

spectators were present on these occasions, from first to last, and were well rewarded for coming. Photographs of snow gain peculiarly when thus shown as transparencies, the intense brilliancy of the lantern causing the snow in light to appear much more luminous than can possibly be the case with photographs seen in the ordinary way. If it were possible to combine on a large scale this quality with the advantages of the stereoscope, there would be little besides colour left to be desired. Altogether the exhibition was completely successful, having been visited by not far short of 3,000 persons. Copies of the catalogue can be obtained from Messrs. Spooner, price 6d.

H. G. W.

[The portrait of Mr. Donkin, which appears at the head of this notice, is from a drawing by Mr. Willink.]

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#### MR. DONKIN'S ACCOUNT OF HIS 1888 JOURNEY IN THE CAUCASUS.

[The courtesy of Mr. E. H. Donkin enables us to place before the readers of the Journal the following most interesting letter, written by his brother a fortnight before the accident.]

Betsho, Wed., Aug. 15, '88.

I SIT in a blazing sun at a rough wooden table outside a wooden sort of barrack called a Cancellaria, one room of which we have, in a small valley, which you may roughly compare with the Zermatt valley on a smaller scale, but with an enormously larger Matterhorn at the head of it, towards the left—the great Ushba. It is still unclimbed. We have been here nearly a week, 4 days of which we spent in camp high up by the moraine under the mountain, and had two hard tries to get up the two twin peaks, but were beaten; the first time we tried the N.E. and slightly higher peak, by going up the great snow couloir between them; the weather was fine but too warm, so the snow was not hard enough, and it became dangerous from avalanches. We had to keep upon the rocks at the side, which were very difficult, and at last it was a choice between the steep snow and its risks and a defeat; so, though you may imagine the disappointment, we turned back and came down again. Even then we were not free from risk; huge avalanches had already fallen, and we had to run and slide down the slopes as fast as we could, tumbling through the masses of ice and snow débris till we were clear of avalanche tracks and could take it easy. Even so we were out for 13 hours and hard at work all the time. That was Saturday last. On Sunday we rested, and on Monday we had a try at the S.W. peak, from the S. arête. This avoids all risk of avalanches and we hoped for success. The telescope had shown that most of the route was easy except one hard bit below the top. It was an enormously long climb over the lower rocks and snow gullies, nowhere very steep, but very tiring just because it was easy enough to go fast. At last however we were brought up against a cliff; the great cliff which guards the top, and such a tremendous wall of forbidding precipice I never saw before. It is

nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile wide, and a magnificent and spotless field of snow hangs below it, sweeping down at a fearfully steep angle into the valley below. We were on a ridge abutting against the right-hand end of the cliff, and anxiously did we scan it for a possible way up. In the middle was a great crack from top to bottom, full of icicles; immediately over our heads the rocks went almost sheer up, solid and firm, but such little projections as there were sloped the wrong way and gave no hold whatever. Streich was not very well, and evidently did not think it possible. However we put down all the baggage, and had a try at the lowest rocks. We got up a little way, a very little, and then got hopelessly stuck. Fox, who is a most enthusiastic climber, wanted to try the ice gully, but merely to get near it involved getting up an overhanging slab of vertical rock, which I declared was impossible; indeed, I had mentally given it up on first inspection. Once up those 400 or so feet of precipice, all would have been easy, as the top slope is gentle; but it was hopeless, so once more we had to accept defeat, and turned downwards. Before doing so, however, we built a little cairn, and I took a boiling-point to determine the height we were at—nearly 15,000 feet. As we descended the interminable ridges of broken rock the clouds swept up and a little snow fell, but lower down we got into finer weather again. Ushba is its proper name—the rain peak. Seldom is it free from cloud; but the first two days here it was clear and I have got several good photographs of it. We had started at 2 A.M. and did not get back to camp till 6 P.M.; 16 hours out and the hardest part left undone. . . . But you will like to know more generally how we have fared. We left Constantinople on Sat. July 29 and had a fine passage to Batoum, touching at several southern ports, and landing for a few hours at Trebizonde on the Tuesday. Next morning we reached Batoum and expected much trouble with the Custom House people, but, as I told you in my letter from there, we got through wonderfully easily. Next morning we left by the 8 train for Kutais, arriving at 2. We were met by Rieger, our interpreter, an elderly German with short grey hair, very brisk and energetic, and we soon found him an excellent courier and general manager. Kutais is a good-sized town with a fair hotel. By hard pushing and much bustle we managed to pack all our goods and ourselves on eight horses by 6 o'clock the same afternoon, and rode out of the town a motley cavalcade, greatly to the amusement of the lazy inhabitants. A good road goes for many miles gently up the Rion valley, but we could not do more than 10 or 12 that night, and we stopped at a *duchan*, or roadside wineshop, for the night. We got a fairly clean room, and lay in our sleeping-bags till early morning, when we rode on again. On and on all day—very tiring—to another *duchan*. Meals all anyhow, occasionally a tinned soup, but mostly brown bread, milk, and occasionally a chicken or a few eggs. The scenery became finer and the hills covered with beautiful forests, but the snow mountains not yet visible. On the 3rd day we crossed a pretty grass col into the Zenes Tshkali valley (Horse River), the road becoming now only a path. Scenery much finer and the valley a most beautiful one. By about 6 we arrived at Lentechi, and after some parleying put up at a biggish farm-house with a large first floor

balcony, accessible only by a clumsy ladder. This we took possession of, as the inhabitants gaping at us as we unpacked our things and got ready for the night. We had bought a sackful of good bread at Zagiri, the last place with anything at all like a shop. From Lentechi our plans were to send Rieger and 2 natives with the horses and bulk of the baggage round by the well-known Latpar pass into Suanetia, while we 3 and 2 guides and 2 native porters intended to cross the Leila chain direct northwards to this place, if possible climbing the highest point of the range on the way for the sake of the splendid panoramic view of the main chain it must give. We failed, however, in this, and only managed to cross by a pass known to the natives. The difficulty of making them understand our object is almost insuperable. The glens and ridges, forest-covered and all but impenetrable, make it impossible to do without the natives; they alone know where there are paths, and they won't leave them, and the idea of going up a mountain where there is no path instead of crossing at a lower point where there is one is naturally to them the wildest folly. Well, the result was that as we rose up the steep grass slopes under a blazing sun we gradually made out our whereabouts, and saw Leila far away westwards 2 or 3 days distant, deep gorges intervening; so we of course gave it up and accepted the native daroga, or path. When I tell you we slept out *twice* before reaching the comparatively low col we were making for, you will see the kind of distances we had to go. However, this was partly due to our being entirely out of training and also to Dent not being very well. On the 3rd day we reached the pass and looked over the ridge for the first time down into Suanetia, the great wide valley of the Ingur with the main chain on the north. But, ah, what a distance away! We stopped there an hour and a half, photographing and taking angles and notes; the day was fine, but clouds hung partly over the snows, giving us occasional glimpses only of Ushba, straight opposite. We hoped to get down to Latal that evening and meet the horses, and started down the gentle snow slopes merrily enough. Soon however we got into difficulties: the gorge we were in, leading down to the Ingur valley, was very long, and intersected by other gorges that involved long detours; our two natives evidently did not know the right way, but late in the afternoon we struck into a good path which took us down to the water, and we hoped we were all right. But it went on and on, and it got late, and we saw we must camp out once more. We settled to move on a little further, looking for a convenient spot. The path turned upwards to the left, the river trending to the right; we went on further, moved more up through the forest, wondering how much higher it would go. Evidently it took us over a spur, and we should soon drop down to another stream the other side. We were very tired and were carrying heavy loads. Up went the path suddenly, very steep; the forest impenetrable either side; no water or level spot, so we *had* to go on, though gasping and nearly exhausted. Imagine reaching Zermatt late in the afternoon very tired, and finding you had to go up to the Riffelberg. Nearly half as high again did we toil up through that wood, till at a small clearing we dropped on the grass and one and all declared that if water could

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.

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## 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.