be found we would not budge another step. Fischer, our sturdy young porter, dived down into a little dell and soon shouted out 'Wasser!' so, greatly relieved, we set about lighting a fire. By cutting a lot of leaves and pine twigs we made comfortable beds and slept well. Next morning we went on early, climbing at least another 500 feet before we topped the ridge and went straight down the other side, quite as steep and far, down to the other stream. The wholly unnecessary cruelty of such a path, when it might just as well go round the spur below, is one of the puzzles of this wild country. Further on we crossed a big stream by a ricketty bridge, and getting up on rising ground came in view of the square towers of Latal. We had crossed the Ingur without knowing it! The complexity of the gorges and mountain spurs is very great. At Latal, a very poor place, we found Rieger and the horses and baggage, and a Suanetian boy whom we had found at Zagiri and had brought with us (*i.e.* with Rieger's party), a handsome young fellow of about 16, who really wept for joy at our arrival and kissed our hands. It was a lovely morning, nearly cloudless, and it was a great relief to get into the saddles again and ride over the short and easy little pass down into this valley. At the top of it, turning a corner, we came full in sight of Ushba, such a magnificent view, nearly the same as the engraving in the last 'A. J.' Of course I got the camera out and took 2 views. . . . Betsho is a very poor little place. It is with the utmost difficulty we can even get bread, and that only through the Russian Priestav, or military commandant, who is stationed here, a melancholy reserved sort of man, who, however, has entertained us to supper twice, and has really done a good deal for us. Dent, I am very sorry to say, is not well enough to climb, and is going home. Fox and I are very well indeed, and are going on. We leave this to-morrow, crossing the chain northwards and making for Bezingi and the Koshtantau district, after exploring the glaciers just north of Ushba. . . .

W. F. Donkin.

THE EARLY EXPLORERS OF THE CAUCASUS.

By DOUGLAS W. FRESHFIELD, Hon. Sec. R.G.S.

At the close of 1887 a volume containing the biographies of some leading Alpine guides, written by various hands, and entitled, 'The Pioneers of the Alps,' was published in London and reviewed (February 1888) in these pages. The excellent photographic portraits and illustrations contributed by Captain Abney, F.R.S., give the work a permanent value, and it has recently (October 1888) been issued in a second popular and less expensive edition. I have been reluctantly compelled to call attention at the Alpine Club to certain statements affecting the early explorers of the Caucasus to which the editor, Mr. Carus D. Cunningham, has devoted in this second edition a new page in his introductory note. I must here repeat—as far as is consistent with needful condensation—Mr. Cunningham's allegations in his own language.

'*It probably required considerably more strength of character than we perhaps appreciate for some of these guides to start for far-distant countries, where they vaguely imagined they might encounter adventures similar to those they may have read of during the long winter evenings in some popular Penny Dreadful book of travels. . . . From all we can learn, the difficulties of the expeditions to the Caucasus have been unduly overrated and magnified; not by any means intentionally, but simply from the fact that none of the little band of early explorers had ever travelled in a really rough country. The small contretemps of travel they encountered were simply those such as any Englishman unacquainted with the habits of the people, the language, or unprovided with proper introductions could not but fail to meet with* (sic) *in any Russian territory which the Messrs Cook had not succeeded in opening up for the tourist. . . . The height of the mountains of the Caucasus always conveys a most erroneous idea of their difficulty. . . . That there are difficult peaks in the Caucasus no one can deny; but they are still unascended. The guides who have been taken from the Alps to this 'great field for exploration,' have usually been called upon to display those qualities we associate with a Dragoman. The brothers François and Michel Dévouassoud have explored the Caucasus, a district which has been visited by Peter Knubel, and also by Alexander Burgener.*'—'Pioneers of the Alps,' 2nd ed., pp. 28–9.

I shall hardly be accused of presumption in taking these remarks as intended to reflect primarily on the first Alpine Club explorers of the Caucasus, the party of 1868; at any rate, if they were not so intended, that must be their effect on the general reader.

Most mountaineers who have climbed or explored in distant regions have learnt to 'suffer gladly' the comments of those to whom their form of travel is foolishness. But it would be unjust as well as unmannerly to extend sufferance on these terms to one who is a member of the Alpine Club and the editor of 'Pioneers of the Alps.' That, to the best of Mr. Cunningham's belief, I and my companions, Mr. Comyns Tucker and Mr. A. W. Moore, combined twenty years ago to present to the public a very exaggerated picture of the difficulties and dangers of Caucasian exploration, is no doubt a misfortune for the Geographical Society and the Alpine Club! But it is a misfortune, some may think, which might, under all the circumstances, have been borne silently, with a resignation grounded on faith in truth and time. Had these reflections fallen only, or chiefly, on myself, I might have been disposed to ignore them. But Mr. Cunningham has made his beliefs—or his scepticism—the ground of studied disparagement of the risks run and the professional skill shown by my veteran guide François Dévouassoud, of Chamonix, disparagement which I cannot consider as palliated by the compliments he is pleased to pay to him as the '*doyen* of the pioneers who have set out to' distant ranges, or to his social and literary attainments as a 'clever and intelligent man of the world.' Dévouassoud's friends—and mine—will understand that I feel bound therefore to show publicly what these beliefs of Mr. Cunningham's are worth; that inserted, as they are, in a volume to which I have myself contributed an authentic biography of my

comrade, I cannot allow them to pass uncorrected. But it is due to all concerned to add here that, before publishing this correction, I have been careful to submit it first to Mr. Cunningham, in the hope—a hope that has been disappointed—that by some step on his part he might relieve me from the very unwelcome necessity of recording in a permanent form the fallacies of a fellow-member of the Alpine Club.

Mr. Cunningham has told his readers that he relates to them the result of 'all we can learn.' All he has learnt in this instance is fiction—the exact contrary to the plain facts as long since published. He has been the too willing victim of an inexcusable mystification. I will prove in as few sentences as may be what I have here asserted.

Before entering the Caucasus all our party had seen much of mountain travel, and three of the four had previous experience of eastern travel in the wilds of the Hauran and Armenia. Our interpreter, a Caucasian by birth, and an excellent linguist, had been secured for me by Mr. Gifford Palgrave (then Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Trebizonde and previously at Sukhum Kaleh), whose body-servant he had been in his Abkhasian journeys. We were furnished with introductions to General Ignatieff, then Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, to General Loris Melikoff, then Governor of the Terek, to Count Levershoff, the Governor of Mingrelia, and to Baron Nicholai, the Viceregal Secretary at Tiflis, to General Chodzko, the head of the Caucasian Staff, as well as to Doctors Radde and Abich, the well-known savants, from all of whom we received valuable assistance. Our difficulty lay, not in any lack of introductions, but in the fact that we persisted in going into districts where Russian introductions did not at that date run. The country was not thoroughly pacified until many years later—after the war of 1877. In 1864, Dr. Radde, a Government traveller, had suffered robbery, and been forced to slink by night through certain villages in Suanetia to avoid outrage; even in 1876 he met with serious difficulties among the Chetchens. In 1868 travel was more or less dangerous in several parts, highly dangerous in Suanetia. François Dévouassoud, shut up in a barn at Jibiani by a mob armed with naked daggers and loaded guns, had no need to draw on his imagination for a picture suitable for 'a Penny Dreadful'!

In 1869, and again in 1875 and 1876, there were disturbances both in the east and west of the Caucasus, and Free Suanetia resisted the Russian authority in arms.

Captain Telfer, R.N., relates how in 1875 two Russian travellers were refused shelter for the night at Ipari (Suanetia), 'notwithstanding the personal request of the chief' (of the district, Colonel Hrinewski) 'and the official documents with which they were provided.' Again he writes, 'The natives decidedly refused to supply us' (Colonel Hrinewski and Captain Telfer) 'with food at any price except on two occasions. The fact is that the Swanny dislike the intrusion of strangers, and especially of those wearing the uniform of the monarch who claims them as his subjects.' *

* Telfer's *Crimea and Transcaucasia*, vol. ii. pp. 101 and 120. London 1876.

In 1876, Captain Telfer's friend, the Russian officer in command of the district, was, with five companions, murdered in cold blood in a barn a few miles from that in which we were mobbed. The incidents were described in detail by Captain Telfer in the 'Times' of January 22, 1877. Two years ago I saw the razed battlements of the hamlet where this outrage occurred.

Owing to the slow but sure pressure of Russian rule, such 'small contretemps of travel'—as Mr. Cunningham humorously calls the possibility of murder—are happily no longer to be feared by travellers. A Jewish pedlar is about the highest game a free Suanetian now ventures to sacrifice to the hereditary instinct of a race amongst which, as Dr. Radde records, 'individuals who have committed ten or more murders' were lately common.

My friend, Mr. Comyns Tucker, was no doubt a little premature in 1884 * in writing that robbery also was at an end in Suanetia. My own experience in 1887 proved the contrary.† Yet our solitary misadventure at Adish was an exception; and the speedy punishment that, thanks to the energy of the Russian priestav, fell on the robber-hamlet, may probably render this the last exception to the general rule and experience of recent travellers. I have been, it is true, courteously remonstrated with by my late companion, M. de Déchy, for *under*estimating the present difficulties of Caucasian travel. ‡ M. de Déchy speaks on the strength of four years' experience, and has a right to be heard. But I think he agrees with me that the country as a whole has improved, and is improving yearly, and that the frequent passage of travellers has in many districts smoothed the way of their successors—as long as the latter bear themselves with prudence, patience, and discretion. Yet so far are the Suanetians from having lost their bad name that last autumn, when the disappearance of Mr. Donkin's party first became known, the suggestion made both by Mr. C. Phillipps Wolley (the author of 'Savage Suanetia') and by officially-connected residents at Tiflis was that the travellers had met with violence among the Suanetians. The supposition in the particular instance was impossible; the experience of the past two summers has taught English travellers to believe that under any circumstances it would have been highly improbable. Yet it had, as I have shown, some *primâ facie* justification in comparatively recent events.

I trust that I have made it sufficiently clear—I might, had I space, multiply proof indefinitely—that François Dévouassoud fully deserves any credit he may have got for courage in facing twenty years ago murderously disposed barbarians. I must now show still more briefly that the suggestion that he, in common with other guides taken to the Caucasus, was chiefly employed as a 'Dragoman,' is as groundless as it is likely, should it meet with any credence, to be mischievous in inducing rash attempts by unpractised travellers.

I will not quote from my own book, 'The Central Caucasus,' published in 1869. My companion, the late Mr. A. W. Moore, C.B., formerly

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* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xi. p. 429. † *Proc. R.G.S.*, Nov. 1887.

‡ *Österreichische Alpen-Zeitung*, Jan. 25, 1889.

head of the Political Department at the India Office, and Hon. Secretary of the Alpine Club, compiled a diary of our journey, which was printed in the 'Alpine Journal' (vol. v., pp. 160–6). It would take a daring man to dispute Mr. Moore's competency and rigid accuracy in any matter of mountaineering. I find on looking back the following entries:—*Kasbek*, 'steep and dangerous ice-wall, costing four hours' work.' *Gurdzievsk Pass*, 'snow-couloir of excessive steepness.' *Karagam Pass*, 'six hours in a bad ice-fall.' Such entries from such a pen may be left to speak for themselves to all competent readers. Members of the Alpine Club will have no difficulty in deciding between Mr. Moore, the eye-witness, and Mr. Cunningham, the compiler and critic.

But I cannot resist asking Mr. Cunningham—Does he know what a 'Dragoman' (even spelt with a big D !) is, that with these entries before him he can write—what he has written ? Has he realised that up till now no single great peak of the Caucasus has been climbed without an Alpine guide—not even Elbruz, though it has been attempted over and over again by brave and hardy men, Cossack soldiers and native hunters ?

A famous 'Alpinist,' of Tarascon, a few years ago persuaded himself that the difficulties and dangers of the Alps were 'put up.' He submitted 'all he could learn' to the test of personal experience, and returned to Tarascon a wiser man. Mr. Cunningham has not yet proved his 'learning'; he has to some extent let the time pass by for fairly proving it. Yet even now if he will do with a dragoman all François did in 1868 and 1887, I think I may safely promise him that on his return he will have the material for a volume 'Sur le Caucase' almost as entertaining as his predecessor's 'Sur les Alpes.'

With regard to a subsidiary statement, whether intended as a compliment or the reverse, that '*François Dévouassoud passed several years at a Jesuit Seminary with a view to entering the priesthood of that powerful body: he however abandoned the idea, returned to his native valley, and joined the Société des Guides instead*,' François wishes me to say that there is not a word of truth in it.

I ought, perhaps, to add that readers must not assume, because I refrain here from any further corrections, that there are not many other passages in Mr. Cunningham's portion of 'Pioneers of the Alps' which in my opinion ought never to have been written, and stand greatly in need of correction.