbasan we followed a road to the coast as far as Durazzo, and on the way one could see, far away to the S., the vast mass of Tomoros—a mountain which might be worth visiting, though it seemed to possess but little character in its outline. The road we were on kept more or less to the River Shkumbri, which forms the dividing line between the northern

⁵ H.Q. of the French 57th Division during the Pogradec and Shkumbri operations, 1917. This monastery, lying close to the Yugoslav-Albanian frontier, was for long a bone of contention between the Serbs and Albanians. It was handed over to the Serbs in 1925 by Ahmed Zogu.

and southern Albanian peoples—the Ghegs to the N. and the Tosks to the S. The country was well cultivated, chiefly with fields of maize. Incidentally the route we took from somewhere the other side of Bitolj (Monastir) to Durazzo was almost identically that of the Via Egnatia.

Durazzo is not a place of beauty and is surrounded by vast areas of malarial swamps. We only stayed there long enough for a bathe in the sea and to have lunch and went on to Tirana, about 20 miles distant, where we spent a night. The day following we went N. through beautiful wooded country to Scutari, and before getting there we could see to the N.E. the graceful shapes of the mountains N. of the Drin, for which we were aiming. We had some stifling days in Scutari, where we made preparations for setting out to the mountains. We engaged one mule with a muleteer, Ali Rama Hanci, who proved an excellent fellow. We also took with us Lazzaro Lassa to act as interpreter of Albanian and Serbian languages and to assist us in getting over the mountain frontier. He was quite useful to us in his own country ; but as he was ultimately forbidden by Serbian guards to cross the frontier, it is doubtful whether it was really worth our while to take him or not. Besides the Balkan languages he could speak Italian, but so could our muleteer to a certain extent. However, it would have been a pity not to have taken the dragoman Lazzaro, for with straw hat and European clothes of the fashionable Scutari cut he gave a certain air of civilized culture to our party which it might otherwise have lacked. True, he was of an accommodating nature and went upon the Christian rule of casting away those things which offend. From time to time on the mountain tracks we observed him cutting off offending pieces from his shoes and casting them from him, and so he proceeded with cheerful resignation over the stony hills.

Our investigation of the geography of Albania had led us to believe that there were two high mountains called Maja Jezercë (8600 ft.) and Maja Shkëlzen (8200 ft.) which should be conspicuous summits of the Prokletija group. The maps available indicate white uncharted spaces around these somewhat problematical peaks, but the way of approach to the district seemed fairly clear. On the Albanian side the head of the Shala Valley was obviously the starting-off place, and on the Yugoslav side, a point somewhere in the neighbourhood of Gusinje. Even if we did not get to these peaks we felt fairly certain that the main mass of the mountains must lie in the position indicated, and we made plans accordingly. From Scutari our



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0 10 20 km.

intention was to go up the valley of Proni Şat, then cross over Chafa Şteygut at its head and descend into the Shala Valley. From the latter valley we could easily reach Chafa Pejs, and when there we could see what could be done in the way of peaks. We further hoped to cross Chafa Pejs and so make over the frontier to Gusinje. As will be seen these plans worked out remarkably well and we made no variation on them in what we were able to do.

We set out from Scutari before daylight on the morning of July 23. For a short bit of the way, as far as the Khan Ćesmes, we could go by car; and, arrived at this simple khan, we had a species of breakfast before getting under way for the long trek up the valley of Proni Şat. Our first day's march was to be as far as Boga. Before entering the valley we had to cross a great barren plain covered with stones and small bushes through which a sandy track meandered on. Long before we were across this the heat was terrific, and very glad we were that the patient mule was carrying our rucksacks for us. The river bed follows a deep ravine through this valley, which is one of the poorest and driest of all the mountain districts and is inhabited by the Shkreli clan. After about 2 hours from our breakfasting place we entered the main valley and came to a few scattered houses where we were hospitably provided with the inevitable Turkish coffee—a drink entirely inadequate for the thirsts we had acquired. As one must not in politeness pay for these drinks it is difficult to go on asking for more and more; but Elmslie on occasions like this usually does his best with one or two of the languages he happens to be learning at the moment. We soon got into really beautiful scenery which promised great things ahead in the way of mountains; but myself I chiefly remember the long sweltering walk up this dry valley by the two places at which we could get water. The first of these was a poor trickle of a stream at a spot called Dusej, and resting here was an amazing assemblage of Albanian men and women sitting among their goats under the scanty shade of a few trees. A tough, slim race these Albanian herdsmen are! We could never make out how they managed to keep any flesh on their bones with the small amount of food they appeared to eat. In none of their villages or shepherds' huts could we ever get an adequate supply of food, although we were always invited to share whatever was going. We much regretted we had not been able to bring more in the way of food with us; but suitable supplies in the Albanian towns are almost non-existent, and this makes provisioning in this

country a serious problem. I think one would have to import a considerable quantity of food if one was going to make a prolonged stay up in the mountains. The second watering place in Proni Şat is a really fine spout of water. We spent a long time by it, making tea and afterwards bathing. It was somewhere hereabouts that our party was increased by another Albanian who seemed loath to leave us and indeed accompanied us for the remainder of the tour. His chief function seemed to be to steer the mule by its tail, and this he did very effectively on sundry descents. This man had a fine face, almost exactly like the excellent frontispiece in the Gordons' book. After the second fountain the valley widens considerably, and before long we entered the land of the Klementi and came in sight of the scattered houses of the village of Boga.

In Albanian villages the houses do not cluster together after the manner of Alpine chalets—rather are they well separated, and each one is built as a small fort with massive stone walls provided only with windows in the upper floor, and these narrow slits adapted for gun-fire. However, the days of family and clan blood feuds which made this species of domestic architecture a necessity are rapidly drawing to a close. The simple plan of justice so long in force among these mountain peoples is happily fast disappearing. In some districts it is stated that only a few years ago blood feuds accounted for the death of 50 per cent. of the male population. With such figures, and remembering the succession of appalling wars that has overwhelmed these people, one almost wonders that one ever sees a grown man in the country. Our own experience has always been of the most peaceful and pleasant nature with the people we have encountered. Everywhere we have been received with friendliness, and indeed it has been almost embarrassing the way the peasants have supplied us from their scanty stores of food and welcomed us to their mountain huts.

At Boga there is a small church with a priest's house adjoining. There, after a very long wait, during which darkness came on, we were able to get some food—eggs mixed up with cheese and milk in a most disagreeable manner, but not at all to be despised in the ravenous condition we had reached. We decided on inspection not to sleep in the house. It was a clear warm night, and we spread our sleeping-bags outside on a very gently sloping grassy field and slept soundly.

We got off early next morning and continued up the valley making for Chafa Şteygut (= the pass of the goat track) at

the head of the valley (6000 ft. approximately). After a short distance from the village the route steepened and went up through pine woods with a fair track all the way. Apparently this pass coupled with that of Chafa Pej's was once an important highway for merchants going from Ipek and Gusinje to Scutari. I believe they used to sell horses and purchased salt. Before the final rise to the pass-top we entered a more open space called Gropa Bors, and looking down the valley from here we got wonderful views of the limestone walls rising up in true Dolomite fashion above the pines. Just below the top there was a very small spring—most welcome to find in this almost waterless region. The pass itself is a narrow cut in the rocks, and the view on the far side almost took our breath away, for we had no notion that we were going to see such a vast array of peaks. The maps we had were entirely inadequate to account for all the summits that rose to the E. and N. As will be seen from the sketch map the route over Chafa Šteygut leads down into the Shala Valley—the long defile which runs S. to meet the Drin at Dusmani. All round the head of this valley are magnificent jagged limestone summits. It appeared that the name Jezercë must, if it has any meaning at all, be only a name for the group at the head of Shala Valley, and from where we stood we could see a number of individual peaks rising from the general mass of this region which is perhaps best called Prokletija. The way leading up to Chafa Pej's could be more or less made out, the route appearing to start up very steep screes at the end of the Shala Valley. Running E. from the top of the chafa was a vast shelf of high ground with a fine mountain with a notched arête at its eastern extremity. This mountain, as we heard later, is called Pupluku, and it obviously seemed to be one of the most desirable summits to attain. From Šteygut it was not clear exactly where the highest point of this mountain lay, for other heights in front partly obscured it. On our left hand to the N. of the pass there were high crags rising to various summits which would make the high-level traverse between Šteygut and Pej's an arduous business. The drop from the top of Šteygut to the valley floor is about 3300 ft., and the descent is very steep indeed. For the initial stage a serpentine track goes down through screes. It is a horribly rough path, only just possible for a mule. The lower part is through woods and trees and leads to a plank bridge over the stream about half an hour above the houses of Thethi. We got to this village about mid-day, and were enthusiastically welcomed by the cheerful Franciscan priest, Nikolaus Kolej by name, who



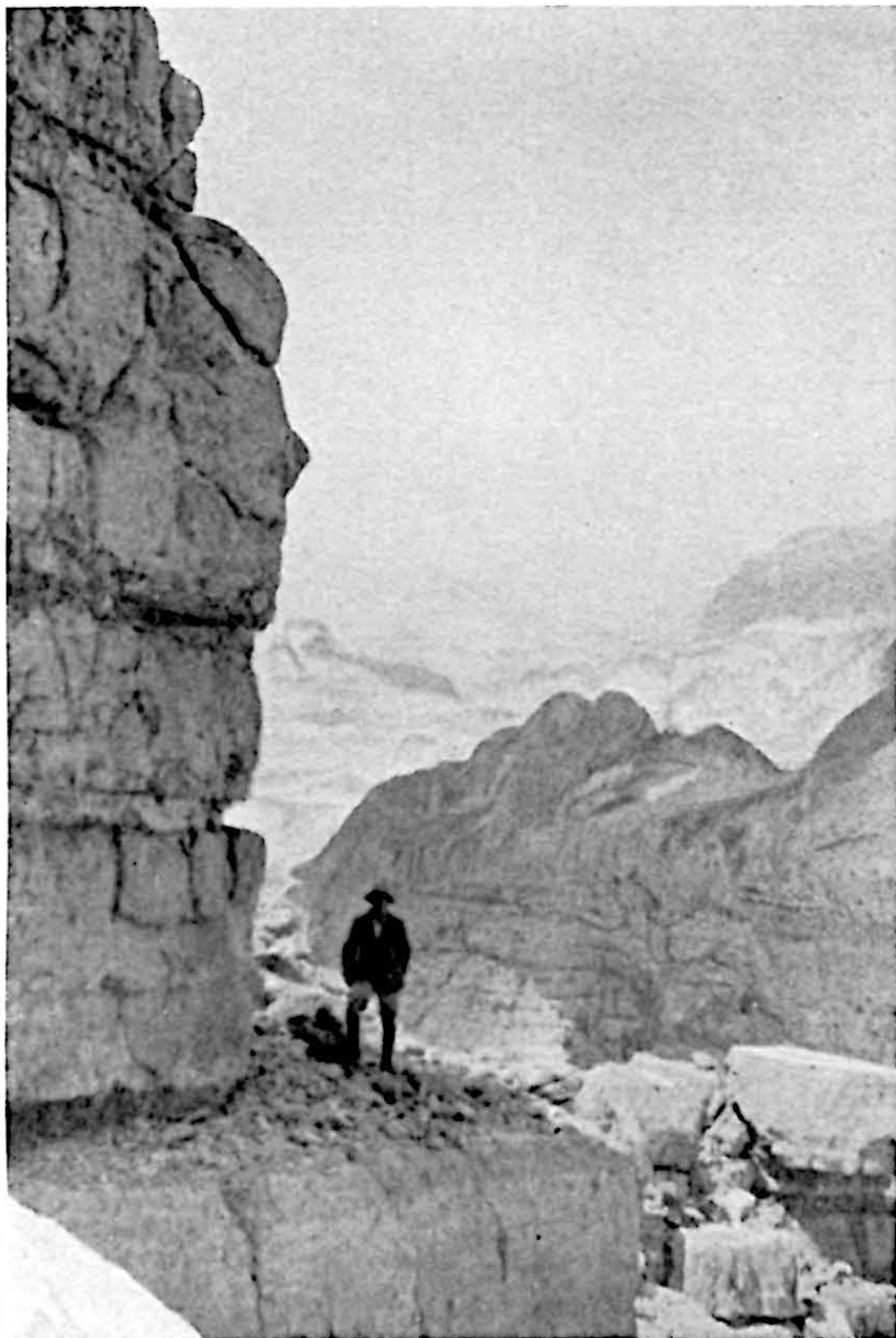
Photo, L. A. Ellwood.

PUPLUKS. From the N.



Photo, L. A. Ellwood.

CHAFJA PEJS. Looking N.



Photo, W. T. Elmslie.
Ledge on N. Slope of W. arête of PUPLUKS.



Towards W. Ridge of PUPLUKS.

presided in this outpost of civilization and lived in a pleasant dwelling, half house and half church. He had a large group of boys with him on holiday and they were all busy re-roofing the house when we arrived—for there had recently been a fire which had burnt most of the place down. This Franciscan had lived in Vienna for some years and so spoke German, and we got a great deal of useful information from him. Incidentally we learnt that a party of Italians had been in the district a few weeks previously for the purpose of surveying the mountains, and we could see the cairns they had built on most of the heights round the valley. Thethi lies on a flat valley floor which appears to be almost surrounded by steep mountains, for the Shala stream leaves this upper part of the valley by a deeply cut gorge. There is a striking mountain at the head of the valley to the W. of Chafa Pejs which has a fine leaning outline, and as we discovered later on, when we were at the top of Pejs, this would not be a difficult summit to reach. To the W. of this mountain is a ridge of hills with a sharp sky-line, and lying rather back, a rounded summit of considerable height which seems to be called Radohins.

The E. side of the valley also has high summits along its crest, one of which, Maja Drenit (7000 ft. approx.), was climbed by Steinmetz in 1904. Over this E. side a pass leads to the Valbona Valley. It would be interesting to traverse this, for the district on the far side appears to be quite undescribed by any travellers, and it might be possible to reach Shkëlzen this way.

We had a lazy afternoon bathing in the stream near Thethi ; and in the evening, after a meal with the priest, we camped out in a field. Again the night was beautifully warm and we slept in the open.

The next morning found us after an early start laboriously making up the steep rise to Chafa Pejs, and terrifically hot it was plodding up from one limestone shelf to another until we arrived at the top. Our dragoman was quite unused to this kind of work, and, whatever the language may have been that he used, the words sounded sufficiently expressive of his feelings. When we got to the top of this pass we were all suddenly and completely overcome by hunger—a really consuming hunger which the packs from the back of the mule quite failed to satisfy. I think this came from our foolishly having tried to do in Albania as the Albanians do in the matter of food, and the cumulative effect of such abstinence nearly led to serious consequences. We had been told in Scutari

that we should be able to get plenty of food in the villages; but this was not the case, and we ought to have carried far more than we had done—this is a bit of advice to anyone who may follow in our steps. After our inadequate meal we were able to appreciate what a wonderful place the top of the chafa is. This top is of considerable extent with ups and downs into various hollows—one of which encloses a rather beautiful little tarn. On the W. side of the pass there are several fine peaks: one in particular looked very attractive with an almost straight shoulder slanting up for a great length to its summit, and it looked as if it would be quite a problem to attain this shoulder. There was a still finer peak, which we gathered must be Shkroz, further to the W., and, as we learnt later when we were able to see it better from the top of Pupluks, Shkroz is certainly one of the finest of the Prokletija mountains. To the E. of the chafa the great shelf mentioned in the view from Šteygut led away over very rough and fatiguing looking country towards Pupluks and the peaks adjoining it. There would probably be a fairly good route up Pupluks by this shelf; but we had formed a plan to descend the far side of Chafa Pejs and camp by some shepherds' huts which we had heard existed at a spot called Runica. From here we thought we might effect the ascent of Pupluks from the N. Accordingly we crossed the pass and got down to Runica about mid-day. Chafa Pejs lies at a height of 5630 ft., and Runica is some 1200 ft. lower. There are two clumps of stone huts which suffice for the simple needs of the herdsmen who live up here during the summer. All things considered, it was a good place for a camp, for we could get milk, cheese and a very little meat from the huts, and we found a place for our tents rather lower down on a grassy plateau which must at one time have been the floor of a lake. The valley we were in runs in a N.E. direction and drains into the waters of the Lim. All round were fine dolomite cliffs—so far as we knew, entirely unexplored. In the afternoon we went across to the N. side of the valley so as to look across to the opposite side and prospect a route up in the direction of Pupluks. There was a wide ravine which continued as a gully up to a well-marked col (Chafa Pupluks). This seemed to be the obvious line of ascent, but we could not see how things would develop after this col was reached. There was no more to be done that afternoon, so we lay about in the small amount of shade available and consumed tea and pemmican. In the evening we went up to the huts, where great preparations had been made by the

herdsmen to provide us with a decent meal. We ate this insulated as well as we were able on stones lying in the vast area of manure and refuse which surrounded the vicinity of the huts, and all the shepherds and their families gathered round to watch our struggles with the unaccustomed food, which, anyhow in the case of Ellwood and myself, were not so very successful. It is pleasant to remember this meal with the crowd of simple Albanians of all ages and sizes around us, clothed in their black braided white trousers, short coats, and small white skull-caps. No more appropriate setting could have been desired than the high-lying valley with the limestone pinnacles towering up on all sides and the deep blue shadows of evening gradually gaining upon them.

We got away from our camp at 2.40 A.M. the next morning. There was a fine moon which served us well until we got into the gully we had prospected. This proved fairly easy of ascent for some way ; but then it narrowed, and we were confronted with a steep wall of rock with a dry watercourse at a steep angle at its left-hand corner. To avoid negotiating this in the lantern light it seemed better to forsake the gully and make out on our right-hand side. This was easy to do and we made a considerable ascent up very steep grassy slopes and ledges, and so got nearly to the level of the col, but some distance W. of it. It was fairly easy to cut across the intervening rough ground, and we arrived at the col (Chafa Pupluks) about 2 hours after our start. Dawn came upon us before we reached this point, and we were able to gain some impression of the magnificent scene which faced us. Pupluks was unmistakable ahead, but it appeared to be a long way off, and there was a vast limestone hollow to be crossed before the rise to the mountain could be reached. To the W. of the summit there was a very fine rock ridge with many pinnacles along its length, and it seemed that, if the crest of this ridge could be reached, the way to the summit would be easy going. Five well-marked snow gullies descended from the ridge to a big snow slope lying high up on the side of the mountain ; and the problem appeared to be to reach this high-lying slope and tackle one of the gullies. We spent some time investigating a line of ascent, and it seemed fairly clear that a long gentle snow slope on the far side of the limestone hollow would first have to be gained. Some rocks at the head of this slope ought to afford a feasible approach to the higher snow slope. It was laborious and very hot crossing to the lower snow slope ; but it was a fine world of rocks we had reached, with all the fantastic beauty which



Photo, C. M. Sleeman.

CHAFÁ PEPLUKS.

limestone mountains alone can give. High up on one of the great rock walls to our right was a hole right through the mountain—very reminiscent of Tafonata in Corsica. Although this barren wilderness is not ever likely to blossom like the rose, it is not too much to prophesy that the Prokletija—these accursed mountains of bygone times—will perhaps some day become the paradise of a Skypetar Alpine Club.

Our lower snow slopes went very well. It was not difficult to find a route up the rocks and screes at its head, and so we arrived at the upper snow slope. This is well shown in the photograph of the mountain with the gullies from the W. ridge running down to it. We started upwards across the slope and after inspection decided to try the gully last but one from the summit end of the ridge. A certain amount of step-cutting had to be done to reach the gully, but it was not difficult to gain its rocky bed. The effort of ascent was one of care rather than strenuous climbing. The rock was excessively rotten and the angle steep, but no serious difficulties were encountered, and we were glad to find that the gully continued right up to the arête. However, we did not follow the actual edge of the arête onwards, for a very convenient ledge, keeping slightly beneath the gendarmes of the ridge, led us right to the final peak. This final peak consisted of screes and slabs and was very straightforward work. We got to the top at 8.45. Arrived there we found a recently built cairn—no doubt made by the Italian survey party we had been told about in Thethi. The existence of these cairns is worth reporting: but this is not the place to comment on their significance; however one may sympathize with the Albanians, one hardly wonders at the vigilance of the Serbs all along their frontier.

The day was blazing hot and there was not a cloud in the sky, as seems to be the invariable rule in the Albanian summer. We spent a long time on the summit photographing in all directions. To the E. of us we could see far away down the Valbona Valley; and we thought we could make out a peak which might possibly be Shkëlzen, though its distance seemed greater than we had expected. We made a mental note that the Valbona Valley ought certainly to be visited one day. Due S. of us rose up a considerable mountain which is probably Lis. This blocked the view of some part of the ridge which forms the E. side of the Shala Valley; and incidentally this may account for the fact that Steinmetz, when he ascended Maja Drenit, failed to see Pupluku. To the S.W. we got a fine view of the great shelf of country which stretches to Chafa

Pejs under the W. ridge of Pupluks. Probably a fairly easy, but laborious ascent of Pupluks could be made by this shelf, but it would involve up-and-down work in limestone hollows and a great deal of scree ascent. S.E. of Chafa Pejs we could see the rounded top of Radohins and farther S. Chafa Šteygut. Perhaps the finest of all the peaks in sight was Shkroz, which rose in the distance as a fine rock pyramid rather to the N. of W. To the N.W. was Chafa Pupluks by which way we had come, and beyond this, and forming a general background to the northerly view, was the great line of precipices cut out into innumerable peaks which form the N. side of the valley in which Runica lies.

In descending we kept further along the ridge than the head of the gully we had ascended, to see if we could discover a route off the ridge freer from loose stones than our gully; but the other gullies seemed no more promising, so we went down the way we had come up, and, in due course, in the fierce mid-day heat were traversing the hollow leading to Chafa Pupluks. We kept to the ravine all the way down from the chafa. It was very steep in places, and, for ascending, the way we had gone in the early morning is certainly preferable. However, our descent to the level of the camp was rapid and we arrived back at 4.30.

We had no more days at our disposal to make further investigations of the climbing possibilities of these Prokletija mountains. Early in the morning we struck camp and set off down the valley toward Vusanje and Gusinje. The way led down through pine trees, and in less than an hour's time we came to a very beautiful lake. Here the Albanian-Jugoslav frontier runs right across the valley, and we half expected difficulty in crossing the by no means imaginary line. There was a small Yugoslav guard-house a few hundred yards beyond the white marks which indicated the frontier, and repeated shouts brought forth a Serb soldier with whom our dragoman entered into a prolonged argument. While this was in progress we were longing to bathe in the beautiful lake, but refrained from doing so as it might have meant an 'affair' and a complication of international relations. No amount of entreaty or cigarettes availed with the soldier. We ourselves were to be allowed to pass, but the dragoman, the muleteer, and the hanger-on-to-the-mule's-tail were forbidden to leave their native land. Reluctantly we said good-bye to them; but the pathetic figure of the dragoman—straw hat in hand—and his companions left behind in their isolated situation still lingers

in the mind. The Serb soldier proved a willing companion and shouldered two uncomfortable cylindrical sacks removed from the mule, while we took up the burden of our own weighty rucksacks. So we proceeded down the valley to the small village of Vusanje. Here we waited some time in a gendarmerie post, and in process of time a mule was brought forth. The baggage was transferred to the animal and we continued our way to Gusinje. The road went through a fertile valley, but it was rather a depressing walk, as all the houses we passed were in ruins due to some incident the particulars of which were not quite clear to us. All went well, however, and it seemed that without further difficulty we should actually reach this far-famed village. There are many accounts of attempts to get to this place, but I have heard of no one who has been there. The Admiralty Handbook of Serbia, Montenegro and Albania says 'it is regarded as one of the most fanatical towns in Albania and has hardly ever been visited by a stranger.' Save for the fact that it is inhabited by Albanians it is no longer Albanian—obviously it is a place to visit. We got there all right and spent a very delightful afternoon bathing with some boys in a clear river with the distant Pupluks in sight, far away up the valley we had come down. This is not the place to record our experiences of the evening and how we ultimately escaped at night and surprised the people of the inn at Andrijevisa, 15 miles away, in the very early hours of the next morning. The account of all these happenings is rather for vivid journalism than the pages of the ALPINE JOURNAL.

By arriving in Andrijevisa we concluded the Albanian part of our holiday ; but before going E. to Peč, and so to join the railway at Mitrovica, we spent a short time in the hill country of Montenegro.

In rapid touring such as we had made one always leaves much for the next time. The mountains of Albania more than came up to our expectation, and the Prokletija with all its unexplored peaks and climbs—to say nothing of the manifold fascinations of travel therein—is certainly no longer an accursed region as far as we are concerned.

The following is a list of books, etc., bearing upon Albanian travel :

' Reise durch Rumelien und nach Brussa im Jahre 1839 ' (Göttingen, 1841), by A. Grisebach. He made a journey in four

days through the Ducagin country. He says that he passed no villages but seventeen khans. He encountered the best scenery between his thirteenth and fifteenth khan, and commented on the steep Alp-like peaks rising up magnificently in the N. He compares them with the rock points of the Dolomites of Tyrol, and counted fifty such needle peaks and noted the snow filling their gullies.

'Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe,' 1867, by G. Muir Mackenzie and A. P. Irby. These ladies also travelled from Prizren to Scutari, apparently in the year 1863.

'Researches in the Highlands of Turkey,' 1869, by H. F. Tozer. In vol. i. he tells of his journey from Scutari to Prizren made in 1865. He went through the country of the Mirdites to Orosh. Going on to the junction of the Drins he came in sight of the Bertiscus mountains and describes the glorious view to 'the serrated and in some places snowy peaks of Jacova.'

'Eine Reise durch die Hochländergaue Oberalbanien,' 1904, and 'Ein Vorstoss in die Nordalbanischen Alpen,' 1905, two pamphlets by Karl Steinmetz in the series *Zur Kunde der Balkanhalbinsel, Reisen und Beobachtungen*, Hartleben, Wien und Leipzig. Each of these is a very carefully written account of a journey made in northern Albania. In the first journey made in 1903 the author traversed the S. part of this district, and in the second journey made in 1904 he went up Proni Šat, crossed Chafa Šteygut and descended into the Shala Valley. From Thethi he made the ascent of Drenit on the E. side of the valley. Both of these accounts are full of interesting observations, and are well worth reading by anyone intending to travel through the northern mountains. Each pamphlet has an excellent map of the country covered. Unfortunately our party only discovered these pamphlets after we had returned to England.

'Das Katholische Nordbanien, Eine Skizze,' by Franz Baron Nopcsa, deals with matters of ethnological and geographical interest in northern Albania. The pamphlet is provided with a large scale map of the district and also a geological sketch map.

'High Albania,' 1909, by M. E. Durham, gives accounts of travels made in the northern mountains in 1908 and contains a great deal of interesting information about Albanian customs. The volume has a good map.

'The Peaks of Shala,' 1922, by R. W. Lane, gives an account of a journey made to the Shala Valley. It is written in some-

what emotional American and contains vivid descriptions of adventure, real and imaginary. The authoress certainly imparts the fascination of Albanian travel.

'Two Vagabonds in Albania,' 1927, by Jan and Cora Gordon. This gives an excellent picture of Albania and matters Albanian. The authors among other journeys in 1925 went into the Shala Valley by way of Chafa Šteygut. The book is filled with delightful sketches and drawings, and is a highly artistic work.

'L'Albanie et les Albanais,' 1921, by J. Bourcart. The author lived three years in Albania and travelled extensively in the country. The book was written with the aim of making known Albania and the Albanians to the French.

'Handbook of Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, etc.,' 1920. This book is prepared on behalf of the Admiralty and the War Office. It gives details of a great number of itineraries through the countries dealt with. These details are not always up to date. Travel in Albania is an easier matter than might be gathered from the information supplied in this book. There are excellent chapters on the geography and peoples of the countries, also vocabularies of the languages.

From the great mass of literature dealing with Balkan affairs I select the following books as being useful reading from the general historical and geographical points of view :

'Albania the Foundling State of Europe,' 1914, by Wadham Peacock ; 'Geographical Aspects of Balkan Problems,' 1915, by M. L. Newbigin ; 'Albania Past and Present,' 1919, by A. Chekrezi ; 'Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle,' 1920, by M. E. Durham ; 'The New Balkans,' 1926, by H. F. Armstrong ; 'L'Albanie devant l'Europe,' 1930, by A. Mousset ; 'Albania. The Rise of a Kingdom,' 1930, by J. Swire.

The following maps are useful :

Sofiya, 1 : 1,000,000, compiled by R. G. S. under direction of the Geographical Section General Staff, Corrections 1918.

Freytag and Berndt's Autostrassenkarten Sheet 82, 1 : 300,000.

The following six sheets of the Kartographisches, früher Militärgeographisches Institut in Wien, 1 : 200,000. Scutari ; Prizren ; Durazzo ; Elbasan ; Karfu ; Valona.

The maps in the two pamphlets by K. Steinmetz mentioned above. These maps have been particularly useful to me in making the sketch map which accompanies this article.

None of the maps are really adequate for travel in the mountains. Large white spaces still remain, which should perhaps be one of the chief incentives to future exploration.