

false claim to have climbed the peak in 1868. He grossly misquotes me to the effect that our party only took the incredibly short time of four hours in climbing the mountain; whereas I stated that we took four hours in ascending from 11,000 to 14,800 feet, and 5½ hours in climbing the further 1800 feet to the top. An answer to all his arguments is to be found in my 'Central Caucasus,' a copy of which is in the Museum at Tiflis, or in the 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xii. pp. 320-389, in which I have dealt generically with the class of commentators to which Herr von Seidlitz apparently belongs.

Further reply would be thrown away on so unconscientious a writer. It may be serviceable, however, to any Russian or Caucasian climbers who desire to verify the advantage of the route discovered in our descent in 1868 if I repeat the following simple directions. Follow the Tchach, the chief tributary of the Devdoraki torrent, to its source, then climb the easy slopes on the (true) right of the Atchieretchi Glacier to the ridge separating it from the Devdoraki Glacier. Bivouac for the night under a rock tower above the icefall of the latter, visible from the spot whence the Devdoraki Glacier has been photographed. From this point (marked "Volgichki, 13,454 feet," on some maps), it is easy to enter the great névé plateau at the northern base of the two peaks of Kasbek, which was apparently attained from a more westerly valley by Herr von Seidlitz's Ossetian friends. From this plateau the ascent of the peak offers no greater difficulty or danger than that of Mont Blanc from the Grands Mulets. And when a hut has been constructed at the sleeping place the only hardship will be avoided. A direct ascent from the Post Station by the eastern or southern face will, however, always be a more or less difficult or dangerous expedition, according to the state of the snow on the very steep upper slopes. Doubtless before many years have passed the ascent from the north will be frequently made, and tourists of all nations will look back with mingled amusement and surprise to the lucubrations of the learned men who were unfortunate enough to find "able editors" ready to exhibit to the world how little they understood, or were able to appreciate, the details of mountain climbing, the configuration of Kasbek, or the ordinary veracity of Englishmen.—[D. W. F.]

Dr. Schweinfurth in South-western Arabia.—Dr. Schweinfurth arrived at Aden at the end of the year *en route* to Hodeida. He intends to explore the little-known Menakha Mountains in the neighbourhood of Sana. He has letters from the Sultan, and has received ample support from Berlin.

Grombchevski's Journey across the Pamir.—M. Venukoff has communicated to us the following information regarding Grombchevski's expedition, which started last spring from Turkistan with the aim of crossing the Pamir into Dardistan and the Upper Indus. The last

information (up to Dec. 2nd) about Grombchevski's movements came from the Russian Consul at Kashgar, who had received several letters from him. After having left Lake Kara-kul (in East Turkistan) the traveller reached the highlands of the Pamir from the north, and followed the course of the Ak-su up to its confluence with the Istyk. There he was stopped by the Chinese authorities coming from Tashkurgan. Grombchevski succeeded, however, by means of presents to the local *beg*, in obtaining permission to continue his journey, and crossed the water-divide between the upper Ak-su and the Vakhn-daria. But here he met with a new obstacle: when he had reached Baza-i-Gumbez, he learned that the Afghans had sent a military detachment for the purpose of arresting him and bringing him to Sarad on the Vakhn-daria. To avoid this, he took a south-eastern direction, and went up the Aksai, a small tributary, on the left bank, of the upper Vakhn-daria, and made a stay for the night in its valley. As the night came, the expedition saw the fires of the Afghan camp, and decided to attack them themselves. It was raining, and the night was very dark, so that the Cossacks succeeded in crawling to the Afghan camp to seize the men, and to bring them disarmed to the Russian camp. Grombchevski obtained from the Afghans all necessary information, took them with his expedition, and crossed the Hindu-kush; there he set them at liberty. However, on descending the southern slope of the Hindu-kush along the streams which flow towards Nagar and Hunza, the expedition lost one-half of its horses. Grombchevski sent at once one of his men to the ruler of Nagar and Hunza to ask for help. The help came; men were sent by the ruler, and they transported the luggage of the expedition to Hunza on their own backs. The expedition stayed for some time at Hunza, and thence returned by another route. It crossed the Mustagh, and after having left some of his luggage at the sources of the Tun river (a tributary of the Yarkand river), M. Grombchevsky went to Pill, whence he soon returned and continued his journey down the course of the Tun as far as its junction with the Yarkand river. Thence he took an eastern direction down the latter; but after having met there with new obstacles, he went to Bas-robot, and thence crossed the high mountains which border the Pamir, reaching a spot situated 27 miles to the north-east of peak Tagarma (Mustagh-ata), and 47 miles to the W.S.W. of Yanghi-hissar. From this spot he sent to the Russian Consul at Kashgar the following message: "No provisions, no food more; I am in extreme danger, and request immediate relief." The expedition already being then on Russian territory, it must be presumed that the relief came timely, and that the results of M. Grombchevski's remarkable explorations will be saved for the benefit of science.

Trade in Persia.—In view of the special attention which has recently been directed to the trade of Persia, the following extracts from the Report (No. 445) for 1887-8 of Mr. W. G. Abbott, our Consul at Tabriz,

be made some time during the present month (March), when Colonel Pevtsov, known to geographers through his travels in Mongolia, will assume the command of the expedition. M. Bogdanovitch, a mining engineer, will be attached to the mission as geologist.

Explorations in the Pamir.—The eastern part of the Pamir was explored in 1887 by the traveller Grum-Grshimailo, to whose previous journeys in that region we have before referred. His route upon the present journey was as follows:—Starting from the river Kudar in the north of the Pamir he skirted Lake Rang-kul, crossed Tash-kurgan, and proceeded along the upper course of the Yarkand-daria, across the Mustagh and the spurs of the Kara-korum range and the Benku Pass to Ak-su. It was then his intention to visit Wakhan, but finding that impossible, he effected his return northwards by the most direct route. His surveys extended over several hundred miles of country, and his map forms a valuable addition to the cartography of that region. He was able to determine more than twenty new altitudes, besides correcting many former determinations. Among the other important geographical results of his journey may be mentioned the discovery and partial exploration of certain glaciers on the upper course of the river Tagarma, and the delineation of the western part of the Kara-korum mountain system.

Further News of Grombchevaki's Expedition across the Pamir.—We are indebted to M. Venukoff for further interesting details regarding Captain Grombchevaki's journey, in continuation of his communication published in our February No. (p. 103). They are taken from a letter of the traveller to M. Venukoff, and are as follows:—“From the outposts of the Alai I proceeded, on July 23rd (1888), up the Isfairam river, crossed the pass Tenghiz-bai, and followed the valley of the Great Alai. At the entrance into the gorges of Kyzyl-art we stopped for two days, in order to buy horses accustomed to mountain journeys, and then resumed our march, *via* the pass Kyzyl-art, towards the depression of Lake Great Kara-kul. We crossed further the pass Ak-baital, and soon reached the Ak-su, or Murghab. According to the plan of my journey, I had now to cross the mountains which separate the Ak-su from the Pamir Tagdum-bash, and try to penetrate into Kanjut so as not to touch Afghan territory. I could do so if I proceeded nearly due south from Ak-tash, across the Benku Pass, because this route would bring me to a place situated some thirteen miles higher up than Kurgan-i-hojar-bai; but I learned that in such case I should fall amidst the summer encampments of the local *beg*—a Kalmuck, devoted to the Chinese—who would not allow me to proceed further. I should have to resort to force, and thus have too many people hostile to me. Therefore I decided to enter the Khanate of Wakhan, presuming that the Afghans cannot be nearer than at Kala-i-pianj, and that I thus might cross the Kelinj Pass, and enter Kanjut before the Afghans had time to come and stand in my way.

So I went up the Ak-su, reached its sources, crossed the Chil-ob, or Andemanyn Pass, and came to the upper parts of the Vakhan-daria. On August 15th we encamped at Bazai-i-gumbez, opposite the mouth of the Vakhjir (or Almayan-saya). Up to this time we had marched without taking one single day's rest, and had covered nearly 400 miles. The horses behaved very well, notwithstanding the high altitude of the region; but each of them was carrying about 360 pounds of luggage, and they badly wanted some rest. However, we learned from some Vakhan travellers that there was no time to lose; a strong Afghan detachment was camping at the Sarkhyad village, and a longer stay at Bazai-i-gumbez would not be advisable. I also had to abandon my scheme of taking the Kelinj Pass, and I entered a lofty mountain tract towards the sources of the Dangnyn-bash river—the Kara-tchukur—with the intention of entering later on the valley of the Kalik stream, which would bring me to the Kalik Pass, and thence to Kanjut. By taking this last route I should avoid an encounter with both the Afghans and the beg who was staying much lower down the course of the Kara-tchukur. In the meantime, the weather, which so far had favoured us, suddenly changed. Rain was pouring, and after two days it turned into snow. The last traces of the foot-path which we were following had disappeared under the snow, and I was compelled to stop. However, the snowfall, while retaining us, had also retained the Afghan detachment which had been sent out from Wakhan in order to seize us. The informers only of the detachment had succeeded in following us, and we took them prisoners. Under the menace of being shot, these two men showed me the way across the Vakhjir Pass to the Kara-tchukur river. The pass, nearly 13,800 feet high, was covered with snow, and a snowstorm raged as we crossed it on August 21st. To avoid being stopped by the Chinese begs, I entered next day the gorge of the Kalik river, and, without guides, we were searching for three days a passage amidst the glaciers and the perennial snow of the Mus-tagh. Finally we found it, and the passage proved exceedingly easy; in fact, a cart with a full team of horses could follow this route.—When we reached the summit of the pass, I saw under my feet the gorge of Kanjut; my dream for many years past of seeing the southern slope of the Hindu-kush thus became a reality. I had no idea what would be my reception there; should I return alive? I rejoiced to see that my supposition as to the easiness of the passages across the Western Himalayas, or the Eastern Hindu-kush, was so fully confirmed. We had journeyed with heavy luggage, covering no less than twenty, and sometimes more than thirty miles every day, and now we stood at the gates of Kanjut without having lost, or even injured our horses. After descending into the valley of Kanjut, we marched almost without hindrance to Lub-jangan, where we met with the first inhabitants of Kanjut. The people we met with had been sent out by

the ruler of the country, Safder-ali-khan, to levy taxes from the Pamir Kirghizes submitted to China. I learned from them that a further advance with laden horses would be impossible, and so I wrote to the khan announcing my arrival in his territory, and asking him to send bearers for the transport of my luggage. The answer came seven days later and was favourable, the khan was sending me men and expected me in his capital.—From our first steps we discovered that the road was really impracticable for horses. Even I—an experienced hunter in the Turkistan mountains—was stopping quite bewildered, and at certain dangerous passages I was bound to resort to the help of the mountaineers. The khan received me with suspicion to begin with; but later on he made me an excellent reception, at a durbar to which all the higher functionaries and elders of the khanate, as well as envoys from Nagar and Ghilghit, were invited. I entered the circle of the functionaries on horseback—the khan's music playing and salutation shots being fired from a gun and the *taifurs*.—Next day the khan came to dine with me, and during the visit he took a cold and fell ill with fever. He suspected me of having poisoned him, and so I had to doctor him and stay, although I surely would have been torn to pieces if the illness had had a fatal issue. But I armed myself with calmness and a bold persuasion that nobody would dare to offend a Russian, and this policy proved the best. Finally the khan recovered. At the same time the news came of an insurrection which had broken out in Afghanistan, and of cholera having made its appearance in Ghilghit. A war was beginning against the Kashmiris who were gathered around Ghilghit. I had nothing more to do in Kanjut, and so I bade farewell to the khan at a special audience on September 19th, and on October 2nd I was again on the Pamir Dagnyn-bash, after having crossed the pass Ming-teke.—In order to characterise the inhabitants of Kanjut, it is sufficient to mention the two following facts:—Safder-ali-khan has shot his own father, poisoned his mother, stabbed to death his brother Sha-sumeis-khan, and ordered to be thrown over a precipice his two younger brothers, one of whom was eleven years and the other eight years old. The other fact is this:—Kanjut was visited before me by Colonel Lockhart, who kept the brother of the khan and the son of the vizier as hostages, and nevertheless part of his numerous escort were taken prisoners by the Kanjutis and sold into slavery. Altogether, they live upon robbery, plundering both the Chinese and the Kashmiris and selling their prisoners into slavery. Kashmir pays them every year 15,000 rupees, and China sends substantial presents to induce them to keep quiet, but nevertheless they continue to practise their old customs of rapine and robbery. If I have succeeded in twice crossing their country without having been robbed, it was probably on account of the friendship of the khan and his favourites, besides, and my own boldness. I never asked anybody's permission to make my survey; I determined latitudes and longitudes,

and observed my meteorological instruments at regular hours, without trying to conceal one. The Kanjutis, no doubt, felt that, in case of need, I should fight desperately, and, being themselves endowed with boundless courage, they respected the feeling of security which I displayed while living among them. When I reached the Pamir Dangnynbash, I had lost half my horses, and the other half were out of service. I was compelled to leave there my men and luggage while I went with one man only on hired horses to Ruskem. I proposed to explore the Ruskem river up to Karakorum and thus to connect my survey with that of the British. But we soon learned that the Kanjutis had plundered a rich caravan which was marching from Yarkand to Ladak, and had also kidnapped the whole of the scanty population of Ruskem; the land was now a desert. My guide, who was afraid of also being taken prisoner by the Kanjutis, and wanted to compel me to return, managed to drown all the sheep I had taken with us for our food as we were crossing the Ruskem-daria. So I was compelled to return. However, this unsuccessful excursion — which brought me within three days' march of Kirghiz-ilga (a spot marked on British maps)—had the advantage of permitting me to correct the map of the Ruskem river and its sources.—Returning to Dangnyn-bash, I took over my oxen and we followed the course of the Tash-kurgan river, past Tash-kurgan, as far as the peak Tagarma. I followed the course of the Tash-kurgan river, past the villages of Shindi and Baldyr, and thence went up the valley of the Vatcha. My intention was to reach the middle course of the Ruskem river, and to survey it in a tract which had not yet been explored. At Pehan-yart I was compelled again to leave my men and horses, which were broken by fatigue, and again accompanied by one man only, I went on hired horses to Pil, on the Ruskem-daria; but we nearly succumbed during that excursion from want of water. Returning again by the same route, I rejoined my men, and we went up the Shindi river, past Chichiklik and Koahka-su, to the sources of the Ring-kul, and thence down its valley as far as Ighiz-yar. There I turned towards the north, crossed the ridge which separated me from the Kara-tash, and went up this last river across the mountains which M. Ivanoff has named the Kaashgar ridge; we passed between two peaks of the Mustagh-ata, over the very high pass Kara-tash, and reached Lake Little Karakul. The valley of the Ghez river, past Upal, brought us to Kaashgar.” —Since this letter was received, General Venukoff informs us that Grombehevski had returned to St. Petersburg, where the Russian Geographical Society awarded him a gold medal, and he was received by the Emperor. The detailed report of the expedition is expected to be published next autumn.

Russian Colonies in the Syr-Daria Region.—The Russian colonisation of Central Asia began in 1875 in the Syr-Daria region, on the east of Lake Aral, by the foundation of the village of Mikhailovsk in the district of