Review: The Caucasus

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corner of the Bavarian Alps; but here again the maximum for the region is outside German territory. The Schwarzwald has from 180 to 200 cms. in the highest parts, while the Brocken stands out in North Germany with a rainfall of 170 cms. Four considerable areas have less than 50 cms. (20 inches) of rainfall per annum—(1) Posen and the lower Vistula (minimum at Pakosch, in the district of Mogilno, 41 cms.); (2) the lower Oder; (3) the Saale-Elbe valley between Halle and Magdeburg; and (4) the middle Rhine plain between Mannheim and Bingen (minimum, 43 cms. at Grünstadt).

While 50 per cent. of the rain falls in the winter half-year (October to March), in the extreme west only 35 per cent. falls in winter east of a line from the Moravian Gate through Warsaw. From one-third (in the west) to two-fifths (in the east) of the rain falls in the summer three months, and from 24 per cent. in the west to 16 per cent. in the east in the winter three months. In the spring three months the contrast is between the north, which receives under 20 per cent., and the south, which has 24 per cent. of the annual rainfall; but in autumn it is much the wetter there, receiving over or nearly 30 per cent. near the coast, compared with from 22 to 24 per cent. in the south, which is thus better favoured. June is the wettest month in the south, July in the centre and north, except in the extreme north-west, where August or October are the rainiest months. January is driest in the south, February in the east, and April in the north-west and along the margin of the Baltic. The probability of rain is least in September for the whole of middle Germany from the middle Rhine to the Vistula, but north of this April is the happy month, to the south January in the upper Danube, and November in Bohemia. As might be expected, the Rhine valley and North sea margin have least snowy days—under thirty—while in the far east the number is just double.

No one can examine these volumes without admiration of the great industry of their author and his collaborators, and without being impressed by the enlightened action of a Government which supports a staff sufficient for the work, and is generous enough to secure its publication.

A. J. H.

ASIA.

THE CAUCASUS.

Kaukasus, Reisen und Forschungen im Kaukasischen Hochgebirge. Von Moriz von Déchy. In drei Bänden. Berlin: D. Reimer. 1905-7. *Price*, vols. 1 and 2 (together), 40 m.; vol. 3, 40 m.

Forty years ago the "frosty Caucasus" was practically unknown to the physical geographers and naturalists of Western Europe. Before 1870 some light was thrown on its heights and recesses by the researches of the eminent botanist, Dr. Radde, and the wanderings of English mountaineers. It was discovered that there were other lofty summits in the range besides Elbruz and Kazbek, and that these were not even typical summits, but volcanic excrescences from a chain composed largely of crystalline rocks. The snow-girt basin of Suanetia, the Alsatia of the Caucasus, was penetrated, and the twin peaks of Ushba added to the known glories of the world.

English readers are, or ought to be by this time, familiar with the natural features of the Central Caucasus. Its scenery has been often described by Alpine Clubmen, and depicted by the masterly hand of Signor Vittorio Sella. Of the western and eastern flanks of the range, of Circassia and Daghestan, we know less in this country. The German public, however, has had presented to it, in the two very substantial volumes and 2000 pages of Herr Merzbacher, a detailed account of travel in the eastern as well as in the central districts. M. de Déchy, who, though a Hungarian, writes in German, now attempts to combine, for the first time in a single work, a description of all the three main sections of the Caucasian

chain. The first two volumes are complete in themselves, while the third is, as we shall show presently, more particularly addressed to specialists.

M. de Déchy has good qualifications for the task. A practised mountaineer and an expert photographer, he has paid seven separate summer visits to the Caucasus, travelling, climbing, and photographing in the company of alpine guides, and at times with scientific specialists. He presents the results of his journeys in the form of a personal narrative, into which are interwoven the topographical and ethnological observations made on the road. His sentences are agreeably short, and he writes in a style livelier and less laborious than that to which we are accustomed in German-written works. He has a good eye for scenery and picturesque incident, and is at pains to point out the different characteristics of the various regions traversed. He by no means neglects the human element, and in the Caucasus mankind offers a very large field for study. His work, as a whole, supplies, in a most readable and not too lengthy form, an adequate general picture of the structure, physical features, and inhabitants of the mountain region, and of the frequent incidents of travel in a country where few days are without incidents, often of a kind pleasantest in memory. For in many parts of the Caucasus the daily difficulties, whether caused by the absence of tracks or the perverseness of the inhabitants, are apt to make most African or Asiatic travel seem in comparison a simple affair.

It is in the descriptions of the western and eastern sections of the chain that English readers will find most novelty. The Caucasian snows extend at least 150 miles beyond Elbruz. West of the great volcano the Klukhor pass affords a more or less practicable horse-road across the chain—a road frequented in classical times, and now restored by the Russians. M. de Déchy suggests (vol. 2, p. 159) that it may be inferred, from the fact of its having been used 2000 years ago as a trade-route, that there was less snow on the Caucasus then than now. We do not think this follows. Strabo particularly mentions that the natives, when they came over from the north to Dioskuriæ (Sukhum Kaleh), used toboggans and snow-shoes. Beyond the Klukhor, extending 35 miles to the Marukh pass, extends the Klukhor group, the glaciers of which may be seen, a shining shield, from the Black Sea. Their reservoirs are extensive, and they descend on both flanks between bold rock pinnacles into valleys filled with noble forests. An account of climbing and exploration in this district has been recently given in the *Alpine Journal* by Dr. Fischer, whose brother perished with Donkin and Fox on Koshtantau. Its largest glacier, the Aménau, has an extent of 16 square kilomètres, and descends to 5874 feet. Its highest summit, Dombai-Ulgen, reaches 13,250 feet.

To the next section, the last to carry snow and ice, M. de Déchy gives the appropriate name of the Abkhasian Alps, a memorial to a vanished, or rather banished, race. Its limits he defines as the Marukh and Pseka passes; the distance between them is not far short of 100 miles. Its highest summit, Psyr, is 12,429 feet. On the south side of the chain, from Suanetia westwards, the range of Palæozoic slates, which culminates in the Leila group, runs more or less parallel to the crystalline axis, and encloses the long parallel trenches of the Ingur, the Azgara, the Bsyb, and the Msympta. Of one of its culminating clusters, the Chedym group, M. de Déchy furnishes some fascinating pictures. It bears several secondary glaciers, and others lie scattered in the recesses and hollows of the main chain. Only one or two, however, descend on the north slope as far as 6200 feet, and can be called of the first order. The last ice seems to be found on the Fisht and Oshten peaks in 40° E. long.

Of this interesting region little has been heard since the visits more than fifty years ago of Mr. Spencer and one or two other sympathizers with the native tribes.

M. de Déchy has broken fresh ground in it by his passage across the chain from the headwaters of the Great Laba to those of the Bsyb. But right and left of his route there is work for many explorers and climbers, and we may add map-makers. For it is obvious, as the author himself suggests, in the *Errata* to vol. 3, that the indications of glaciers in his map are in this neighbourhood uncertain and inadequate. The task will not be altogether easy, for, owing to the depopulation of the valleys on the southern flank, travellers must carry with them full provisions for their sojourn in the mountains. But the adventure will bring ample reward to lovers of forest scenery, botanists, and probably sportsmen, though the last-named must be careful not to trespass on preserves, where the auroch still lingers under grand-ducal protection.

East of the Dariel road M. de Déchy's travels and ascents have been more extensive and numerous than in the western region. His first journey led him among the network of valleys and ridges to the north-west of Daghestan, the country of the Tush and Chevsur tribes. Crossing many passes, he explored the glaciers of the Pirikitelian group and climbed its highest summit, Datach-kort, 14,016 feet. In further journeys he visited the home of Schamyl, and wandered through the valley of the Andischer Koisu and across the flanks of the Bogos group, finally crossing to Telaw in the Georgian lowlands. An ascent of the volcanic heights of Basardjusi completed the author's travels in the Eastern Caucasus.

Had we to divide the Caucasus into two in place of three sections, we might make the Mamisson, not the Dariel, the point of separation. For the Kasbek group belongs rather to the eastern type. The contrast between the scenery of the eastern and western Caucasus is well brought out by the illustrations. It is the contrast between sharp granite peaks and icefalls tumbling towards or into luxuriant forests and flowery dales, and landscapes our ancestors would have called "horrid," slaty roof-like ridges, naked scarred hillsides, and barren glens and gorges. But in Daghestan man makes some amends for nature's shortcomings. The villages are striking in themselves, and still more so in their situation: witness the very romantic view of "Tindi," cut off from the world by its grim fence of sky-reaching summits. And the inhabitants are worthy of their homes—at any rate, from the ethnologist's and photographer's point of view.

It is impossible in the limits of a review to enter in any detail into M. de Déchy's routes, or to do justice to his extensive travels in the central districts on both sides of the chain between Suanetia and the Dariel; nor is this the place to dwell on his climbs, which included, in the Central Caucasus, Elbruz and Kasbek, a peak he identifies with the highest summit of the Adai Khokh group, and many glacier passes. Nor can we attempt here to do more than call attention to the geological details and diagrams frequently interspersed in the narrative.

One criticism we are disposed to make. We regret that the author has not arranged his chapters with respect for locality rather than for date, particularly in his second volume. It is somewhat distracting for a reader to find himself carried backwards and forwards between the very alluring and romantic forests and glaciers of the almost uninhabited region west of Elbruz, and the stern heights, water-worn slopes, grim gorges, and strange villages of Daghestan. The eastern groups seem generally to arrange themselves more in ridges than isolated peaks, and Basardjusi is a positively ugly summit. It is to the valleys behind Sukhum Kaleh that the botanist, the climber, and the lover of the picturesque will turn most eagerly. Here surely lies one of the future playgrounds of Europe.

M. de Déchy's text is amply and luxuriously illustrated, both with views of the mountains and portraits of their very various inhabitants. These illustrations are for the most part of extraordinary beauty, and it is hardly possible to praise them

too highly. The subjects have been, as a rule, well chosen, and the figures often most skilfully grouped. They have all the merits of photographs without the defects commonly found when photographs are reproduced for book illustration. On the one hand, few or none, even of the plates in the text, are black or blurred; on the other, the hand of the "improver" has not interfered with or obscured local detail and characteristics. They afford good material for a discourse on how to treat photographic material, a discourse which might be made more effective by contrast. For not a few of the photographs used by M. de Déchy, whether his own or those of others, had previously served in 'The Exploration of the Caucasus' or in Herr Merzbacher's book, and several in both. In the former work some even of the heliogravures are flat (contrast the same view opposite p. 142, vol. 1, of 'The Exploration' and opposite p. 27, vol. 1, of Déchy), while the process plates in the text often lack the clearness and brightness M. de Déchy has attained. Herr Merzbacher employed artists and woodcutters to deal with his material. The result is, as a rule, a relatively faint, unimpressive picture, in which the peculiar local type of the landscape is apt to be modified by subjective influences. What, then, is the secret of M. de Déchy's exceptional success? We believe it to lie in the very skilful retouching of the plates, especially with regard to the foregrounds, under the close supervision of the author. A few slips in the identifications of the peaks illustrated may be pointed out. In the Panorama, vol. 1, p. 88, of the Mishirgi glacier, "Dych-Tau-Grat" should be Mishirgi Tau, "Midschirgi Tau" Ulluauz Bashi, and "Ulluauz Bashi" Ukiu. The view from the Tuiber pass on p. 222 is looking east, not "west." Writing in German, M. de Déchy naturally adopts the German method of spelling, which allows such monstrosities as Schchara and Schchelde, and doubles S at the beginning of a word.

The map, in two sheets, on the scale of 1 : 400,000, based mainly on the Russian Surveys, is valuable as giving a complete picture of the chain from sea to sea. Partly, however, owing to the comparatively small scale, the delineation of the glacial region is generally wanting in detail and distinctness. For the same reason, M. de Déchy has been unable to emphasize some called-for corrections in the new Russian survey in the chain south and east of Elbruz.

We regret the absence of one or two good district maps, for example of Elbruz and the Central Group. They would have had interest for students as well as travellers.

The third volume contains the scientific results of the travels of M. de Déchy and his companions. His geological and botanical collections, the latter comprising several new species, are illustrated and described by various specialists. The remaining space is occupied by a more general disquisition on the structure and glacial features of the Caucasus by the author. This is done in a masterly manner without undue detail, and should be of the greatest use to future encyclopædists. M. de Déchy gives a careful account of the orography of the chain from sea to sea, dividing it into groups or sections. He reviews, as had previously been done in this country, the long struggle which active explorers had to wage with book-men in order to induce them to abandon their preconceived ideas of the small extent of the Caucasian snowfields and ice-streams.

The recent oscillations in the glaciers and their probable extent during the ice period, are both referred to. The absence of sub-mountainous lakes and the rarity of high tarns are noted, and the explanations furnished by Prof. Penck and his followers of these facts put forward. This is hardly the place to enter into the protracted argument as to the probable origin of lake-basins which still occupies and divides geologists. Sufficient weight has hardly been given hitherto to the action of torrents, both in filling up and in tapping natural hollows. They may

be studied at work to advantage both in the Maritime Alps and the Adamello group. Our own experience, which is fairly extensive, leads to conclusions similar to those of Prof. Heim, Prof. Bonney, and Prof. Garwood.

Taken as a whole, these volumes offer to the public a very complete picture of the characteristics of one of the most interesting portions of the Old World. M. de Déchy may be congratulated on the skill with which he has succeeded in combining the materials collected by his predecessors, of which he has made free and frequent use, with his own observations, and presenting them to the public in a form likely to be attractive to the general reader, as well as valuable to the scientific student or mountaineer.

D. W. F.

BURMA.

'Burma: a Handbook of Practical, Commercial, and Political Information.' By Sir George Scott, K.C.I.E., with special articles by recognized authorities on Burma. London: The De La More Press. 1906. Price 10s. 6d. net.

The heading to this book might lead one to conclude that the contents consist mostly of dry unpalatable matter, but the reader will be disillusioned, and speedily find himself on the best of terms with the writer. Those who have read 'The Burman, his Life and Notions,' by Shway Yoe (the pseudonym used by the present writer in his earlier days), will readily recognize and appreciate the same characteristic charm and pleasant humour of style throughout this work. People who have resided in Burma, and know something of the country and its inhabitants, will find much herein to amplify their knowledge, whilst those who contemplate a first visit to Burma can accept with confidence the information recorded in these pages, in preference to being misled by the "emotional and sketchy" authors on this subject, referred to in the preface of this work.

In his unpretentious way, the author describes his book as "of the nature of a skeleton, or of a painter's study for a large work," but there is much herein which savours of careful study and thought, and it is to be hoped that the same hand will, at some future date, undertake to write the larger work, when the cessation of administrative labour affords the requisite leisure.

Burma is a land of much promise and many possibilities, and although much has been effected by the administration since its annexation, the country is still in the infancy of its development, and no one who has lived there can deny that there is a great future ahead. There are still vast areas beyond the northern administrative line about which we still possess very little knowledge, and when railways are extended beyond Mogaung and Myitkyina, it is possible that at some distant date a veritable Klondike may be discovered far away in the Nam Kiu (or, more correctly speaking, the Loi Nok Ngeun) mountains.

There are untold attractions for the traveller, geographer, prospector, capitalist, artist, archaeologist, and ethnologist, to whom this modest volume will appeal, and serve as a useful and valuable guide and *vade mecum*. As the forests of India become denuded of game, the sportsman too will hie to pastures new, and when the art of shooting from howdahs, as hitherto practised in the Indian terais, is better understood in Burma, there will be no lack of the very best sport in the Shweli and upper Irrawaddy valley areas, for has not every Chingpaw a row of tiger's teeth to adorn his sword-belt? let alone the evidence of numerous tracks of wild animals which one encounters along every footpath in these forests; whilst at the confluence of the Nmai Hka and Mali Hka, the fisherman can revel in perhaps the finest mahsir-fishing in the world.

In Burma there lies a vast and fascinating field of research for the ethnologist