great rapidity by the construction of a railway from Mikhailovsk on the Caspian to Kizil-arvat and Sarakhs, and thence to Merv and north-eastward to Tchardjui on the Amu, from which point it is now being continued across Bokhara towards Samarkand. Attempts at growing cotton and tea are being made, and land has been rented at Merv for cotton plantations. Cotton is to be pressed by steam at Bokhara and Tchardjui, to be sent to Russia by the Trans­caspian railway.@@1

*Caspian Littoral.—*The Caspian littoral is divided into two districts, Krasnovodsk and Manghishɫak. The former has about 15,500 settled inhabitants and 3056 Turcoman kibitkas (partly shifted in summer to Persian territory). The chief settlements of the district are Krasnovodsk on the Krasnovodsk Gulf; Mikhailovsk, the terminus of the Transcaspian railway, in regular communication by steamer with Baku ; and Tchikishlyar, close to the mouth of the Atrek. The Manghishɫak district, which includes the Ust-Urt plateau, has a population of about 34,500 Kirghiz. Its chief settlement is Alexandrovsk.

The total population of the Transcaspian region was estimated in 1883—that is, before the annexations in South-West Turcomania —at from 214,000 to 260,000 inhabitants (P. A. K.)

TRANSCAUCASIA, the name given to that portion of the Russian empire (in Caucasus, Armenia, and Asia Minor) which lies to the south of the main Caucasus ridge. It comprises the governments of Kutais (inclusive of the province of Batum), Tiflis, Elisabethpol, Erivañ, and Kars, with parts of Daghestan and most of Baku, and the separate military districts of Tchernomorsk and Zakataɫy. Sometimes Transcaucasia is identified with Southern Caucasus, and then it is intended to include the whole of Daghestan. So defined, it would have an area of 95,930 square miles, and a population of 4,173,380.

Three regions must be distinguished :—(1) the narrow strip of land between the main Caucasus ridge and the Black Sea (Tchernomorsk district, *q.v*.) ; (2) the broad valley, watered by the Rion in the west and the Kura in the east, which separates the main Caucasus ridge from the region next to be mentioned ; (3) the highlands, mountains, and plateaus of Lazistan, Kars, and Armenia.

The valley referred to, which crosses the isthmus from the Black Sea to the Caspian, consists of two widely different sections,—the drainage-area of the Rion, which is Mediterranean in its physical characteristics, and the valley of the Kura and Araxes, which slopes to the Caspian, and in its lower parts becomes purely cis-Caspian. The Mesques or Meshik Mountains (3000-5000 feet), a ridge running south-west to north-east, and probably a con­tinuation of the Black Sea coast ridge (Tchorokh Moun­tains), separate the two. The drainage area of the Rion, which corresponds approximately to the government of Kutais, includes the former provinces of Imeritia, Min- grelia, Guria, and Swanetia on the upper Ingur and Tshenis- tshali. With the exception of the valley of the Rion (some 25 miles broad), and the sandy and marshy littoral, it is wholly occupied by spurs of the main Caucasus ridge, the Meshik, and the Wakhan Mountains; the last-named rise to 10,000 and 11,000 feet above the sea in their highest summits, and are intersected by deep and fertile valleys. The region is characterized by a heavy rainfall and a moist maritime climate. The vegetation, which is luxuriant, is of a circum-Mediterranean character : fine forests of de­ciduous trees clothe the mountain slopes, and the high­land villages nestle amid thickets of azalea, almond, and rhododendron. Maize, the mulberry, the vine, and a great variety of fruit trees are cultivated. Mingrelia and Imeritia are the real gardens of Caucasus ; but the high valleys tributary to the Ingur, inhabited by Swanians, are wild and difficult of access ; in some of them, which are narrow and marshy, fevers and scurvy prevail. The Rion is not navigable, and of its tributaries only the Tshenis-

tshali and the Kvirila are worthy of mention. Several lakes (such as the Paleostom, surrounded by marshes at the mouth of the Rion) occur in the coast region. The popu­lation consists of Imeritians, Mingrelians, Gurians, and Swanians, all belonging to the Kartvelian branch of Caucasians (see vol. x. p. 433), with a few Ossetians, Jews, Armenians, and Tartars. Russians are not numerous.

The pass of Suram, by which the Transcaucasian railway now crosses the Mesques Mountains, leads from the valley of the Rion to that of the Kura. Spurs from the Caucasus and the Anti- caucasus fill up the broad longitudinal depression between these, so that above Tiflis the bottom of the valley is but a narrow strip. But below that city it suddenly widens, and stretches for nearly 350 miles eastward towards the Caspian with a steadily increasing breadth, until it becomes nearly 100 miles wide in the steppe of Mugañ on the Caspian littoral. The snow-clad peaks of the main Caucasus, descending by short steep slopes, fringe the valley on the north-east ; while a huge wall, much lower, and having the characters of a border-ridge of the Armenian plateau, bounds the valley on the south-west.@@2 The floor of the valley gently slopes from 1200 feet at Tiflis to 500 feet in its middle, and to 85 feet below the level of the ocean on the Caspian shore ; but a plateau ranging from 2000 to 3000 feet in height, very fertile along the Aɫazañ, a left-hand tributary of the Kura, stretches along the southern hill­foots of the main ridge. In its lower course the Kura is joined by the Araxes, a river nearly as large as itself, which brings to it the waters of the Armenian plateau.

The highest mountains of the Caucasus enclose the upper parts of the valley (now the government of Tiflis). An unbroken series of peaks, from 10,000 to 12,600 feet in height, mostly snow-clad and separated by but slight depressions, is seen in profile as one looks from some height of the Anticaucasus towards the main chain and the broad valley of the Kura. Deep short gorges and valleys indent the steep slopes which are inhabited by Ossetians, Tushes, Pshavs, and Khevsurs in the west, and by the various tribes of the Lesghians in the east. Every available patch is used in these high and stony valleys for the culture of barley, even at heights of 7000 and 8000 feet above the sea ; but cattle-breeding is the chief resource of the mountaineers, whose little communities are separated from one another by passes in few cases lower than 10,000 feet. The steppes which cover the bottom of the valley are for the most part too dry to be cultivated without irrigation. It is only nearer the hillfoots in Kahetia, where multitudinous streams supply the fields and the gardens of the plateau of the Atazan, that wheat, millet, and maize are grown, and orchards, vineyards, and mulberry- tree plantations are possible. Lower down the valley cattle-rearing becomes the chief source of wealth, while in the small towns and villages of the former Georgian kingdom (see Georgia) various petty trades, testifying to a high development of artistic taste and technical skill, are widely diffused. Further down the Kura, in the government of Elizabethpol, and especially on the right bank of the river, a population of Russian agriculturists—chiefly Nonconformists —is rapidly springing up, so that corn is exported from the villages on the Ganja. The slopes of the Anticaucasus are covered with beautiful forests, and the vine is grown at their base, while in the broad and wide steppes the Tartars rear cattle, horses, and sheep. The lower part of the Kura valley, which belongs mainly to the province of Baku, assumes the character of a dry steppe where the rainfall hardly reaches 13∙7 inches at Baku, and is still less in the Mugañ steppe (in most striking contrast with the moistness of the Lenkoran region close by). The steep slopes of the Great Caucasus are still covered with thriving forests ; but forests and meadows dis­appear in the steppe, whose scanty vegetation has a Central-Asian character. Only *tugais,* or thickets of poplar, dwarf oak, tama­risk, and so on, follow the actual course of the Kura, whose delta is covered with impenetrable growths of rushes. The Mugañ steppe, however, does not deserve its ancient evil reputation ; the serpents with which it was said to abound are entirely fabulous, and in the winter it is full of life ; herds of antelopes roam over it, and its southern irrigated parts promise to become the granary of Caucasus,@@3 although its unirrigated parts will probably never recover their former richness, the Kura having excavated its bed to a much greater depth. The Apsheron peninsula, in which the Great Caucasus terminates at Baku, to be continued farther south-east by a sub­marine plateau of the Caspian, is the seat of those remarkable naphtha springs which have recently given rise to an important industry and now supply most of the Volga steamers with fuel; while the western shores of the wide Kizil-agatch Bay—the Tatysh, or Lenkoran district on the slopes of the Armenian plateau—on account of their rich vegetation, fertile soil, and moist climate, are one of the most beautiful possessions of Russia in Asia.

@@@1 No Russian sea shows so rapid a growth of navigation as the Caspian Sea during the last fifteen years. In 1884 no less than 1945 steamers (611,000 tons), engaged in foreign trade, entered the Russian ports of the Caspian, as against 409 (113,000 tons) in 1876.

@@@2 For this valley and the contrasts between the Caucasus and Anti- caucasus, see Radde s *Omis Caucasica,* Cassel, 1884.

@@@3 Seidlitz, *Spiski naselennykh myest Bakinskoi gubernii.*