



Jenny Cressis - Hoofs

# AMONG THE KARA-KORUM GLACIERS IN 1925

BY

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LONDON  
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1926

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## PREFACE

A PREFACE must needs be written the last thing, and as I have related in the following pages all I had to say about our expedition to the unknown glaciers in the Hunza region in Central Asia, and have already expressed my gratitude to all those who so kindly assisted us, this introductory note could be omitted, were it not that I gladly avail myself of the opportunity to record my sincere thanks to Mr Edward Arnold for the kind help he gave me in reading over the MS.

I have aimed at giving a general account of our experiences and adventures. The narrative has been chiefly drawn from diaries which were written on the spot, and gives our impressions such as they were before the influence of time and changing circumstances could alter them. They are thus a true picture of our travels.

JENNY VISSER-HOOFT.

SALTSJÖBADEN,

*June-July 1926.*



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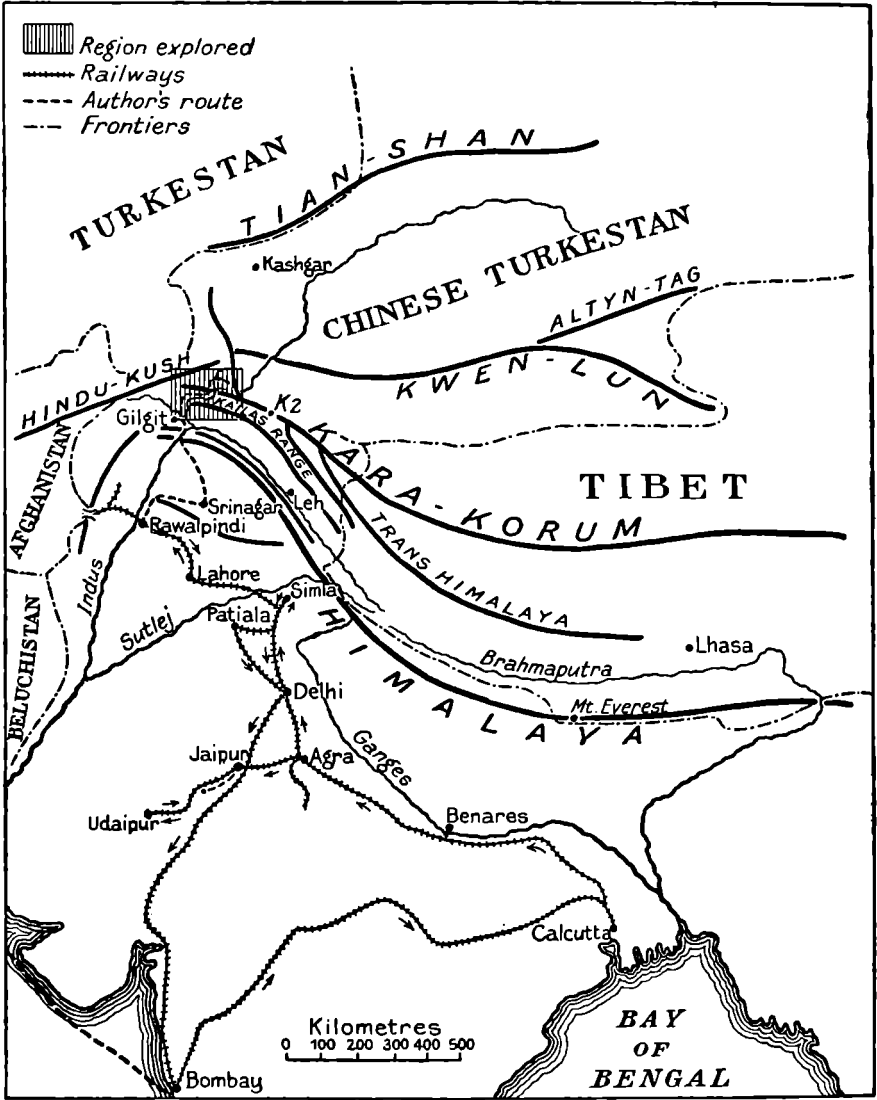
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Outline of Northern India and the Mountain Ranges.

# AMONG THE KARA-KORUM GLACIERS

## CHAPTER I

### . FROM SRINAGAR TO GILGIT

IN the innermost heart of Asia, between the two great ranges of the Kara-Korum and the Hindu Kush, lies a high mountain region which is one of Nature's last strongholds. Mighty glaciers, larger even than those in the Himalaya, descend from heights of more than 25,000 feet, and foaming torrents force their way through gorges of stupendous grandeur. It has been aptly described as one of the most difficult fields of exploration in the world. The northern side of the Kara-Korum especially deserves this definition: it is impossible to imagine a scene of more terrible and magnificent splendour, and it was no wonder that the maps of this region, even those issued at such a recent date as 1915, still showed many blank spaces.

Hardly anything was known about its innermost recesses. Travellers passing through the main valleys had seen the mountains from afar and had crossed the snouts of the glaciers which blocked their way; but, although a caravan route existed

through the dark Hunza gorge from India to Chinese Turkestan, large stretches of completely unknown country were situated on either hand to the east and west. No one had ever entered the side valleys. They were untrodden ground, with the exception of the Khunjirab and Shingshal, these passes having already been visited from the north-east by Sir Francis Younghusband on his memorable journey through Central Asia.

In 1892 the British Government sent a young and energetic officer, now Brig.-General G. K. Cockerill, C.B., M.P., to acquire more accurate information concerning these two valleys. General Cockerill, however, only had the time and opportunity to penetrate into them from the Hunza side as far as the respective passes, returning by the same way.

The aim of our expedition, which started from Srinagar in April 1925, was to investigate this unknown territory, having three definite objects in view. The first was the exploration of the great, unknown Batura glacier, which descends into the Hunza valley between Pasu and Khaiber; secondly, that of the Khunjirab and the totally unexplored Gujirab gorges; and thirdly, that of the untrodden Malungutti glacier which had so far only been seen from the Shingshal valley, and was still a geographical problem.

The field of our exploration thus comprised the main tributaries of the Hunza river, which we hoped to follow up to their glacier sources on the Pamir

watershed. They are situated in the States of Hunza and Nagar, two small kingdoms which are tributary to Kashmir.

Less than thirty-five years ago they were still typical little robber states. Their favourable position, surrounded on all sides by natural fortifications of perpendicular cliffs, narrow gorges and huge wastes of snow and ice, had enabled them for centuries to maintain their independence against all foreign invaders. In their rocky defiles their chiefs led the lives of absolute autocrats; the slave-trade flourished, and the ruler of Hunza, especially, whose territory led up to the foot of the comparatively easy passes leading to the Pamirs and the valley of the Yarkand river, found the looting of the rich caravans on the trade route between Central Asia and India a source of wealth.

For centuries the name of the Hunza-Nagar men had struck terror into the hearts of all travellers in the country between Afghanistan and Kashgar—on one occasion a caravan of fifty camels and five hundred ponies is said to have been pillaged—and they had caused whole regions to be abandoned and depopulated on the northern side of the passes. Splendid cragsmen and of a warlike nature, they had a great reputation as intrepid fighters, and the Kashmiri and Chinese authorities were powerless to put a stop to their well-organised raids.

Thus things stood even as late as 1891, when a British force, led by Colonel Durand, attacked these

venturesome brigands in their stronghold and subjugated the country.

From Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, our route would first take us across the great range of the Himalaya to Gilgit. The Hunza river, which flows into the Gilgit river two miles below the fort, breaks through the second great range, the Kara-Korum, at about two marches beyond Baltit, the capital of Hunza.

Strange to say, the place that the Kara-Korum takes in the continent of Asia is still wrongly judged and not estimated according to its true value. It is less well known than the Himalayan range, probably because the latter has earned the wide-world reputation of being the highest mountain chain on earth. It would be more correct to say that the Himalayan chain includes among its peaks Mount Everest, the loftiest elevation on the surface of the globe. The average height of the Kara-Korum if completely known would probably surpass that of the Himalaya, and the majority of the summits attaining the greatest altitude would most likely be situated in the former. The highest peak which bears the uninspiring name of K2 is only about 724 feet lower than Mount Everest.

The impression that the Himalaya is the most important watershed in Asia is still widely spread, but is again inaccurate. It is a remarkable fact that the mighty rivers of India, the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra, rise from sources on the northern

side of the Himalaya, and after piercing the great mountain wall, flow in a southward direction; the water on both sides thus finding its way to the south and flowing into the Indian Ocean.

With the Kara-Korum it is different. There is no doubt about its forming a watershed, which is the most important one of Asia. A glance at the map shows us how the water draining the northern slopes flows down to the Gobi Desert, that of the southern slopes to the Indian Ocean. There is one exception, however. In the Western area, about fifty miles to the west of K2, and to the north of the great "snow lake" basin discovered by Sir Martin Conway which feeds the Hispar and Biafo glaciers, a mountain range is situated which, curving to the north, claims for a certain distance the important position of the Central Asian watershed. The water draining from its eastern flanks flows in the direction of the Gobi Desert, that issuing from its western side falls into the Hunza river. The latter instead of turning to the north flows southwards and, breaking right through the barrier of the Kara-Korum and joining the Gilgit river, finally reaches the Indus and the Indian Ocean.

This mountain range had never been explored. Besides being a "terra incognita" of considerable importance, it gave rise to a host of absorbing speculations. The problem of the extension of the glaciers on the northern side of the Kara-Korum is of profound interest. Would there be chiefly short,



steep, hanging glaciers, or long, flat ice-floes? Would they be longitudinal, namely, lying in troughs parallel to the mountain ranges, or transverse, that is flowing at right angles to the ranges?

The glaciers, being fed by the snow which falls on the high mountains, are a sign of the moisture of the atmosphere. In this respect they concern the meteorologist, who is anxious to discover how far the South-Western monsoon penetrates into Central Asia and in what way the great barrier of the Kara-Korum influences it.

It is needless to point out what an extensive territory the geologist finds here for investigation. When in the distant future the topographer has completed his task, an overwhelming amount of labour will still await the former before we dimly realise the changes wrought by the gigantic forces of nature during periods of countless years in this greatest mountain complex on earth.

Besides proposing to collect as much useful information on these subjects as possible, there were several questions which interested us—and especially my husband—from a physiological point of view.

It is a well-known fact that high altitudes have a certain influence on the human body and principally upon the nervous system. This has been clearly proved by tests which have been made at great elevations (for instance, on the Italian summit of Monte Rosa), by Mosso, Zuntz, Barcroft and

others, while on the recent Everest expeditions observations have also been made. Nearly every mountaineer has at some time or other suffered from an attack of mountain sickness or seen one of his companions overcome by it. During flights at a great elevation the same symptoms have been noticed. It is due to this cause that military flying men have to subject themselves to a severe medical examination. This includes a series of tests, made under ordinary circumstances and in the so-called pneumatic chamber.

An example of the effects of high altitude upon the human brain is cited in Professor Zuntz's interesting book *Höhenklima*. He relates that in the observatory of Monte Rosa two learned gentlemen were once engaged in a violent dispute about the question whether  $4 \times 8$  made 32! One would be inclined to harbour the suspicion that these worthy professors had indulged too freely in the guardian's store of excellent "vin du pays," if one did not know that exactly the same symptoms sometimes occur when a person is suffering from the effects of rarefied air and want of oxygen as in a condition of drunkenness. Those who have studied the question have observed that in both cases the sufferers are not seldom inclined to be irritable and bad-tempered. A medical man who had been present at some tests made in the pneumatic chamber told us that after the pressure of the air had been reduced to half its normal

condition (representing a height of about 21,000 feet) he himself had caught a serious-minded doctor of science in the act of breaking the glass test-tubes behind the doctor's back, looking as highly elated with his achievement as if he had been a naughty schoolboy. Another frequent symptom is that the patient becomes inspired with an exaggerated idea of his own cleverness and capability.

It is not unnatural that the belief exists that the same tests made in a flying-machine and on a mountain at exactly the same height will not give the same results. In an aeroplane or balloon it may not take more than one or two hours to attain a height which on the mountain will only be reached after several weeks of gradual ascent. Both aviators and alpinists have been subjected to the tests mentioned above, but in these cases it has not been possible to estimate the effects of acclimatisation when comparing the results. To do this it would be necessary that the same individuals should have gone up in an aeroplane and have climbed the mountain.

Professor Magnus of Utrecht, Colonel Hardenberg of the Netherlands Royal Flying Service and Dr Brouwer, the Chief Medical Officer of the Aviation Camp at Soesterberg, gave all the assistance they could in facilitating the preparatory experiments, and nearly every day during the fortnight preceding our departure, my husband went to Soesterberg where the first series of tests were

made. The second would have to be repeated on the mountains of the Kara-Korum.

We arrived in Srinagar in March, and, in the intervals of packing and supervising the numerous details of organisation that before starting often seem so trivial, only to gain such terrible importance on the road, we watched the fair land of Kashmir succumb to the spell of spring.

First the blossoming fruit-trees put forth their ethereal splendour of white and tender rose, their pure and untouched beauty all the more lovely against the background of purple mountains. We rejoiced in them as dainty bridal visions of the flowering earth.

Then suddenly one day we noticed that the two endless rows of poplars, gaunt, bare broomsticks, standing stiffly along the road from Baramulla to Srinagar, were tinged with delicate green, and we saw them, recapturing all their quaint and elusive charm, bend their stately heads with delight to catch the soft wind's slightest whisper, just as we had watched their sisters do in bygone days in the far-away valley of the Rhone.

In the winding water-ways between green meadows, and on the broad Dal lake, gaudy curtains fluttered from the shikaras, while on the Bund the Kashmiri shopkeepers, awakening from their winter sleep, pursued innocent strangers with insistent clamour, all of which was a sure sign

that soon we should be able to set out over the mountains.

By the middle of April all the members of the expedition had arrived, and the final preparations were hastily being completed.

There were five Europeans in our party, including my husband and myself, our countryman Baron B. Ph. van Harinxma thoe Slooten, and our two Swiss guides, Franz Lochmatter and Johann Perren.

My husband's task as leader and organiser of the expedition involved all the harassing duties and anxieties of that position; he also was our chief chronicler, our photographer, geologist and meteorologist, besides being specially interested in the various physiological tests concerning the influence of high altitude on the human system.

I myself hoped to make collections of botanical specimens and butterflies, while our friend Harinxma would be responsible for the zoological collections. It also would depend mainly on his efforts whether dainty titbits and succulent morsels, spoils of the chase, would eventually find their way from the cooking-pot to our dinner-table to provide a welcome change from the ordinary bill of fare.

Our old friend, Franz Lochmatter, a perfect specimen of the Swiss guide at his best, would find rocks and glaciers worthy of his skill in the great mountain-complex for which we were bound. He had already had some experience of mountaineering in the Himalaya and Kara-Korum as he had accom-



MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION.

*Sitting (left to right):* APEZ GUL KHAN SAHIB; PH. C. VISSER; MRS. J. VISSER-HOOFT; BARON E. PH. VAN HARINNMIA THOE SLOOTEN.

*Standing (left to right):* SERVANT OF KHAN SAHIB; AZIZA, THE COOK; JOHANN PERGEN, FRANZ LOCHMATTER; MUNIR KHAN ALLAH BAKSH.



panied Mr Meade in his expedition to Kamet and had been with us in the Sasir group in 1922. He generally supervised the organisation of the transport and more especially the cooking arrangements. We all greatly benefited by his active interest in the kitchen department. With a beaming face he used to produce huge plates of apple-cakes and various other delicacies cooked according to some special St Niklauser recipe which disappeared like snow before the sun. The only time we disappointed him was when we failed to appreciate the dish of mashed potatoes he had prepared with sweetened condensed milk.

Our younger guide, Johann Perren, besides being a first-rate mountaineer, was our "handy-man." He could work wonders with the most primitive tools and loved to help my husband to develop and print his photographs. He had an ingenious turn of mind and could put his hand to anything from the making of most artistic wooden spoons to replace some we had unfortunately left behind, to the construction of a wonderful arbour in a shady grove where a chair, supported by curving ibex horns, was the seat of honour.

Under my husband's guidance he also had control of the medicine chest and our precious supply of bandages.

A most important member of our party was our Indian surveyor, Afraz Gul Khan Sahib, whose services the Survey of India had kindly placed



at our disposal. He proved to be an invaluable help, not only as a maker of maps, but also as our interpreter and representative on the various occasions when we had to deal with village authorities, headmen and coolies. We much appreciated his cheerful disposition, unfailing good humour and untiring zeal and found him to be an excellent worker.

Our first meeting remains a humorous incident in my recollections of our existence on our house-boat on the Jhelum.

Whoever had seen a house-boat with such a look of brand-new cleanliness? How proudly we painted the name we had chosen above the door:—"The Flying Dutchman." And how sadly we became the "Dutchmen who fled!"

But that is another story.

Our boat then was moored close to the busiest part of the Bund which, although having certain advantages, rendered us a tempting prey to the passing merchants and beggars.

"Beautiful *papier mâché!* See, Sahib, my prices. Very cheap!"

"Only look! looking costs nothing. Lady Sahib, you want fine embroideries? Lotus design!"

"Me make bags. Ladies' own pattern."

"You see my book?"

"You want your hair cut?"

Thus it echoed in our ears all day long.

One afternoon we were sitting on the roof of our

boat. My husband, greatly annoyed, had just chased away a crowd of insolent whining invaders and felt that he had reached the limit of his endurance when we discovered a rather stout, cheerful looking Indian gentleman, clad in an immaculate suit of green silk and a tightly-wound pugaree, preparing to cross the plank on to our boat. He was already half-way when he stopped and called out:

“May I come up, sir?”

My husband suspecting that he had something to sell concealed in the folds of his silken garment, begged him with cold politeness to remove himself from our premises.

“I will only trouble you one minute, sir,” he replied, hesitating, and fortunately he added: “I am your surveyor, Afraz Gul.”

The lower members of the staff included our two Indian servants: Munir Khan and Allah Baksh. They both looked very imposing: Munir Khan with his war medals, and Allah Baksh with his enormous, brilliantly-coloured turban. We occasionally wondered with some misgiving whether we really lived up to their extreme dignity.

Aziza, the Kashmiri cook, was a faithful and honest soul, who accepted all the blows of Fate—and generally Fate directed them at his unlucky head—with uncomplaining composure.

And last, not least, after having enumerated all the members of the expedition, I must not forget to introduce yet one more faithful companion, Patiala,

my Tibetan mastiff, a present from the Maharajah of Patiala.

We had brought all our stores with us from Holland. In Ramzana's courtyard the guides worked busily repacking the provisions in yakdams and kiltas, preparing also a second relay that Major Bird, the British Transport Officer in Srinagar, kindly promised to send to Gilgit in June when the passes would be open.

Most of our camping outfit we got in Srinagar, excepting various items, such as cooking apparatus, thermos flasks, dry fuel—"meta"—for use at high bivouacs, etc. Ramzana made our tents according to our indications. As on our first expedition, they again proved to be very satisfactory.

After months of preparation, we were at last ready to start, feeling most grateful to all those who had so kindly helped us. We were especially indebted to Colonel Tandy and Major Mason of the Survey of India; the Resident of Kashmir, Sir John Wood, and Major Neale.

The weather undoubtedly was not in a pleasant mood when the eventful day of departure dawned. Dark clouds scurried across the sky, accompanied by fitful gusts of wind and pouring rain, as our little fleet of doongas slowly made its way down the River Jhelum in the late afternoon of April the 25th.

The journey to Bandipur would take about

twenty hours as we had to cross the great Wular lake. It was advisable to make all the speed we could : the water was rising and it would be difficult to pass under the bridges.

It must have been about midnight, when we suddenly stopped.

“The bridge!” we thought in despair. “Not eight hours have passed since we started and here we are already held up.”

We dismally peered into the dark night and contemplated a philosophic resignation if our fears should prove to be justified. We found, however, the “Khan Sahib” already engaged in a lively discussion with the protesting boatmen. Nothing daunted, and heedless of the chattering Kashmiri, he stepped ashore. There he stood on the bridge and gravely unwound his turban. With great precision he then proceeded to measure the space between the curving wooden structure and the water.

Six hours later he repeated this solemn rite.

“Sahib,” he cried, “we can go on, but we must hurry. There is no time to be lost.”

Raising his voice he commanded all the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses to climb on to the roof of the doonga. The rope was loosened : we waited anxiously. Much screaming and chattering ; heavy thuds, more pushing and crying as all the weightiest individuals the village could produce scrambled on board, and—we advanced. Triumphantly we passed

under the bridge, the passengers jumping off at the critical moment with repeated cheers and demands for "baksheesh!"

With this brilliant manœuvre we had overcome our first difficulty. Soon afterwards we saw the broad expanse of the Wular lake gleaming in the distance. Things seemed more hopeful, for a glimpse of blue sky between the low-hanging clouds promised a brighter day.

In Bandipur a crowd had collected to witness our arrival, including all the authorities the place could muster. They had thoughtfully produced eight bullock-carts for our luggage.

As soon as the boats were moored there ensued a scene of wild confusion. Although we had carefully rehearsed the part each of us was to play in stemming the rushing tide of coolies, our efforts were fruitless and we soon gave up the attempt to keep them off. My husband took out his cinema apparatus, determined that the scene of our arrival in Bandipur should escape oblivion.

Franz, our Swiss guide, in the meantime rubbed his head with a puzzled look.

"Herr," he said. "It seems as if we had never been away."

And indeed, we also had thought of Ganderbal and our arrival there, before starting on our first Kara-Korum expedition three years ago.

There was the same wild confusion, but, as on that previous occasion, at last out of the chaos

an orderly procession slowly unwound itself and straightened out on the long white road: first the lumbering bullock - carts, then we ourselves, surrounded by a group of officials, followed by our servants, the cook looking hot and worried, and anxiously hugging a huge piece of meat and a milk-can against his breast, while in the rear the noisy crowd of hustling "Baksheesh"-begging Bandipurians raised a cloud of dust.

At the very last moment we discovered that one of our servants had thought fit to add to his equipment an immense umbrella and a jaunty little walking-stick. He did not seem to realise that Kara-Korum travellers have no use for such things and looked rather dismayed when my husband sternly ordered him to send them back to Srinagar.

We were to spend our first night in a little bungalow a few miles outside the village, so we had not far to go, and enjoying a leisurely walk, we anxiously discussed the problems that awaited us. The condition of the first two passes, which lay directly before us and by which we would cross the main range of the Himalaya, chiefly occupied our thoughts. The authorities at Bandipur had assured us that the passes were already open; accordingly on the following morning we set out on our way to Tragbal with forty-eight pack-ponies, thus commencing the journey of 230 miles to Gilgit, our starting-point for Hunza.

It was with considerable relief that we turned

our back on Bandipur, for cholera had broken out on the shores of the Wular and the epidemic was sure to spread.

The road to Tragbal is very beautiful, being well wooded, and everywhere the shy flowers of spring were emerging from their hiding-places. The dak-bungalow is delightfully situated and most comfortable, but unfortunately grave apprehensions for our further journey, caused by the appalling weather, disturbed our enjoyment of this peaceful spot. We found that a considerable quantity of fresh snow had fallen within an hour's distance of the rest-house and soon realised the necessity of sending back our ponies and exchanging them for coolies who would have to come up from Bandipur.

This, of course, meant that we should have to wait in Tragbal for several days. It was a disappointing state of affairs, but having learnt by experience what a hopeless matter it is to be dependent upon coolies for transport, we were inclined to consider ourselves fortunate when, after a delay of not more than three days, we found ourselves once more on the road with all our belongings on the sturdy backs of a hundred coolies.

The clouds were still hanging low and the beautiful forest looked very damp and gloomy, as we climbed the steep track which leads up to the open spaces beneath the Razhainangan pass. As soon as the trees disappeared we found a bleak and wintry landscape, a symphony in grey and white.

Surely Srinagar with its flower-decked gardens and meadows, its picturesque houses, where scarlet tulips nodded on the roofs leaning over the sun-lit river—Srinagar, we mused as we looked round, must belong to another world.

Here, as far as the eye could reach, only the dense grey pall overhead was visible, shrouding the monotonous white surface at our feet, dulling the senses and affecting one's mind with the same oppressive blankness.

Along the track the tiny, black specks indicated the progress of the coolies. It was hard work for the men to carry their loads in the soft snow. Every now and then they went through up to their knees, so that it was impossible to go quickly. At a height of 11,586 feet we crossed the watershed and descended the snow-slopes on the other side of the pass.

Behind the shelter of a tumble-down hut we halted a moment to unpack the tiffin-basket. Harinxma's servant, Allah Baksh, was much impressed. This was his first experience of the snow. His desire to join the expedition had been so great that after some hesitation we had granted his request to be allowed to accompany us, having warned him that difficulties and hardships would certainly not be lacking. Nothing then had seemed to be able to damp his ardour. Now, however, his moustache which had hitherto curved defiantly upwards with a conquering air, drooped forlornly, and the wonder-



ful yellow turban he had so proudly displayed on the Bund in Srinagar looked strangely out of place against the dead white background of snow.

He could not hide his amazement.

“Sahib,” he ventured timidly, “how deep is the snow here?”

“About four or five feet,” my husband answered.

“And is it strong enough to bear our weight?”

“Certainly.”

“And how deep is the snow then in the Kara-Korum, Sahib?”

“Sometimes a thousand feet or more.”

Allah Baksh stared at us in wide-eyed wonder.

“But,” he continued, “they tell me that there are great holes and openings in the snow where it splits to pieces. Is that truly so?”

We assented gravely, watching his puzzled face.

“Then,” he said, shaking his head, “if I fall into one of those holes which are a thousand feet deep, no Allah Baksh will come back to the village to tell the tale!”

I wondered whether he was considering the folly of having followed such mad Sahibs on such a queer adventure and already regretted those paths of life where one walked with an umbrella.

However, there was one thought which sustained him, and which he often confided to us. It was the vision of his return to his own village.

“Then I shall be a great man,” he used to say with a proud smile, “and I will tell stories, many stories.”

It is more than a year ago since we stood on that icy, wind-swept slope; and now, in the bazaar when the heat of day has passed, I imagine, I fondly hope, that Allah Baksh sits at his shop-door. The smell of dust is in the air, the golden light quivers and plays on the multi-coloured throng: silently every now and then a figure slips aside and joins the magic circle of listeners. Ah! Allah Baksh! What wonderful stories you must be telling!

On the northern side of the pass, there was more snow than above Tragbal but our whole caravan reached Koragbal safely before night-fall. Going on to Gurais next day we found the tehsildar there awaiting our arrival. In this village we had to engage coolies for the crossing of the ill-famed Burzil pass.

In the summer this pass, although reaching a height of 13,775 feet, is harmless enough; but in spring, when its otherwise grassy slopes are still buried beneath masses of snow, it has a bad reputation owing to the avalanches which render it dangerous.

At the next stage, in the bungalow at Peshwari, we met the second son of the Mir of Hunza, who had been to Africa on a pilgrimage and was now on his way home.

Unfortunately conversation was limited, as neither he, nor his father's Wazir, who had accompanied him on his travels, could speak a word of English. We therefore all sat in two rows facing each other

and looked friendly and polite. If the weather cleared up for a moment, both sides with effective gesticulations expressed mutual delight, relapsing into sombre head-shakings at the sound of the rain splashing on the roof and the wind howling and shrieking round the house.

Our following march from Peshwari to Burzil Chauki once more brought us into wintry scenes. The last four hours after we had been obliged to abandon our ponies seemed endless. Wading through soft snow is, as everyone knows who has ever tried it, a tiring and tedious form of exercise, and we were glad to get to the bungalow.

The little rest-house proved to be a true refuge in a desolate country. A cheerful fire was soon blazing by which we could dry our wet clothes, grateful to be under shelter, for in less than an hour's time the first stray snow-flakes heralded the approach of another spell of bad weather. Gradually the white veil closed in on all sides. Our tracks were soon covered over and the snow was piled higher and higher all round the verandah.

Towards dusk, as we peeped out of the window, we discovered three men approaching the bungalow, the one in the middle leaning heavily on his two companions and evidently dragging himself along with great difficulty. To our surprise we recognised the tehsildar of Gurais. We were much concerned at his appearance. He had experienced a nasty accident on the road to Peshwari, whence he had

accompanied us. Very kindly he had given me his own pony and had in consequence himself been mounted on a strange horse. The animal took fright, had unseated him and flung him against a stone wall so that he had injured his leg. Notwithstanding this mishap he had managed to reach Burzil Chauki in order to assist us in controlling the coolies, bad weather, as he well knew from experience, having the inevitable effect of inspiring them with an overwhelming desire to return to the flesh-pots of Gurais. His presence proved to be a safeguard against their all deserting us during the following days. It kept on snowing and he had to use all the influence he possessed to prevent them from running away.

On the fourth day at last the weather improved. In the morning Harinxma and the guides set out towards the pass to reconnoitre the route and investigate the condition of the snow. Impatiently we awaited their return. We were only too anxious to start. It was bitterly cold in the bungalow and we could not remain there much longer as the coolies had only enough food to last them three days more. The building was too small to accommodate them all, so most of them had to sleep in the open verandah where they huddled together all day long, wrapped in their drab coloured blankets, looking like a row of miserable sparrows. We were therefore much relieved when Franz and his companions came back with good tidings.

Although, owing to the quantities of fresh snow which had so recently fallen, it would be hard work, they reported that there was no need to wait any longer if the weather held out. We immediately decided to cross the pass that same night: there would be less risk of avalanches than in the daytime and the moon would light us on our way.

Unfortunately we should have to leave Khan Sahib's servant, who was seriously ill, behind. The poor man begged us with tears in his eyes to allow him to come with us, but it was out of the question. The tehsildar of Gurais promised to take care of him and to send him on to Gilgit to catch us up as soon as he was strong enough to travel, and this was the only consolation we could give to his master.

At eight o'clock the coolies started. The broad track that Franz had made was plainly visible, and we watched them disappear one by one on the glittering white expanse of snow. A few hours later we also followed. To our delight the surface was quite hard. It was a wonderful night: clear and crisp. The moonlight bathed everything in soft radiance as we advanced rapidly, and only near the top of the pass, when heavy clouds dulled the landscape and an icy wind began to blow, did we notice the intense cold. The hut on the summit was nearly buried in the drifting snow, so we only halted for a moment, standing in the track to drink a drop of hot tea out of the thermos flask and eat a biscuit

before we commenced the descent. Harinxma and my husband put on their skis after the first steep bit, but they were not of much use and they afterwards left them behind at Chillam Chauki.

Daybreak came with a dull grey light, and unfortunately the beautiful hard snow became softer and softer so that the descent seemed endless. It was about nine o'clock in the morning when we arrived at Chillam Chauki. Most of the coolies were there already. They had done very well. On the way we had seen no signs of avalanches anywhere, but if one did not keep low down in the bottom of the valley there might be some danger.

In Chillam Chauki we found a messenger with a letter sent by the Political Agent in Gilgit. We also found ponies waiting for us and for our transport. All the arrangements were in perfect order.

Next morning, a few hours after our departure from Chillam we left the snow behind, and once more entered a region of green trees and flowers. The road to Gilgit has so frequently been described that I will not enter into details. I had read several accounts of the terrible heat from which many travellers have suffered during the descent along the formidable cliffs to the so-called Devil's Gap and the Indus Valley. The sky was overcast when we passed this ill-famed spot, so we were mercifully spared.

The Indus valley has a unique fascination that cannot be denied. Not only the Indus, however,

but each great river has particular characteristics and seems to embody a spirit of its own. How well we remembered, as we now once more approached it, the moment, when, emerging out of the narrow gorge beyond Lamaruyu on the road to Leh, we had gazed for the first time on its swiftly flowing, silent waters far below us, darkly, sullenly flowing, as if in resentment at being imprisoned between those rocky walls, smoothly, swiftly, gliding towards freedom.

Here, near Bunji, the mountains recede and the Indus passes through a sandy desert where the dry, burning heat of summer is akin to the glow of a furnace.

In Astor we had been obliged to change our ponies, and in the afternoon with much interest we had watched a game of polo being played by the villagers. The British officer at Bunji, Captain Dean, gave us a friendly welcome in his pretty little bungalow. In the garden the roses blossomed, and the mulberry trees scattered their sweet, ripe fruit; while in the background Nanga Parbat's great cliffs of ice and dazzling precipices rose as a vision of unrivalled splendour.

On May the 16th we arrived at Gilgit, the goal of the first stage of our journey. During our three days' stay there were many arrangements which claimed our attention. On the first evening we dined with the Political Agent, Major Loch, who was starting next day on tour, and enjoyed also a

very kind reception by the few officers and their wives living in this lonely corner of the British Empire.

I was again inspired with a most sincere admiration for the Englishwoman in the East, who is so essentially a home-maker, and who, bravely following her husband where his duty calls him, does not allow even the most difficult circumstances to deprive her of that gracious quality. In the most remote spot: in the wilds, in the desert, be it in a tent or a bare hut or a rough stone house, she not only makes a home, but she creates an atmosphere of comfort and beauty where the gentle amenities of civilised life are preserved and the best English traditions upheld.

These thoughts re-occurred to me when, on our return journey in the autumn one evening in Gilgit, I watched the soft candle-light shedding its glow over the dinner-table with its flowers and dainty appointments. It was only three weeks, our hostess told me, since she had arrived in the empty house in this primitive place, where one searched the ramshackle bazaar in vain for a spoon.

Or again a few days later, when at the foot of the Burzil pass we met the caravan that had just hurried across to avoid the first winter snow and saw the pale young wife, who was accompanying her husband, with her baby barely a fortnight old.

Like a green oasis Gilgit lies in its surroundings of sandy desert and bare rocks. During our short



stay there we found time to visit the school, and were most favourably impressed by this excellent institution, whose capable and energetic headmaster is devoted to his task. Then, hurrying on the final preparations, we found ourselves once more ready to start.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM GILGIT TO PASU

IF there are perhaps regrettable signs that Leh one day may threaten to become a fashionable tourist resort for the jaded globe-trotter, who, having exhausted all other sensations can still hope to awaken a thrill on his return by his descriptions of the goblin country with its weird folk, the devil-dances and Lama monasteries perched high up upon the rocks, Hunza is in no such danger. Beyond Gilgit civilisation ends. Thenceforth we should meet no more Europeans until our return in the autumn.

The thermometer indicated more than 90°, even at this early time of the year, as our caravan, crossing the Gilgit bridge, entered the sandy, treeless desert which leads to the Hunza valley. The road up to Hunza is kept in constant repair. There are excellent bungalows, and it is possible to use ponies, which have to be changed at each stage. The scenery is wild and of an imposing grandeur. The path leads along terrible precipices, being often cut into the face of the rock; sometimes, where this is impossible, frail, wooden structures hang over the

river along the so-called "parris." It is altogether a marvellous piece of work.

At Minapin, a pretty place where purple iris lined the road and the ditches in the meadows, we passed the first of the big Zaskar glaciers, which descend right into the Hunza valley, and are thus specially adapted to examination for purposes of glaciological investigation.

Sir Henry Hayden, during his visit to these regions twenty years ago, had placed certain marks upon the rocks, besides making plane-table sketches and taking photographs, which enabled us to compare his observations with the exact position of the glaciers at the date of our visit.<sup>1</sup>

We found that all the ice-streams of the Hunza valley had retreated, and still showed signs of shrinking. The Minapin glacier, in fact, had moved so far that we had to give up the search for it without even gaining a glimpse of the ice on the afternoon of our arrival at Minapin, so that Franz, with much glee, nicknamed it the glacier "that had run away." The next morning, however, we discovered it, and in our turn mapped and photographed the exact position of the snout.

Not far from Aliabad lies the Hassanabad glacier, which my husband and Afraz Gul also visited two days later.

Emerging from the great ravine between Minapin and Aliabad, we were much impressed by our first

<sup>1</sup> *Records of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. XXXV, part 3, 1907.

view of the fertile green expanse on either side of the river where Hunza and Nagar are situated. Well-irrigated, terraced fields slope down to the bottom of the valley, and the big patches of cultivation are everywhere interspersed with clumps of trees.

Nagar has been called the land of gold and apricots, and it certainly does its name justice. It is less well placed than Hunza, which has the advantage of lying on the sunny side of the valley: this, it is said, accounts for the cheerful disposition of the inhabitants and their fine physique. It is true that we afterwards observed that our Hunza coolies were far superior to their Nagar brethren, both as regards strength and endurance.

Through narrow lanes between high stone walls our caravan wound its way to the rest-house at Aliabad. We found that a great crowd had assembled: the entire male population seemed to have congregated to witness our arrival. They made a picturesque group, sitting on the ground in orderly rows facing the bungalow. Most of them were tall and well-built men, some actually fair-skinned; they all wore the customary dress of the country: a long, light-coloured woollen choga, wide woollen trousers tucked into their high felt boots, and a flat cap, the brim being tightly rolled up all round. The front rows were occupied by the boys, many of them fondly hugging what seems to be the Hunza lad's only plaything—namely, a bow and arrow, typically recalling their war-like traditions, and making me

think of the youthful David before he went out to slay Goliath. They all stood up and salaamed as we approached.

I hope that we provided our audience with some entertainment that afternoon. In all events the spectacle was admirably staged: up we rode in a stately procession and the eldest son of the Mir advanced to meet us at the entrance of the rest-house, surrounded by a group of followers.

He was a fair, middle-sized man with a red moustache, and far from having the romantic look that one imagines the descendant of a line of wild, Asiatic robber chieftains must possess, he reminded us of a certain type of Dutch farmer. He was dressed in what appears to be the last word in extreme refinement of Hunza fashion: a Norfolk jacket of English cut, loose Indian trousers of white linen, brown shoes, black cotton gloves and the typical Hunza cap: a queer kind of sartorial pot-pourri.

Like his brother he did not speak English and Khan Sahib translated our mutual greetings. We then adjourned to the verandah, where, after a short interval, we asked him to take a cup of tea with us. This caused great interest among the spectators. The table was laid with an immaculate white cloth, and Munir Khan and Allah Baksh, with an inimitable air of dignity, proceeded to fill the cups.

Some of the boys sitting in the front row began to nudge each other and converse in excited whispers, but they were instantly sternly repressed by their

elders. A deadly silence reigned as each movement on our part was watched by a hundred inquisitive eyes.

During the afternoon the weather, which had been cloudy, since our departure from Chalt, suddenly cleared up and above the trees surrounding the bungalow a snow-clad mountain of incredible beauty arose against the blue sky in the soft light of the approaching evening; Rakaposhi! Not only here, but all the way up to Baltit it dominates the whole valley; 25,550 feet it rises straight to its snowy summit, its glistening ramparts gaining in beauty through the contrast of the smiling green foreground.

Next day we remained at Aliabad. In the morning my husband and Khan Sahib departed on two wretched little ponies to make an excursion to the Hassanabad glacier. They returned just in time to join us as we started for Baltit to pay the Mir a visit.

It is a pleasant ride of about 7 miles from Aliabad to Baltit: the way leads continually through green fields and little walled-in gardens and orchards. Countless rivulets trickle languidly from terrace to terrace, irrigating the land. Only those who have traversed many weary miles in the terrible glaring heat of endless sand and bare rocks know what the sound of running water means. Soon the castle of the Mir came into sight, perched high upon a rock. It was deserted at the present moment as he had already moved to his summer quarters down below.

He received us in the little garden before his house. At the time of the memorable expedition of

the British to Hunza he was a young man,<sup>1</sup> and he well remembered those adventurous days. He was of a different type from his sons: heavy-featured and inclined to be stout. We noticed that he was dressed in the same manner. A carpet had been spread on the grass, on which stood a table and some chairs, and here tea was served under the trees. Three of his sons were present, one of these a tiny boy with huge black eyes and rosy cheeks, who seemed to be his father's favourite, a veritable little Benjamin, clad in amusing little Russian boots and a gay little gold-embroidered coat of many colours. A crowd of servitors stood at a respectful distance, and, shyly peeping round the trees, several of his grandsons watched the scene, slim little lads, with dark hair cut *à la page* and narrow oval faces, who, in their long chogas, had a mediæval air.

Khan Sahib translated our conversation. We first discussed the arrangements that had been made for our benefit, the Mir having agreed to supply us with coolies and the necessary rations. He had already made a depot of "ata" at Pasu, and promised us that further supplies would be forwarded regularly to our base-camp. This transaction being satisfactorily concluded he began to speak of the difficulties which awaited us, and asked us whether we knew that during the summer it was impossible to penetrate into the Shingshal and Khunjirab valleys

<sup>1</sup> See Colonel Durand, *The making of a Frontier*; and Knight, *Where three Empires meet*.



IN HUNZA (BALTI).

Sitting (*left to right*): AFRAZ GUL KHAN SAHIB; BARON E. PH. VAN HARINKMA THOE SLOOTEN; THE MIR OF NAGAR; MRS. J. VISSER-HOOFT  
Standing: PH. C. VISSER.





owing to the immense quantity of water which completely filled the narrow gorges.

We answered that the Political Agent in Gilgit had already informed us about this difficulty but that if we could not penetrate through the gorges we would try to get in over the mountains.

“But does the Sahib know that the way over the mountains into the Shingshal valley by the so-called Karun Pir is very steep and difficult? Surely the Sahib would not think of taking the Memsahib with him?” he continued. And he gravely shook his head.

Khan Sahib however assured him that he need not be anxious about the Memsahib.

“Had not the Memsahib crossed the Burzil in the snow?”

“Yes, that was true,” the Mir answered. His son had told him about that, and also about the wonderful boots the Sahibs wore with great heavy nails.

He then beckoned two men to advance and introduced them to us as being the two “men of standing,” two levies who, according to his orders, would accompany us and act as head-men of the coolies. One of them, with skimpy dark locks sticking out of his cap, whom the guides immediately nicknamed the “little Jemindar,” possessed a certain prestige owing to the high position of his brother, who was the Wazir; the other was a very tall gaunt individual, who towered behind his companion.

They salaamed deeply and made way for another

couple: two wild-looking fellows, who were pushed forward by the other men. Apparently they could not understand a word of what was said to them, the only way of communication with them being by gesticulation.

“These,” said the Mir, “are Shingshali! They will also go with you.”

We watched the wild men of Shingshal being led away—they really looked like frightened children—and then took leave of our host, after having accepted an invitation to return to Baltit on the next day and dine with him.

As the little guest-house he was building was not yet ready, we found on our arrival the following day that the Mir had pitched tents for us in the garden.

The dinner was served in European fashion. There was excellent soup, mutton and chicken, a curry, potatoes and green vegetables followed by a pudding, fruit and coffee. The Mir’s personal servant, who waited at table, and who, we afterwards heard, had cooked the meal himself, was apparently well versed in the ways of Europeans, having acquired this knowledge during his term of service with a British officer. The Mir, himself a Mohammedan of the Sunni sect, does not, like his Nagar cousin, disapprove of the use of alcohol, and is fond of a glass of wine.

After dinner, three men, carefully selected with an eye to their graduated stature, the youngest in fact a mere lad, performed a dance. They were

quaintly dressed in bright red costumes and wore shoes with long curling points. Long plaits of thick dark hair hung down their faces on either side, swaying with every movement as they twisted and turned, so that we first wondered whether they were men or women. They had, as the old nursery rhyme would have it, "rings on their fingers and bells on their toes," which tinkled a weird accompaniment to the music. Compared to the harsh din which had so often rent our ears in India, we found the melodies quaint and pleasing. The dances reminded us strongly of a Russian ballet. The little room was sparsely lit by a single oil lamp and I could just distinguish in the shadows above the mantel-piece Lord Kitchener's well-known face looking out of his silver frame between two hideous sixpenny vases. In the dim light the three red figures circled mysteriously, one behind the other, repeating the rhythmic, jerking movements of the leader in well-disciplined accord.

Before we retired our host presented me with a choga of oatmeal-coloured homespun, embroidered with bright flowers.

Unfortunately our present to the Mir, a gun, had not yet arrived owing to an unavoidable delay. For his eldest son we had brought a Zeiss binocular and a silver cigarette case for the Wazir.

The next morning, May the 26th, we began another stage of our journey. Pasu lies three marches beyond Baltit, but it is impossible to use

baggage animals as the track is too bad. For transport we had to depend on coolies. I still had a pony, but I was continually obliged to dismount, as even on the most sure-footed animal it was too dangerous to ride. Indeed I once found myself, pony and all, slipping down a steep, wet grass slope; fortunately we both regained our footing in time.

As we neared the spot where the Hunza river breaks through the Kara-Korum the path became rougher and steeper and the scenery grander and wilder. Tremendous precipices rise on both sides in this wonderful ravine where Nature has hewn a rock-portal of gigantic dimensions. Land-slides frequently obliterate the track, and some parts of the road are dangerous, especially after a prolonged fall of rain. On the third day after our departure from Baltit we came to a height where, overlooking the valley to the north, we discovered the tiny green oasis of Pasu lying against a background of fantastic peaks: a row of tapering pinnacles resembling a mighty chain of Chamonix aiguilles, only infinitely grander and wilder. Down below, the river rushed swiftly over its gravelly bed of sand and stones.

We afterwards sometimes imagined, with some amusement at the contrasting visions the idle thought evoked, what an ideal climbing centre this lonely spot in the great Central Asian mountain wilderness would make. There were, within an hour's reach, the two mighty glaciers; hidden from the valley by steep cliffs, lay a green belvedere of an alpine meadow

PASU, IN THE HONZA VALLEY.





beside which the glories of the Montanvert grew insignificant and pale; and opposite the river a few hours' walk brought one to the foot of a series of virgin pinnacles and spires and towers, a great barrier of huge unscaled "giant's teeth," enough to tax the energies of a whole host of the fiercest rock-climbers that ever set their foot upon a crag.

Now we found nothing but a few mud houses scattered among the fields. The Mir had given us permission to make use of his private bungalow, but one glance at the damp and depressing little stone building sent us hurrying down the path to the "garden" that the village head-man, in answer to my queries had indicated as a suitable camping-ground. It proved to be an ideal spot at some distance from the village. Peace and quiet reigned in our camp as we sat in the shade of the apricot trees, enjoying a well-earned rest and discussing our plans.

We wished to begin with the exploration of the great Batura glacier; probably its length would be no less than thirty miles.

"But," said Franz, whom on the way I had often caught gazing intently at the white peaks all around, "it is still early in the season. Would it not be wise if a few of us first went on a small expedition to make sure of the condition of the snow in the higher regions?"

We all agreed that this was an excellent proposal. There was also the Pasu glacier near at hand which



my husband wished to visit for glaciological and topographical purposes and which was still untrodden ground. Besides, an introductory excursion would serve as an occasion to test the qualities of our coolies before embarking with them upon a more lengthy and serious enterprise.

We questioned the lumbardar, but neither he, nor any of the villagers, could give much useful information regarding the glacier. It was impossible, they said, to follow the ice-stream itself, but there was a grazing-ground on the mountain-side on the left bank, where they sometimes went in summer.

Two days later my husband started with a small party, including Harinxma, the two guides and Afraz Gul.

His description of the expedition follows :

## CHAPTER III

### AN EXPEDITION TO THE PASU GLACIER

*By Ph. C. Visser*

ON 30th May I left our base-camp in Pasu. I first examined the exact situation of the snout of the Pasu glacier, which although it still reached the Hunza valley, showed signs of retreating. We then proceeded along the exceedingly steep moraine, keeping to the left side of the glacier. The coolies assured us the way led higher up, so we continued the ascent along the horrible steep slopes of loose stones, where at each step, one slipped backwards losing half the distance gained.

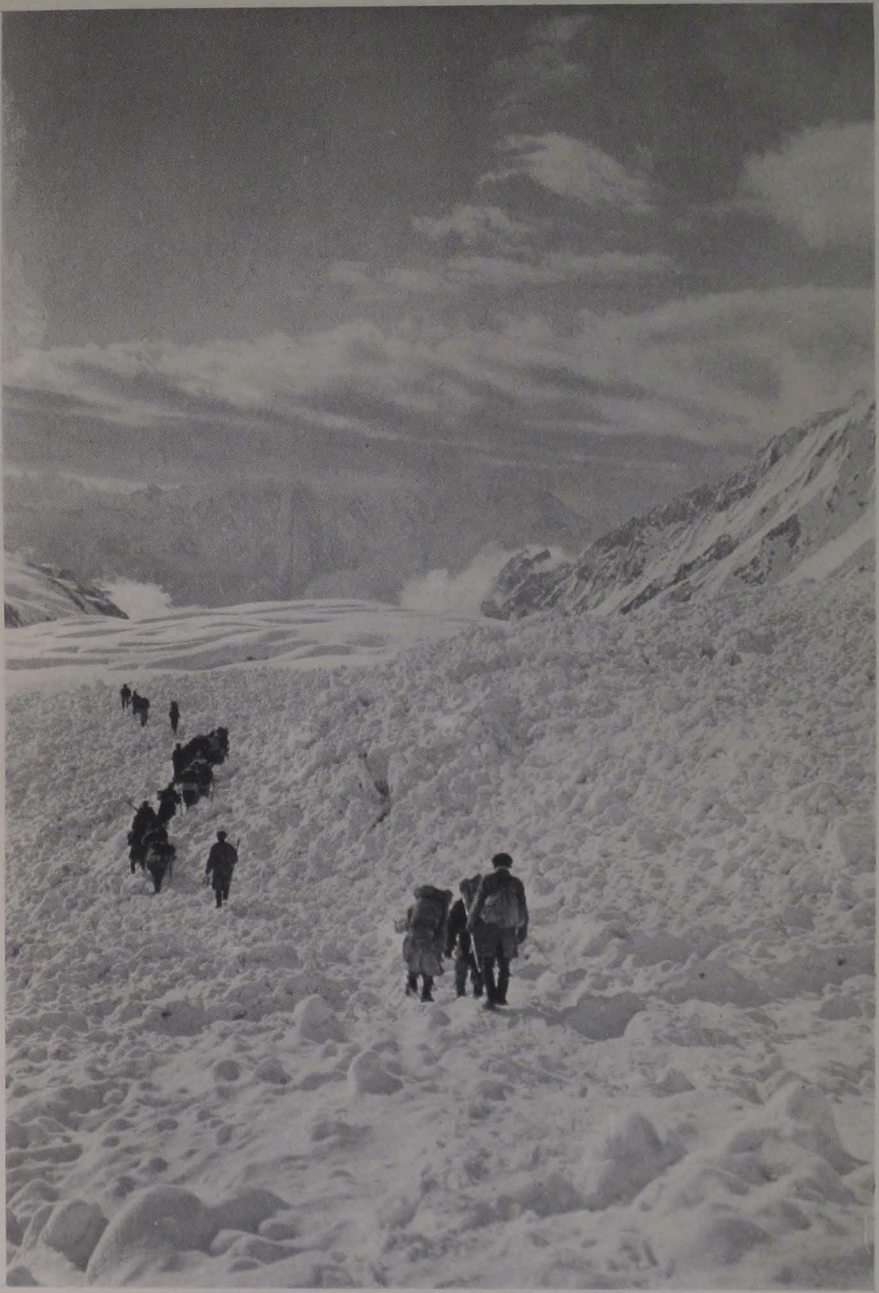
Our starting point that morning had been at a height of about 8000 feet, and in the afternoon, looking at my aneroid, I saw that we had reached 13,000 feet, and still we plodded along, higher and ever higher in the hope of soon striking the plateau the coolies had indicated. Far below us we saw the ice-stream of Pasu, looking as if a gigantic plough had broken it into a thousand furrows. It was nearly 3 o'clock and there was no sign that we were approaching the end of the ridge. Franz felt his patience coming to an end. The coolies were a

long way behind ; if we continued at this rate the falling night would find us still stumbling among the chaos of stones with no suitable place for a bivouac and no water anywhere in the neighbourhood.

The wisest thing to do was to turn our backs upon the heights and to make for the glacier without further delay. Down we ran slipping and stumbling, and within an hour's time we had descended the 5000 feet we had so painfully climbed such a short while ago.

We found ourselves in a tiny narrow valley between the moraine ridge of the glacier and the hill-side. Such places in the Alps are invariably filled with stones, and utterly devoid of vegetation. But here the little hollow was covered with grass and full of fir trees and tall rose bushes. It was an ideal spot for a camp, and we decided to remain here. The view of the gigantic Kara-Korum peaks and the glacier itself, falling from a higher-situated terrace, was superb. The ice had been rent asunder into countless crevasses, and slowly the fantastic towers and needles were melting into the weirdest shapes.

We had taken care to place our tents out of reach of falling stones, for in these wild mountains nature never sleeps. All night long we heard the thunder of the avalanches and the sharp sound of the ice cracking. The whole mountain world looked sombre and menacing, and the weather was just as gloomy and threatening: thick clouds came drifting along



AVALANCHE SNOW ON THE PASU GLACIER.



from the West and I heard the rain pattering on the roof of my tent.

It was not before 11 o'clock the next morning that it cleared up at last and enabled us to start. At first we went on through our little moraine valley, where we came upon an abandoned shepherd's hut. Finding the way blocked we then once more climbed upwards along the mountain-side, and a few hours later we reached the plateau about which the coolies had vaguely spoken. It was possible that in the summer a grazing ground existed here, but it had now disappeared beneath a thick layer of winter snow. The worst was that at each step we sank through nearly up to our hips. The coolies wanted to camp at the beginning of the snow, saying that we should find no other place, and began to protest mournfully when they saw that we meant to go on.

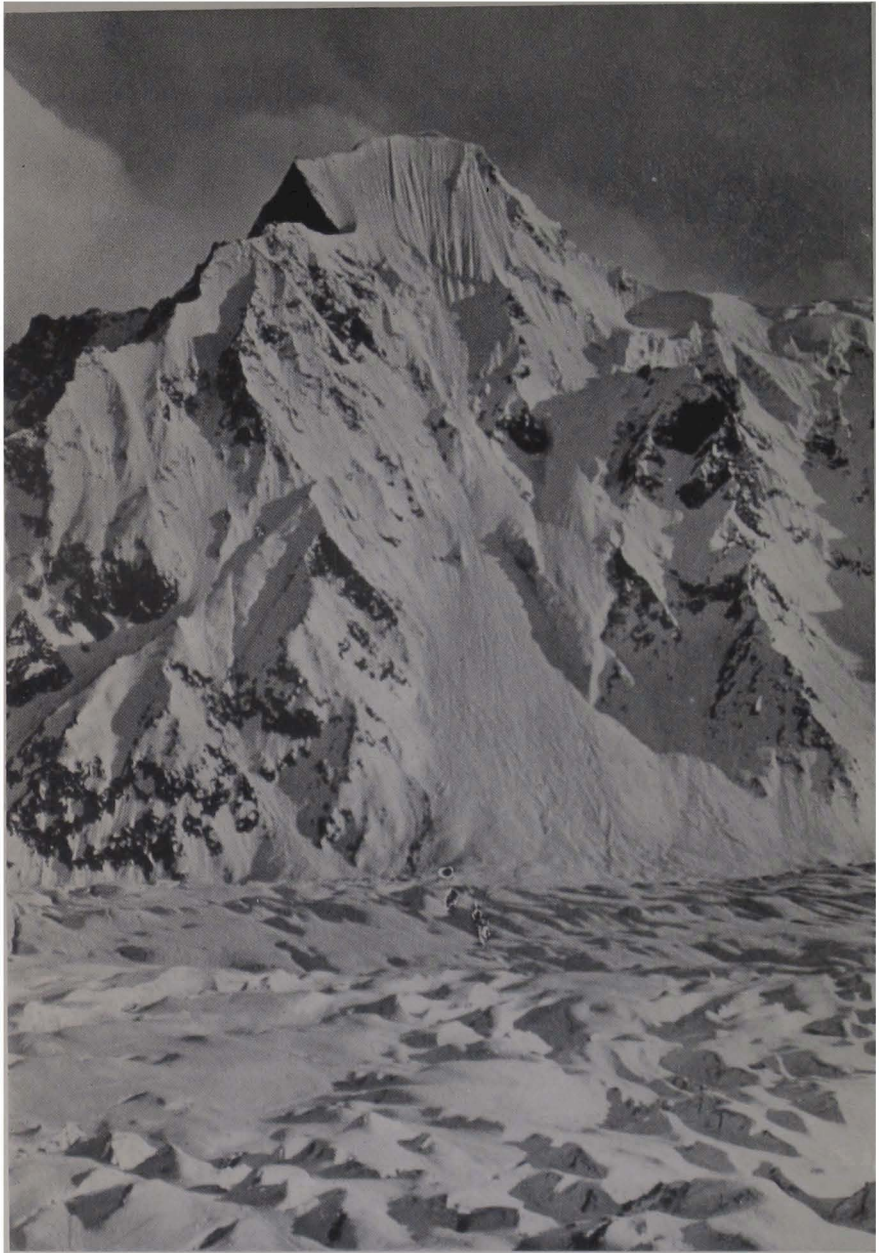
I told them that we would go in front to make the track. Were these, I asked them, the renowned strong men of Hunza, who wanted to let the sahibs go on alone? Their answer was to take up the loads they had cast down and make a renewed effort. For two hours we trudged through the soft snow without halting.

Then Franz cried out that he had found a site for a bivouac. We rubbed our eyes and looked. High above the glacier in the steep rocks he had discovered two tiny places which were comparatively flat. One of them was wide enough to hold the sleeping bag of

my friend. On the other there was just enough room for my two guides and myself. It was impossible to pitch our tents, but after an hour's hard work our beds were ready. We had certainly never slept in such wonderful surroundings. Right beneath us stretched the wild glacier and on the opposite side the mountain walls rose to a height of 23,000 feet. In the distance towards the East a high peak of nearly 27,000 feet was coloured with a delicate rose tint by the setting sun. It was nearly dark when the cook served our supper. The soft light of the rising moon shimmered over the snow and ice; near the edge of the glacier the camp-fires of the coolies glowed mysteriously.

The wonderful star-lit night was followed by a dull morning. We continued our way over the high, snow-covered ridge of the moraine and then had to keep along the steep snow-slopes of the hillside, until we were forced on to the glacier. Again a protesting outcry ensued among the coolies. One of them, an old man, came forward and announced that never before had they been asked to do such a thing. No "officer" had ever taken them along such a difficult way. They refused to go any further even if the Mir in his anger should cut off their heads for this! Khan Sahib met this outburst with a torrent of words which seemed convincing enough, for a few minutes later they had once more picked up their burdens.

With our three ropes we brought the first party



SNOW PEAK ON PASU GLACIER.





of coolies safely through the labyrinth of crevasses and when I returned to fetch the others, I found that they had already started of their own accord, and were blithely threading their way between the towering ice pinnacles and treacherous snow-covered crevasses. We soon came to great masses of fresh avalanche snow, spreading right across our track. Above us enormous quantities still hung suspended, ready to fall at any moment. Breathlessly we crossed the danger-zone, keeping an anxious eye on the upward slope.

Having reached a safe place we halted and reviewed the situation. We had done enough work for that day, and we decided to pitch our tents near the spot where the glacier hung like an immense frozen waterfall. We had to camp on the ice between two immense crevasses. The fireplace had also to be built upon ice, a rather unreliable foundation, as the cook found to his consternation when his pots and pans gradually began to sink lower and lower.

The weather did not look very hopeful: we had scarcely pitched our tents when it began to snow and in the night the wind drove the tiny icy particles against the walls of our flimsy shelter with an ominous patter. The next morning we realised that it was impossible to go any further. Heavy clouds hung between the mountains and a new layer of fresh snow covered the ground. It was certainly disappointing, but we had not planned to stay away

for more than four days, and we resolutely turned homewards.

The topographical results we had obtained were very satisfactory. We had mapped a great part of the glacier and its surroundings, thereby making the discovery that it was five miles longer than had been indicated on the old sketch map, thus being considerably larger than the biggest glacier in the Alps. At the same time we had found the answer to the problem we had set out to solve, namely the question whether it was not too early yet in the season to begin with the exploration of the Batura. We realised that it would indeed be unwise to attempt it at the present moment, when the masses of winter snow rendered all climbing above 16,000 feet laborious and dangerous. On the Batura we should find the same conditions as on the Pasu glacier, and it would be no good wasting our time in a fruitless attempt. We therefore resolved to change our plans.

I started in advance of the others with Perren, Khan Sahib and a coolie carrying instruments, as we wanted to climb two little peaks of about 15,000 feet, insignificant hummocks in the midst of the giants all around, the ascent of which notwithstanding, cost us as much labour as a big mountain in the Alps. Perren and I raced along, but Afraz Gul was determined not to be left behind and followed us bravely, panting like a steam engine. At the top we waited a moment for the weather to clear and then descended quickly on the other side just in time

to catch up our caravan, which was following the direct route homewards.

We wondered whether it would not be possible to avoid the long ascent up the hill-side by following the glacier instead, and decided to try it, leaving the coolies to go back by the way we had come, which they preferred.

Franz, shouldering his gun, and announcing that "there might be animals up there!" chose a route of his own, high up among the rocks. Harinxma, Perren and I kept to the moraine as long as we could and then descended on to the glacier where we soon found ourselves in the midst of a terrible labyrinth of crevasses. We seemed to be pigmies in this playground of giants, and Perren's ice-axe a toy instrument. I wondered whether we should ever find a way through. At the same moment I heard a slight noise behind me and there stood Franz. We had none of us seen him scrambling down the rocks and as by magic he appeared exactly at the critical moment.

"Rather too much pepper," he said calmly, beckoning us to follow him in another direction. He carried his gun on his shoulder and a mighty branch in his right hand served as an "alpenstock." He had left his ice-axe with the coolies when he left us. With unerring instinct he led us over frail ice-bridges, past wonderful blue caverns and tottering pinnacles, right through the chaos, Perren in the meanwhile cutting the steps which he him-

self did not seem to need. Only before the last steep bit he took over the ice-axe, and cut a veritable stair-case down a perpendicular ice-couloir, which landed us safely on the flat and unbroken end of the glacier.

Before nightfall the entire caravan had safely reached our base-camp at Pasu.



DESCENDING AN ICE WALL ON THE PASU GLACIER.



## CHAPTER IV

### ENTERING THE VALLEY OF MYSTERY

AFTER the return of the reconnoitring party from the Pasu glacier we once more discussed our plans. It had been clearly proved that before the season was more advanced it would be unwise to penetrate into the higher regions of ice and snow of the Batura. We, therefore, definitely decided to postpone that part of our programme until the late summer, and in the meanwhile to turn our attention to the country east of the Hunza river where the magic word "Unsurveyed" was written right across the map. No one had ever traced the exact position of the great Central Asian water-shed, the mighty barrier of mountains which so greatly influences the climate, the flora and the fauna of the regions on either side. The reason that such an extensive stretch of country so interesting from every point of view was still "Terra incognita" was to be found in its extreme inaccessibility. The natural and apparently only way of entrance led through its valleys. From April until November, however, the gorges were completely filled with masses of seething water: it was impossible to ford the rivers and equally impossible



to swim as the current was too strong. On either side walls of rock, sheer, precipitous cliffs, barred all progress. In the winter a way might be found perhaps in the river bed, but then again difficulties and dangers of another nature excluded all travel above a certain altitude, such as the heavy snow-fall, the intense cold, the impossibility of obtaining transport.

Thus they had remained up to the present day "Valleys of Mystery" and thus they lured us with the strange fascination of all that is unknown and difficult to attain.

From Pasu we could still follow the mail route from Gilgit to Kashgar for two and a half marches, but before breaking up our camp we had to make a careful plan as regards our supplies for the coming weeks. It was impossible to take a big caravan of coolies with us; it was equally impossible to tell how long we should be out of reach of our base-camp. As we realised more and more later on, the food question is the traveller's greatest difficulty, and on the foresight of the organiser of this special department success or failure depends.

Poring over the map we weighed our chances: there were the main valleys of the Khunjirab and the Shingshal. The Gujirab was a fictitious line. We could only guess what kind of country lay in between. We might have to own ourselves beaten at the very outset if the Mir's gloomy forebodings should prove to be true. The weather, although now looking

hopeful, might defeat us. But, on the other hand, if our luck held out, we might be able to make many interesting discoveries, we might—but we dared not express too loudly these daring thoughts,—we might even find a way through to Shingshal.

Once more we thoughtfully considered the contents of our yakdams and kiltas, and counted our men. For the move to Gircha we needed ninety coolies, but further on we should have to manage with twenty-six permanent porters. Part of the supplies and equipment we decided to leave in Pasu in charge of the lumbardar, and with the rest we set out towards Gircha in the early morning of June the 6th, intending to establish another base-camp there.

An hour's climb brought us to the great Batura glacier, another hour to the opposite side. We scrambled up and down the ice-hillocks, almost hidden under their covering of dirt and stones; and, after a rather dangerous passage under some crazy looking seracs, landed safely on the other bank. On our way we had cast many a glance upwards, following the mighty ice-stream until it disappeared in its mountain setting. There was the field of exploration to which we hoped to return later in the season when a great part of the winter snow with which it was now covered would have melted away in the summer's heat. Undoubtedly it was of formidable dimensions. Right across the river the glacier snout pushed its way, blocking the whole width of the Hunza valley.

The next village was Khaiber ; then with a few hamlets interspersed, followed Gircha.

Here we left the store-keeper, who had accompanied us from Gilgit, to remain in charge of our supplies.

Our caravan was now reduced to fifty persons. Two new permanent members I have not yet mentioned, were Kalbi and Pete.

Kalbi was a Hunza man, our tiffin coolie, who also had special charge of Patiala, and considered himself attached to my personal service. He was very devoted, and accompanied us during the whole expedition, returning with us to Gilgit in the autumn.

Pete was a sheep. Certainly he never dreamed, when grazing on his native pasture above Peshwari, what a strange fate Destiny had in store for him.

The fate that had seemed most likely was an untimely end preceding an appearance upon our dinner-table in the form of mutton-chops. I still remember his arrival at the bungalow at Peshwari. The rain was pouring steadily down when Munir Khan came to ask us whether we would mind stepping on to the verandah for a moment as some coolies had arrived with presents from the tehsildar of Gurais. We put our heads outside the door and saw them standing in the pouring rain : five men in a row. The first held a wooden bowl of milk, the second a plate of eggs, the third a wolf skin, the fourth a fluttering, shrieking fowl and the fifth the most miserable looking sheep we had ever seen.

It was so thin that we decided it was not worth while killing, and in order not to hurt the tehsildar's feelings we took it on with us, intending to keep it until it should become a bit fatter. It proved to be a sagacious animal with a sense of humour of its own. On the Burzil, where it could find no food in the snow, it finally allowed itself to be tempted to accept a pan-cake from the hands of the cook. This was the beginning of a firm bond of friendship between Aziza and Pete, as we called the sheep. Very soon he followed the caravan of his own accord and developed the qualities of a pet dog, answering to his name with a sonorous "Baa." He much appreciated the novelty of tit-bits from our table and became so affectionate that he used to lie down close to me with his funny stiff, wooden legs on my lap. And although in a short time he had completely lost his starved look, and become round and plump, we realised that we should really feel like cannibals if we dreamed of ever eating Pete. Thus, good coming out of evil, he became our mascot sheep, and he certainly brought us luck.

On 9th June we left Gircha. We were still on the Kashgar road, but one more march would bring us to the parting of the ways and as we neared the actual spot where the Hunza river is born in the mingling of the rushing waters of the Kilik and the Khunjirab, our curiosity grew keener at every step. Soon we should stand at the entrance of the

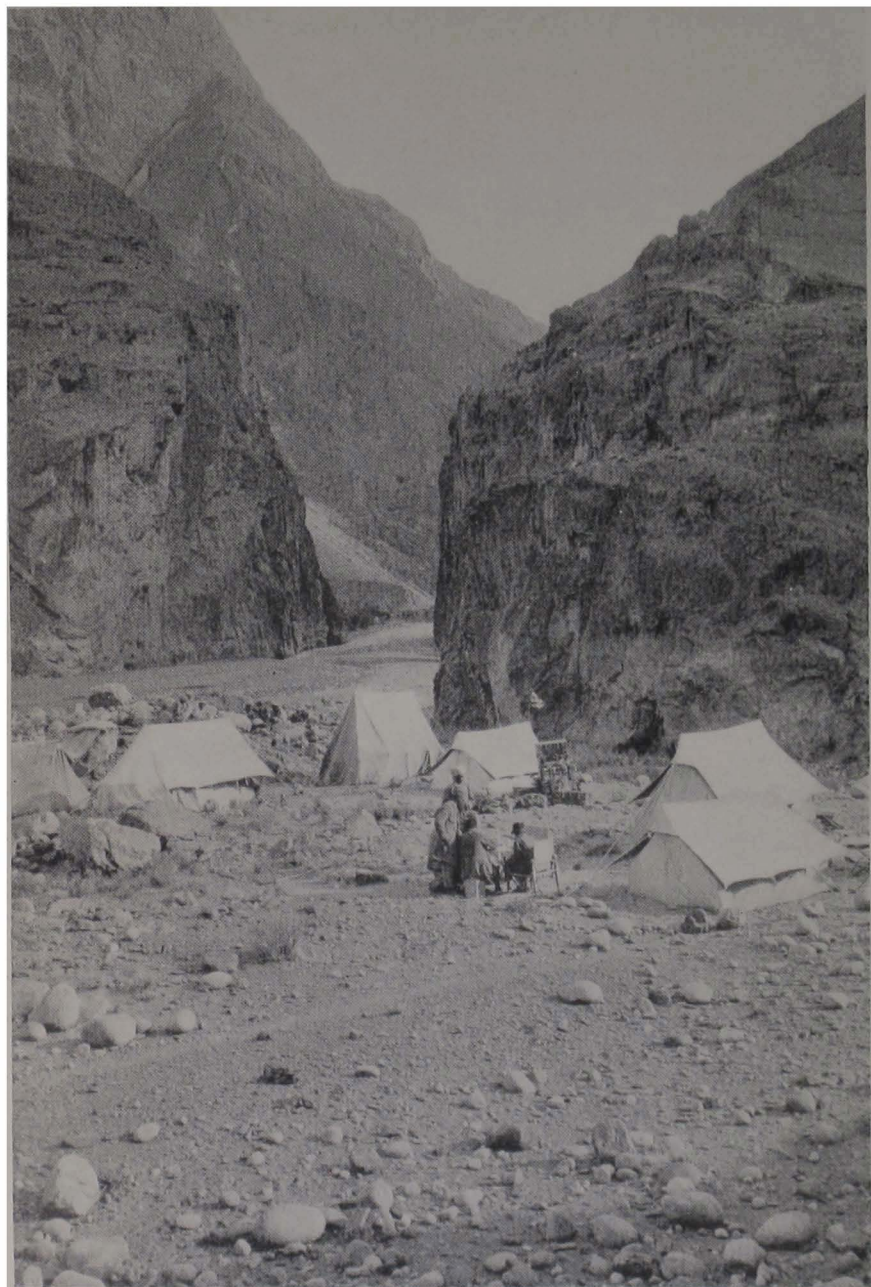
mysterious valleys. What difficulties should we find there, we wondered, what adventures?

As we crossed the bridge which spans the Hunza just before it flows through a tremendous gorge where bare polished rocks rise on either side like a massive gateway, almost futuristic in its block-like effect, a man advanced to meet us.

He said that he was in the Mir's service and that his master had specially ordered him to show us the way to the Kilik-Khunjirab junction. Leaving the river below, he proceeded up a steep path along the mountain side so as to avoid the gorge, and descending on the other side brought us to another small bridge crossing the Kilik, where the Kashgar road branches off to Misgar.

Our guide, who, it appeared, was guarding a flock of the Mir's sheep on some pasture in the neighbourhood, assured us that we could still enter the Khunjirab gorge, but he added the warning that it would be advisable to start on the morrow without further delay as the water was steadily rising and would soon render it impossible to enter the valley at all.

We therefore decided to camp on a flat, sandy spot we had noticed near the river's edge, in view of the proceedings of the next day. From the spot where we sat in a little grove formed by a clump of birch-trees and some shrubs bearing a cloud of delicate, feathery pink flowers, we could watch the Kilik dashing down to join the grey foaming stream of the Khunjirab.



CAMP AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE KHUNJIRAB.



The fact that in the morning there was considerably less water in the latter river, and its drab, muddy colour, showed that it contained a large quantity of glacier ice and confirmed our belief that we should find a region of high mountains at its source.

At day-break we were all ready and eager to start. Directly after leaving our camp we had to ford the river. The coolies, without hesitating, plunged into the cold water, going two or three at the same time so as to be able to give each other some support in the rushing stream. I had kept my riding pony with me, and the sturdy little animal served us well as we crossed in turns on his back. Soon our whole caravan had safely reached the opposite bank, including the dog Patiala, and Pete the sheep.

After ten minutes' walk, however, we once more found further progress impossible. Great cliffs rising sheer out of the stream barred the way, and we were forced into the river and on to the other side, where we were able to continue scrambling among the boulders for half an hour, before we had to repeat the same manœuvre for the third time.

The ford here, however, looked specially nasty. The current was much stronger and the water deeper, so that we took the precaution of first crossing on the pony with a rope, which we secured on either bank, for the coolies to hold on to. They thus ran less risk of being swept away and the weight of the



heavy loads on their backs helped them to keep their footing.

I was one of the first to cross and sat down on the bank to watch the others. Behind them the slab of grey rock, smooth and polished, overhung the water which rushed along, churned into foam wherever the boulders and hidden stones stayed its course. Perren and the jemindars stood on the narrow strip of sand urging the coolies on. They were no cowards, but they well knew the danger of crossing these treacherous, swollen mountain torrents. Fortunately the sun was shining, but the water was icy cold.

The first who arrived made a big fire to dry their wet clothes and warm themselves by, while they waited for the rest. There was wood enough and the flames leapt up high amid the dry, crackling branches.

I saw Patiala, swimming bravely but twisting and turning in the cruel current, and shouted to Kalbi to keep an eye on him. The ponyman, who had discarded all his clothes, crossed the river once more on his horse. The sun gleamed on the wet bronze of his body : a wild son of nature he looked, a true denizen of the wild Hunza gorge.

Then suddenly I noticed Munir Khan. It was impossible to be carried over, and he was resignedly following the example of the others, when all at once, at the deepest spot, he appeared to become dizzy and lose his balance, though fortunately not

his hold upon the rope. With combined efforts he was pushed shorewards by the coolies coming behind him.

The next moment I saw that Aziza, the cook, was struggling desperately in the water; I saw his turban and his shoes being swept away, and Pete, the sheep, following turban and shoes. He very unwisely had tied the animal's rope to his waist, fearing that it otherwise might be drowned, and had got his feet entangled in the rope.

It was an anxious moment: Perren, on the other side and my husband on our's, held on to the rope while the coolies dashed to the rescue. Our cook had disappeared and all we could see was a confused mass of waving arms and legs. After a few minutes, however, he was dragged into safety, a pathetic bundle of soaking clothes. He was somewhat dazed but unhurt and soon regained his self-possession.

"Memsahib," he said nearly crying, pointing to his bare feet. "My shoes! Gone!"

I promised him that we would give him another pair. The sheep in the meanwhile had struggled ashore and triumphantly rejoined us.

I fear that the story of our day's adventures is in danger of becoming tedious: a fourth time, a fifth time, a sixth time we had to cross that same raging, turbulent stretch of water that seemed to persist in its endeavour to keep the invading mortals out of the land of promise beyond. Again and again we were held up by the mighty wall of rocks,

again and again we plunged into the icy stream, wearily hoping that it would be the last time.

But not before the shadows of evening were lengthening did we at last turn our backs upon the river, and, facing a steep slope, begin to toil upwards. Dry gravel made way for grassy uplands, a clear little rivulet appeared with a fringe of green shrubs, and—marvellous sight!—rose bushes covered with wonderful flowers of a deep red colour, surpassing in their beauty all other wild roses of former memories: red, red roses, truly born to blush unseen.

We gathered the fragrant blossoms and the coolies, laughing and forgetting their fatigue, adorned their caps with them.

With a sigh of relief we ordered the tents to be pitched. Considering the difficulties we had encountered, the day's losses were not great: the cook's shoes and the coat of the "man of standing," this was the toll that the relentless Khunjirab had exacted from us.

## CHAPTER V

### IN THE KHUNJIRAB

THE next morning we climbed higher and higher, losing sight of the river altogether. We crossed the pass named Trip Sar and towards evening once more descended to the bed of the stream. We had passed the junction of the Khunjirab and Gujirab but were too high up on the hill-side to see the actual spot where they converged. From Trip we despatched the tall jemindar with a coolie to take a message to our store-keeper telling him to send up immediately a transport of Gircha coolies carrying supplies as far as the Trip Sar, where our own men would fetch them.

A detailed account of our march up the valley would be wearisome: not less than twenty times had we to cross the river between the Kilik and the Bara Khun junction. On the first day at the foot of the steep slope we had sent back the pony, and the sturdiest men among the coolies now carried us across the water. Fortunately the fords were not as difficult as in the beginning. On the fourth day we came to the place, marked

Dih on the map. Wherever a side stream joined the main valley there was a little green oasis sprinkled with bright flowers. Small groves of birches and willows made pleasant shady camping places which we appreciated all the more after the long intervals of sandy stretches along the river and the endless slopes of shale and rocky debris, interrupted every now and then by formidable cliffs.

At Dih, where we came upon traces of a shepherd's encampment, there was a particularly charming little side valley, thickly wooded—an ideal habitation for a colony of hares. Harinxma shot some which came in very usefully as we had to be careful about our provisions. Franz went up the hill-side and saw some ibex, but they were out of reach, high up near the snow-line.

We found life very enjoyable in these pleasant camps. It was ideal weather. The freshness of spring was still in the air; it was warm in the sun, but cool breezes were wafted down from the snows. On the Alpine pastures higher up, the flowers were awakening to radiant life, and from the thickets by the stream, where the branches were so intertwined that we could scarcely get through, issued the joyous song of countless birds. It was good to awake in the early morning and to know that a new day full of adventure lay before one.

Our next camp was opposite another small side valley opening on to the right side of the stream.

Here we ate some trout for dinner that the coolies had caught in their chogas. The fish tasted delicious. In the evening as we were calmly sitting before our tents we were suddenly roused by the sound of excited voices in the coolies' corner of the camp. There seemed to be a great disturbance. They were all talking at the same time and gesticulating wildly. It appeared that they were holding a protest meeting, declaring that they refused to follow the Sahibs any longer. It was evident, they said, that they were all going to die of hunger in this wild uninhabited country, where none of them had ever been before, where there were no villages and no people. There seemed to be no choice between either dying of starvation or else drowning like rats in a trap, as the water in the gorge would soon have risen to such a height that no more rations could be brought up from Gircha. We assured them that they need not fear such a sad fate. There would always be enough for all of them and if we could not get out of the valley through the gorge we would find a way over the mountains to Shingshal. They could trust us to bring them back in safety. At this they dispersed and we thought the wisest course was to take no further notice of them, although now and then we could still hear their voices raised in angry dispute.

It was nearly dark when all of a sudden we caught sight of first one, then two, three figures flitting by in the twilight, followed by a whole group

of men running towards the edge of the stream. As they had taken off nearly all their clothes, we instantly guessed that they intended to cross the river and escape in the dark. At our cry of warning the whole camp awoke to tumultuous activity. I saw Khan Sahib emerging from his tent in a scanty and amazing costume with a long "alpenstock" in his hand; my husband, Harinxma and the guides dashed on to the scene brandishing their trusty ice-axes, while the "men of standing," taking courage, followed their example and joined the fray uttering bloodthirsty yells.

As soon as the coolies saw that they were being pursued, their courage seemed to leave them in the lurch; they turned round and hurried back to their quarters with a shamefaced air. We were prepared to take severe measures if the slightest disturbance should recur, but they gave us no more trouble. As an extra precaution, however, we placed the entire store of rations in the guides' tent and set a watch during the night.

Two more marches brought us to the Bara Khun junction, where we intended to halt a few days in order to explore the Bara Khun valley which General Cockerill had not visited. In any case we could not go further on, as we first had to send back the greater part of our men to fetch the supplies from the Trip Sar. Thus only six coolies were left for our proposed expedition. This meant going with a small party, and as I wanted to devote my

time to botanical collecting, and Harinxma and Franz were sorely tempted by the ibex we had sighted on our way up the valley, my husband selected Afraz Gul and Perren as his companions. I leave him to tell his own story :



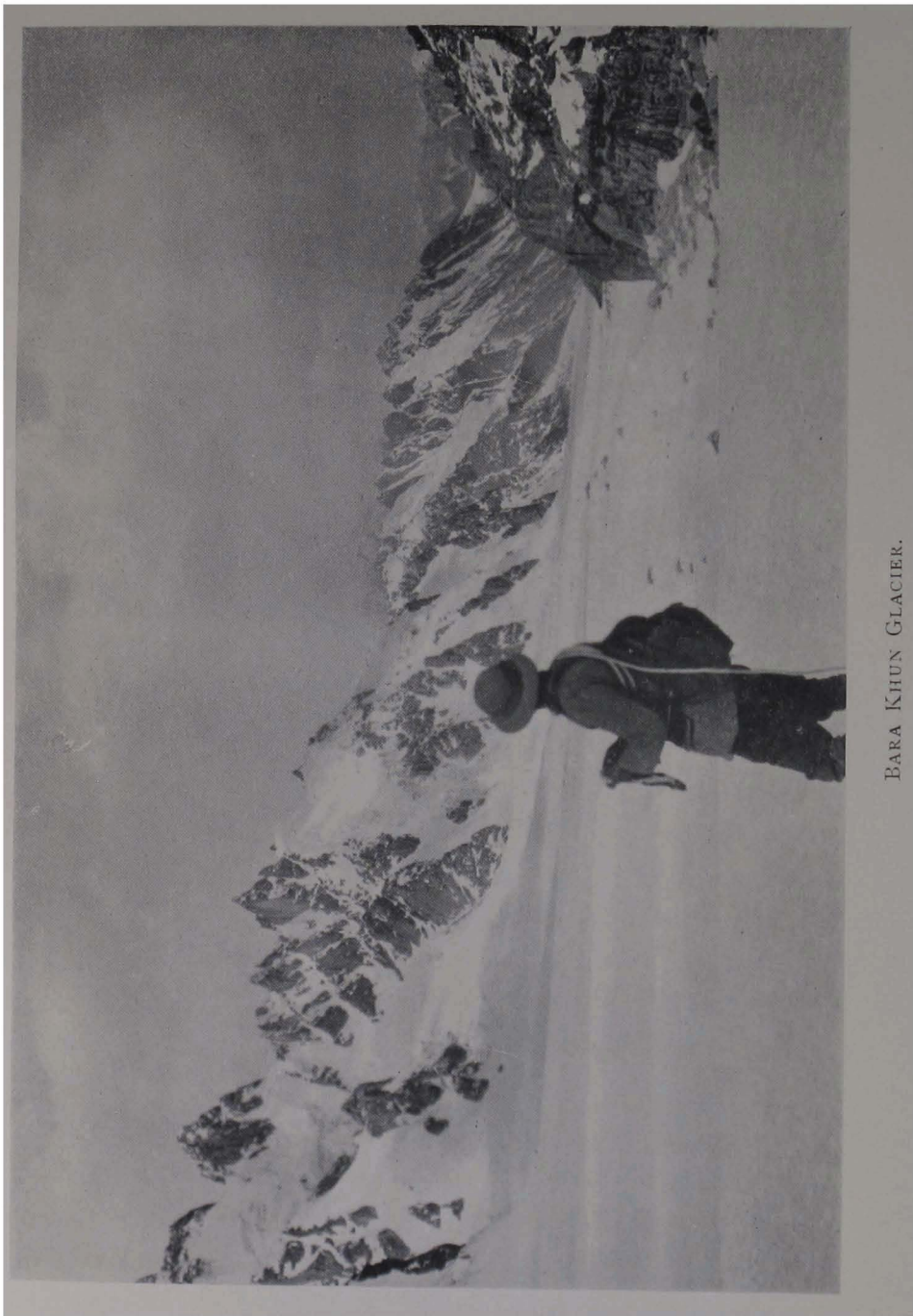
## CHAPTER VI

### THE EXPLORATION OF THE BARA KHUN VALLEY

*By Ph. C. Visser*

MY chief aim was to discover the source of the Bara Khun. It certainly was one of the most beautiful valleys I had ever seen. At first the stream was bordered with pretty flowering shrubs and birch-trees, but, as the valley widened out, we came to stretches of gravel and sand surmounted by frowning crags. There were signs that shepherds with their flocks had visited the valley at some time, probably coming over the passes from Chinese Turkestan in the late autumn.

We must have gone about ten miles, when on rounding a corner we saw to our surprise that we were quite near a big glacier which entirely filled the valley. We were all the more astonished as we had been told that we should probably not find any great glaciers or high mountains in this region. Wondering what surprises would be in store for us on the morrow, we did full justice to our supper of soup and dry bread and soon afterwards crept into our sleeping bags. Owing to the shortage of coolies, we had not brought a tent with us, but we



BARA KHUN GLACIER.



were quite comfortable, as the night was not cold, and we soon fell asleep under the star-lit sky.

At half past three in the morning Perren roused me and without waking the coolies and Afraz Gul, we set out together after a hurried breakfast. It took us an hour to reach the glacier. Curiously enough there was no terminal moraine, but it showed signs of advancing rapidly, the encroaching ice having wrought havoc among the grass and flowers at its edge.

We discovered the source of the Bara Khun river about one mile higher up. Instead of flowing out of the glacier at the bottom as is usually the case, the water had found an outlet at the side before reaching the snout.

We advanced along the moraine without difficulty, surveying our surroundings with curiosity. It appeared that we were entering into a vast glacier region. Several ice streams drained into the lower one, two of which were of considerable dimensions and all around were lofty peaks of more than 20,000 feet. The glacier itself was not much broken and as the snow was still hard, we were able to cover the ground at a good rate. We made for what we supposed to be its upper part, as we could distinguish right before us a gap between two summits, which probably was the pass. Such it proved to be and after nearly seven hours' climbing we stood on the top of the watershed, looking down into China.

"Herr," said Perren, "let us go down a few

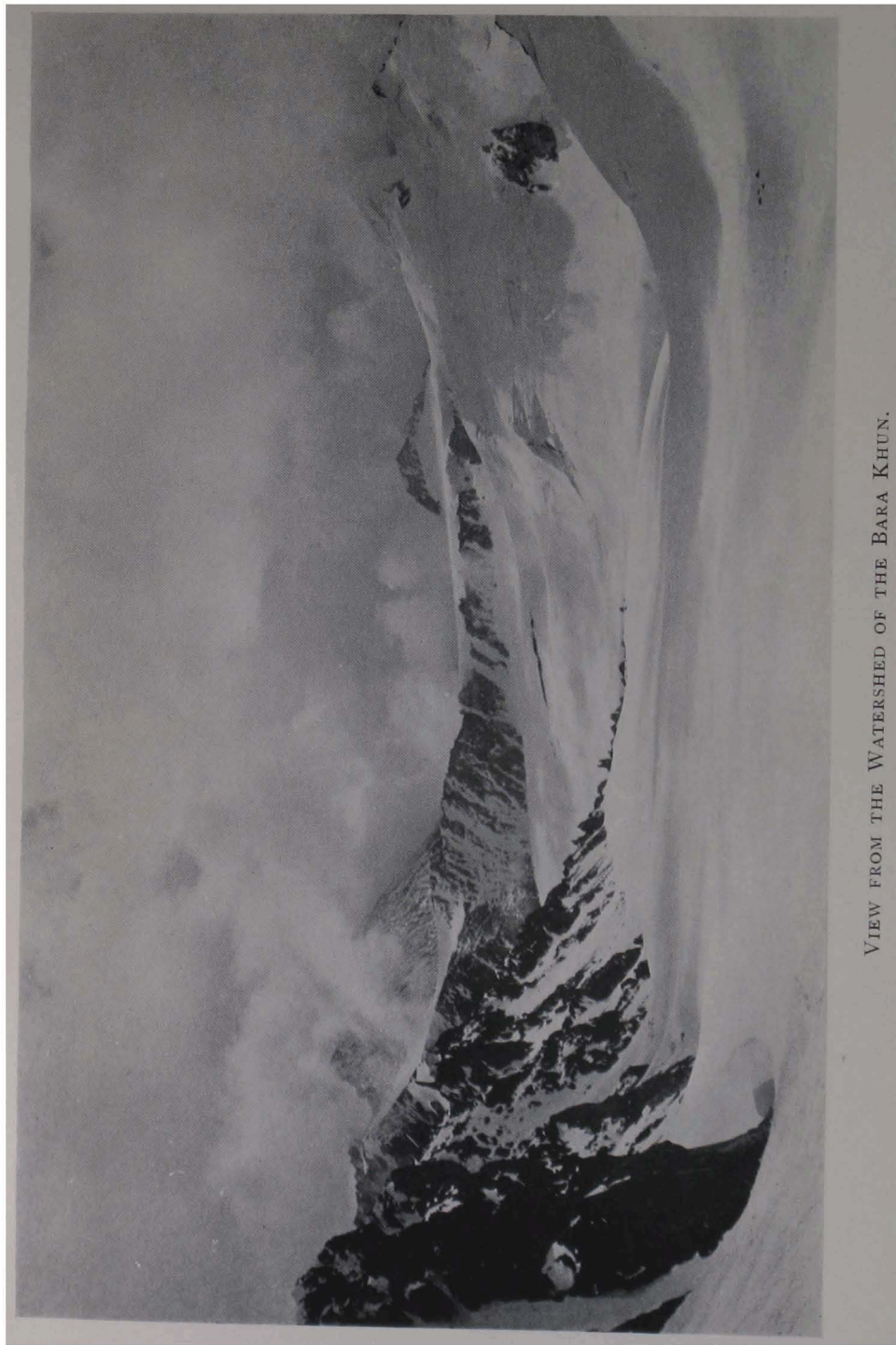
steps on the other side and drink a cup of Chinese tea!"

While he busied himself with the spirit lamp, I contemplated the view. I was surprised to find it very different from what we had expected. The glacier on the other side of the pass was broad at the top and terribly steep. It descended between high cliffs crowned by jagged arêtes and, bending to the north, seemed to be cut off by a chain of snow mountains. Probably the spot where we stood was one of the most difficult ways of access to the Celestial Country.

We had reached a height of 18,000 feet, but, as we now perceived, the Bara Khun glacier did not end here. It continued in an upward direction for about another mile, thus attaining a total length of about ten miles.

A few stray snow-flakes and the heavy clouds above our heads warned us not to linger, but before returning to our camp, we first branched off in a northern direction as we wished to visit another pass, which also descended on the Chinese side. Here however we looked down upon a dizzy precipice, terminating in a wild chaos of ice pinnacles and yawning chasms. This pass could never have been used. The other one, the natives told us, was a known passage and had been frequented as such.

I hastily made some meteorological observations and took my bearings with the aid of the compass, and then we turned back. The descent was arduous



VIEW FROM THE WATERSHED OF THE BARA KHUN.



as the snow had become soft. Half way down the moraine we found Afraz Gul, who had been hard at work and who returned with us to our bivouac. We had only time to take a short rest, as we wished to go on to our Bara Khun camp the same evening, so as to be able to start with the whole caravan next day up the Khunjirab.

The valley seemed endless as we stumbled along in the dark over the stones, but at last, at ten o'clock we saw the welcome glow of the camp-fires in the distance. We had had a long day of more than eighteen hours, and we were all glad to have reached what to us meant "home" in this immense solitude:—our little tents, hidden away among the trees near the rushing river.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE KHUNJIRAB RAT-TRAP

THE Bara Khun camp was a delightful spot. We had selected the tiny wooded peninsula jutting out between the two streams as the best site for our tents. The sound of the rushing water was always in our ears, the perpetual accompaniment of our waking hours by day and our dreams at night. But though it is one of Nature's most fascinating melodies and one sorely misses it after a time, we now listened with increasing anxiety. Every day the weather got warmer, every day more snow melted on the mountains, and the river grew higher. What if we were really caught in the trap?

On the evening before my husband came back, Harinxma and Franz returned. They had been some way up the Bara Khun valley, but had shot no ibex.

That same day the coolies also arrived with the jemindar. They had brought new rations for twelve days, but, they said, it was no longer possible to get either in or out of the valley. They had experienced great difficulty in traversing the river, and no man

however strong and however willing could now get across. There was too much water!

We did not doubt the truth of their report: a glance at the swollen river sufficed to convince us. There was only one answer to the problem: it had become an absolute necessity to find a way out of the Khunjirab to the Gujirab and from the Gujirab to Shingshal.

It was not only a question of getting there, but of getting there quickly. Twelve days we had at our disposal, not more. Fortunately the weather caused us no anxiety: bright clear days and cool nights followed each other in unbroken succession. Neither did the coolies give us any more trouble. They seemed to have forgotten their rebellious thoughts. My husband asked Khan Sahib to tell them that he was satisfied with their behaviour, and as a reward for their recent efforts, distributed a generous baksheesh among them.

One of the elder men got up to make a speech which the jemindar translated.

“We know that it was bad of us to run away,” he said, “and we hope that the Sahibs will not be angry any more. But never before did an officer take us to such difficult places where we had to go over snow and ice. But now we know the Sahibs will find the right way and we will follow them even if they should go as high as heaven itself!”

We sincerely hoped that their confident mood would last. They were like children, easily dis-

couraged but of a kind-hearted and merry disposition. They were not bowed down by the burden of superstition that is the curse of their neighbours in the lama-ridden country of Western Tibet and were undoubtedly much finer men than the Ladakhi, who accompanied us on our Sasir expedition.

Hoping for the best we started without further delay. The way through the Khunjirab valley was now much easier. We passed the slopes on the right bank where General Cockerill mentions having seen traces of human habitation. We also found patches which showed that the ground had been cultivated, but there were no signs of the people themselves. Indeed, in the whole valley we never saw a human being. Coming down the Bara Khun valley my husband had been greatly intrigued by the light of a fire on the hill-side, which indicated the presence of shepherds, who probably had come over from Chinese Turkestan.

At the spot called Kuksel the valley of the Kara Jilgha branches off in a north eastern direction leading to the Khunjirab (Yutr) pass, which is the route followed by General Cockerill.

Our camp here was on a little grassy oasis by the river, where wild rhubarb grew plentifully. We noticed that the coolies tore up the plants and ate the stems. We followed their example and found they had an excellent taste. The cook frequently made most tempting dishes of rhubarb compote whenever we could spare enough sugar. Afterwards

we came across wild rhubarb in all the valleys of the Northern Kara-Korum and were surprised to find it everywhere in such abundance. It grew wherever there was water.

Another important discovery we made was that we could use the salt we found on the ground. Our original supply had come to an end, and driven to despair by the tasteless food we thought we might as well try it as the coolies said they also used it for cooking purposes. As it was mixed with sand and dirt, we found the best way was to melt it in water and use it in a liquid state. It made the soup rather thin, but it was preferable to eating it without any salt at all. We observed with anxiety that the contents of our box of stores were rapidly diminishing, and carefully rationed the remaining provisions, as we could not tell exactly how long they would have to last.

From the Kuksel camp we turned to the north and continued up the little valley of the same name. At the foot of the Kuksel glacier, at a height of 15,030 feet, we pitched our camp. As far as we could see, our route lay along the glacier; somewhere further on we hoped to find a pass leading in the right direction. Next day we sent Franz on in front with the coolies carrying the first half of our luggage. They returned in the evening with a note from Franz and a rough sketch showing the route he had taken. They had reached the pass, he wrote, but as the descent was very steep, he had made them

put down their loads on the top and had sent them back to fetch the rest of the luggage first. It was good news, and on the following morning the second caravan started with Perren and Harinxma. My husband and I remained behind with a few coolies who were indisposed, but on the third day we also followed the others, intending to catch them up by making a double march in the valley beyond the pass.

An explorer, perhaps even more than other mortals, is subject to varying moods. Especially does the chilly atmosphere of the grey dawn awake in one's mind fatal memories of civilisation: the luxurious bed-room, the white bath with its floods of hot and cold water, the letters and newspapers waiting on the breakfast-table, and the tempting promise of an abundant and dainty meal:—fresh rolls, frizzling eggs and bacon, and crisp brown sausages. It is not wise to let one's thoughts dwell on such delectable visions: it makes the meagre supply of muddy water in the battered tin basin appear even more unsatisfactory than it really is, and the dry crust that calls itself breakfast even more unappetising. At other times the dark clouds are hidden behind their silver lining; one's atmosphere is suffused with brightest light: nothing can damp one's enthusiasm, quench one's energy, or dull one's enjoyment.

Such was our happy frame of mind as we left our Kuksel camp on the morning of 29th June. We were full of eager expectations; there, on the

other side of the pass lay another "mysterious valley" even more alluring than the Khunjirab, for no European had ever penetrated into the Gujirab or any of its side valleys.

Our way lay along the stony river bed and thence on to the glacier. In the Alps we should have estimated it to be half an hour's walk to the pass which we located right in front of us, but in this immense mountain region it was impossible to calculate according to the usual standards: the distances being immeasurably great. It took us nearly three hours to reach the glacier, and another hour went by before, toiling up the final steep snow slope, we saw the gently undulating upper plateau appear above the crest. As we mounted, first one, then another, and yet another glittering peak grew visible until at last the whole wonderful panorama was revealed: a fantastic world of mighty rocks and dazzling snow and ice. In the foreground the mountains of the Gujirab proudly reared their snow-clad summits. Beyond them rose the loftier Shingshal peaks and in the shimmering blue haze of the far distance the giants of the Kara-Korum gleamed, magnificent and serene.

Far down below we saw the silver thread of the torrent winding through the valley. In order to get a more complete view my husband climbed a small peak near the pass, about 500 feet higher, which, he found, amply repaid his trouble. In a mighty circle all around he saw the mountain region we

were leaving behind and the country before us, the promised land. He counted fifteen, sixteen glaciers, the majority of which were situated in the Gujirab. We none of us had expected to find an area with peaks of such great height. It was not a second Kara-Korum, but all the same it was an exciting discovery to come upon a glacier region with countless summits of more than 20,000 feet, which had never been seen before.

On the top of the pass which reached a height of 16,900 feet we found an enormous cairn which the coolies had built the previous day. Khan Sahib told us afterwards that they had asked the jemindar to scratch an inscription on one of the stones to commemorate the event. It had made a deep impression on them that we had managed to find a safe passage out of the Khunjirab. We ourselves also felt considerable relief that we had escaped out of the valley. Our supplies were running extremely low and if we had been overtaken by bad weather we should have found ourselves in a very disagreeable situation.

We sat down for a short rest behind a little rock. The descent looked terribly steep: it was a nasty precipitous slope covered with shale and loose stones, dropping 3000 feet without a break. Suddenly I heard a shout and discovered Perren, who was grinding up the slope and had nearly reached the top. He had come to meet us and bring us the latest news of the caravan. We were most thankful



THE GUJRAB VALLEY.





to hear that they had all got down without any accident. The coolies had done very well: they had reached the pass in good time. There had been a great rejoicing on the summit. In order to gain time and to avoid climbing up the steep slope once more, they had divided the loads among the whole party so that nothing was left behind, the coolies taking double loads and Harinxma, the guides and Afraz Gul, even the servants taking their share, everyone carrying something. It had been an enthusiastic if somewhat hazardous descent.

Perren said that he had had an anxious moment when he saw Allah Baksh and the kilta he was carrying rolling down the slope like two big balls. He had, however, rescued Allah Baksh, who had stood looking in despair at the bounding kilta, crying: "My Sahib's kilta! My Sahib's kilta!" The kilta, however, was not lost: it was picked up lower down in a rather dilapidated state owing to its rapid descent.

He also told us that he had been much amused by the behaviour of Pete, the sheep. Harinxma, instead of following Perren who was taking the coolies in zig-zags along the slope, headed for a route of his own down a precipitous couloir, followed by the cook. Pete, who was always to be found a few steps behind Aziza, came to a dead halt, and gazed with disapproval at the descending couple. "What foolish thing is this?" he must have said to himself, and deliberately turning round, trotted off

to join the caravan of coolies, proving to have been guided by a wise instinct, as poor Aziza got stranded at the bottom of the couloir in a most awkward position, where he could neither move up nor down and had to hang on to the rocks until Perren came to his rescue with a rope.

The valley into which we now descended was of the same type as those we had left behind, excepting that there was no trace of any vegetation. Down below, where the snow-peaks were hidden from view, it looked a dreary valley of death. At the spot where the others had spent the night we found a note and an appetising tit-bit for Patiala, which Harinxma had thoughtfully left behind for him and which fully rewarded him for his Alpine prowess. Without stopping we hurried on and soon reached a point where the nullah joined what we afterwards heard was the Chapchinal valley. Here we found that the others had established the camp. We could still see our pass which looked incredibly steep from this side and which we afterwards named the Chapchinal pass.

The next day we set out early in the hope of reaching the Gujirab before the evening. We were in a side valley filled by a raging turbulent stream. Once more the water showed itself to be our enemy, this time claiming Franz as its victim. Scorning a coolie's back, he was jumping from stone to stone, when his foot slipped on a wet boulder and a tossing wave caught him. However, with great presence

of mind he managed to throw himself on to a projecting rock and to scramble on to the dry sand, unhurt, although a trifle shaken and minus his rifle and topee. The coolies proved equal to the occasion, and, spurred on to greater endeavours by visions of generous baksheesh, descended into the rushing stream, where they actually retrieved the lost rifle. We had despaired of their finding it, fearing that it had already been swept too far away by the current, but fortunately it had got jammed between two stones. They, however, did not find the topee, which by now must have reached the Indian Ocean.

One more difficult crossing awaited us at the entrance of the Gujirab valley. The river was very broad and the current exceedingly strong, but after an anxious interval all the members of our caravan were again united on the further bank and we gratefully realised that we had forced the ultimate barrier separating us from the mysterious valley of our destination.

As we advanced the scenery entirely changed its character. Instead of being confined in a narrow cleft, we found ourselves on broad rolling uplands which meagre plants tinged with a faint green hue. The valley was much broader than the Khunjirab: it was a pleasant change after the snow-fields and grim bare rocks we had left behind us. However, there seemed to be very little water. A few hours of continuous going up and down brought us to the only inhabited spot in the valley.

In Hunza nobody had been able to give us any information concerning the Gujirab, and we were greatly surprised to discover a little Shingshali colony, consisting of a few primitive stone huts. The male inhabitants ran out to meet us. We found that six men and twelve women lived here, together with several pale and sickly looking children, and a large community of diminutive sheep and funny dwarf goats with long silky hair.

Our arrival in this remote spot so effectively barred to the outer world—it is impossible to enter from the Khunjirab-Gujirab junction—was naturally a great event. Never before had the people seen a European. How was it possible, they asked, that these strange Sahibs could have penetrated into their valley? What was the reason of their coming? They seemed at first to doubt whether we had peaceful intentions, but they were soon reassured. The fact that one of the “Sahibs” was a woman, appeared especially to awaken amazed excitement. The news seemed to calm the fears of the female population. They had all in great terror taken refuge in the miserable shelters made of rough stones which served them as dwelling places. But when they saw that we were harmless folk, they re-emerged and even allowed themselves to be photographed. Their dress was similar to that of their Hunza sisters: a long drab-coloured smock; loose woollen trousers and the same high felt boots as the men. Their head-dress was a small flat cap, and they wore their



INHABITANTS OF GUJRAB VALLEY.



hair in double plaits hanging in front of their ears. They had no ornaments except a few cheap beads on a string round their necks.

The wretched hovels where they live contained absolutely nothing except the wooden bowls in which they kept the milk, and a few cooking pots. They were delighted when I gave them a couple of empty tins.

Human life in these barren Kara-Korum valleys is a continuous struggle for existence: a struggle not only to force the sterile soil to yield enough to keep them from starvation, but also a struggle against the terrible menace of Nature. On every side these men see the devastating phenomenal forces at work: the avalanches thundering down, the treacherous stones falling, rocks crumbling where they have stood for ages, rivers suddenly flooding their habitations and the fields their patient labour has wrested from the cruel desert.

And yet the heavy cloud of mountain gloom does not seem to obsess their primitive souls. They are not melancholy and taciturn as one sometimes imagines mountain folk must be; they love to make merry, to gather round a fire, to sing and dance and listen to a good tale of adventure and wonderful happenings. They are not abjectly superstitious though they believe in sprites and fairies and devils. One of them told us that he had actually seen a devil. That had been long ago up in the mountains.

We asked what the devil had looked like. Khan



Sahib translated the answer: "He had only one eye in the middle of his forehead, and he was dressed like the Sahibs." We wondered whether this detail was an ironical witticism!

We made a halt near the Gujirab village to await the return of Khan Sahib whom we had left busy with his plane-table in the Chapchingal region. We now felt reassured; the cloud of anxiety at the back of our minds no longer existed: we had escaped out of the trap of the Khunjirab gorge, and although the weather might break, we were certain of being within reach of Shingshal. The Gujirab shepherds knew the way: four marches it was, they said. We had already sent on the tall jemindar and our old Shingshali, telling them to go as quickly as they could to fetch rations and coolies.

It was a treat to get fresh milk again. Every morning and every evening I watched the herd of goats and sheep pass my tent. Keeping close together the crowd of tiny animals shuffled along in the sand on their way to the meagre pastures on the surrounding hills. There were also two yaks in the village: one a great hairy creature with black and white marks; the other was smaller with an amusing fuzzy round head, and the look of an unkempt poodle.

Franz made use of this opportunity to buy a sheep to replenish our impoverished larder, and I also told him to get us a goat to take with us for milk. These business transactions were not com-

pleted before a terrific amount of bargaining had taken place. A little group of men would appear leading some unfortunate animal; a small crowd of interested spectators would collect in the "kitchen." There would be some talk, some gesticulation. It was wonderful how Franz could make himself understood. Presently the sheep would wander about, calmly grazing.

When I saw the crowd, I always knew that Franz was "buying a sheep." Nothing, however, seemed to happen for hours and hours: the onlookers remaining rooted to the ground, Franz hanging about among them with an indifferent air.

"Well, Franz, how are you getting on?" I would ask as I passed.

"He still wants two rupees too much, the old robber," Franz would answer with a delighted grin.

And though it often took him the best part of a day, he generally got the two rupees off the price.

It was lucky, we thought, that we were out of the Khunjirab, as we watched the ominous clouds gathering all round. Slowly but surely the weather seemed to be changing. A persistent wind kept blowing the fine sand into our tents. But the most disagreeable thing was that there was no other water except that which came from the river, which had suddenly turned black and muddy. Transformed into tea it did not look so bad, but when Munir Khan brought me my basin in the morning it became a problem of "to wash or not to wash?"

Khan Sahib rejoined us very well satisfied at the amount of topographical work he had been able to accomplish. He told us that on his return to the site of our camp at the junction below the pass, he had found it buried beneath an enormous stone avalanche. We truly had had a narrow escape. If it had come down one day earlier none of us would have lived to tell the tale of our adventures.

That night we realised more than ever the joy of Life.

Although the weather did not look very promising we resolved to start again the next day. The villagers told us that a few miles further on we should reach the valley through which lay the route to Shingshal. We intended, however, first to follow the Gujirab river to its source. About the country further than a march up the river they could give us no information at all. Nobody had ever been there, they said.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FROM THE GUJIRAB TO SHINGSHAL

ON July the 2nd we resumed our journey up the valley, taking only what was most necessary and leaving the rest behind in charge of one of the jemindars. I was perched on the back of the village yak—the great, shaggy one. The people had with the most kindly intentions insisted that I should make use of their queer beast: I could ride, a few miles they said, and the jemindar had strapped his own best blanket with gaudy stripes on to the creature's broad back. He was fearfully wild before I mounted, and made most terrible grunting noises, but became the picture of stolid calm as soon as I was seated. Indeed, so great was his calm very often, that I could hardly realise that I was moving at all. It was quite impossible to urge him to greater speed: he proved unresponsive to the most persuasive noises, the most energetic jerks at the rope in his nose, the most fearful thuds on his shaggy flanks. Nothing and nobody on earth could persuade that yak to do what he did not want to do, or not to do what he wanted to do. For instance he did not want to go faster than one mile an hour, and he

wanted to go into the water whenever he came near enough. He would lumber along the stony bank with terrible determination in his eye, and several times I only just managed to escape a disagreeable wetting by slipping off his back at the last moment before he plunged into the stream with an awkward movement of his heavy body.

Even this cumbersome method of transport was an amusing change after the many weary miles of toiling over endless stones and rocks and melting snow. It was such a novel experience to move even at the rate of one mile an hour without producing the locomotive force oneself. Soon, however, the ground became so broken and steep that I abandoned my gentle yak, preferring to trust to my own feet to bring me across safely.

The valley was even more beautiful than the Khunjirab. It continued to widen out until we came to a junction, where a nullah branched off to the north east. It then became narrower and narrower. We climbed high up on the left bank of the stream over a lovely, grassy plateau, where patches of Alpine flowers made splashes of colour, and then descended into the stony river bed. The valley became so narrow and was such a chaos of great boulders and fallen stones that we had some difficulty in finding a flat open space large enough to establish our camp between the river and the hill-side.

The sky had looked threatening all day long and

as it grew dark a wet drizzle of snow began to fall, enhancing the gloomy aspect of our surroundings.

It must have been about one or two o'clock in the night when I was suddenly roused by a dull rumbling sound. At first I thought it was the river, but as it grew more distinct I realised that the sound came from the opposite direction. I rushed out of my tent without stopping to put on my shoes or take a wrap. Dark figures flitted past, running for dear life, and I heard terrified cries. I stumbled along in the cold wet snow, hurting my bare feet against sharp stones. My husband came along, and Allah Baksh :

“Take my shoes, Mem-sahib,” the servant said. It was a kind thought in a moment of panic, but I preferred my bare feet. We scrambled a short distance up the steep hill-side on our right and then stood still, listening with beating hearts. The dull rumbling sound filled the dark night with terror and a sense of catastrophe. Straining our eyes we could just distinguish in the dim light an immense stone avalanche crashing down the slope. We also saw to our relief that it was falling to the other side and that our tents were in no danger of being struck.

Khan Sahib in his fright had rushed right into the river and stood up to his knees in the icy water. His servant, Abdul Ali, with a grim “faithful unto death” expression on his face was desperately hanging on to what, in day-time attire, would have been his master’s coat tails.

In a thankful mood we hurried back to our warm beds. After that night I always remembered to put my slippers in a place where I could find them directly; indeed, sometimes I slept with them in my hand.

The next day dawned bright and sunny; the terrors of the night vanished in the delights of the radiant morning and full of expectations we set out with our caravan of forty-two coolies towards the unknown country at the head of the valley. After three hours' marching, the river made a bend to the south, the scenery became of imposing grandeur and a great glacier appeared shutting out the view ahead. On we went, eager curiosity hastening our steps, until suddenly we caught sight of the exact spot where the stream rushed out of the dark ice tunnel under the glacier wall. We had reached the source of the Gujirab!

We sat down at the edge of the ice to have a look at our surroundings and to discuss our further plans. Afraz Gul appeared upon the scene highly elated.

“Sir,” he cried, “this river is longer than the Kilik and Khunjirab: to-day we have discovered the real source of the Hunza!”

We all felt very contented as we listened to the gurgling stream and, basking in the warm sunshine among our surroundings of snow and ice, we debated our future course of action.

Our original intention had been to return to the

spot where the side valley leading to Shingshal branched off from the main valley, and to follow this route, the ordinary way of the Gujirab herdsmen; but the lure of the gleaming, untrodden snow-fields above us proved too strong. It seemed a pity to go back the same way, to retrace our steps, when in front of us there lay an unknown mountain region which had never been traversed and through which it probably would be possible to find a direct route to Shingshal. Thus we argued, not ignoring the drawback that if we were not successful we should be obliged to return to the Gujirab valley and hurry on to Shingshal with rebellious coolies and a disagreeable shortage of rations.

After some discussion we decided that the best arrangement would be to send Khan Sahib back, so that proceeding to Shingshal by the ordinary way he could map the region through which he would pass, while we would try to find a new route through the unknown glaciers ahead. We would all meet again at Shingshal.

In the late afternoon we pitched our tents in a little hollow which we reached after three hours' climb up the glacier. We once more reviewed the situation. We were in the midst of wonderful mountain scenery at a height of 15,600 feet. From the site of our encampment it was impossible to get a good view of the route we should have to follow.

"Let us have a look at the map, Herr," said Franz. We produced the map, but a blank space



was all we could find. Franz gazed at it with a puzzled look and scratched his head, a significant gesture which, translated into speech, meant: "Well, this is a queer business!"

The glacier, however, did not look difficult and it seemed likely that we should find a pass somewhere higher up which would not be too dangerous for our laden coolies. Franz, we decided, should start as early as possible on the morrow, taking two of our best men with him, the small jemindar and the old Shingshali, to see if he could find a way. Harinxma, my husband and I would start a few hours later. Franz would signal to us whether we could go on or not. The caravan of coolies under Perren's guidance was not to start until eight o'clock. This would avoid useless trouble for them if we found that we could not get through, as they could see us returning at a great distance.

We woke to realise that it was a wonderful morning and that an exciting and adventurous day lay before us. In the night it had been very cold but it was a delight to move in the pure cool air and we soon got warmer. It was a long but easy walk up the glacier. As we advanced the shadows gradually dwindled before the rising sun. One by one the peaks around glowed softly while we ourselves were still in darkness, until the powers of the day had conquered the night and all was bathed in radiance. We seemed to be walking over a glittering diamond-sprinkled carpet. The gloom of the dreary stony

valleys had made place for the wide open expanse of sunlit snow.

At last the upper end of the glacier grew visible and we saw the pass: a steep snow-wall led up to the notch in the ridge. A more minute examination revealed a zig-zag track: Franz had arrived at the top already and as he had not returned, this meant that the descent on the other side was practicable.

We trudged on over the snow, which was softening rapidly under the sun's rays, and as we approached the base of the wall, we heard our guide's cheery "Jodler." It did not look very far, but it was impossibly steep and in the rarefied atmosphere—we had reached a height of more than 16,000 feet—we found that we could not climb with great speed. It seemed as if we should never reach the top that had looked so tantalisingly near, but at last I saw Franz's battered old hat peeping over the edge of the snowy rampart; then he stretched out his hand and after one more effort I stood looking out at a glorious panorama of snow and ice, glistening summits, dark rocks and frowning crags, with the canopy of clear blue sky adding to the beauty of it all. For a long time we gazed in speechless admiration at the wonderful view. Right before us lay the chain of the great Shingshal peaks with their descending ice-streams.

Then we glanced down at the glacier right below us. We were perched on a narrow ridge, and the

mountain wall, intersected by couloirs, fell abruptly at our feet.

“Franz!” we exclaimed, “must we go down there?”

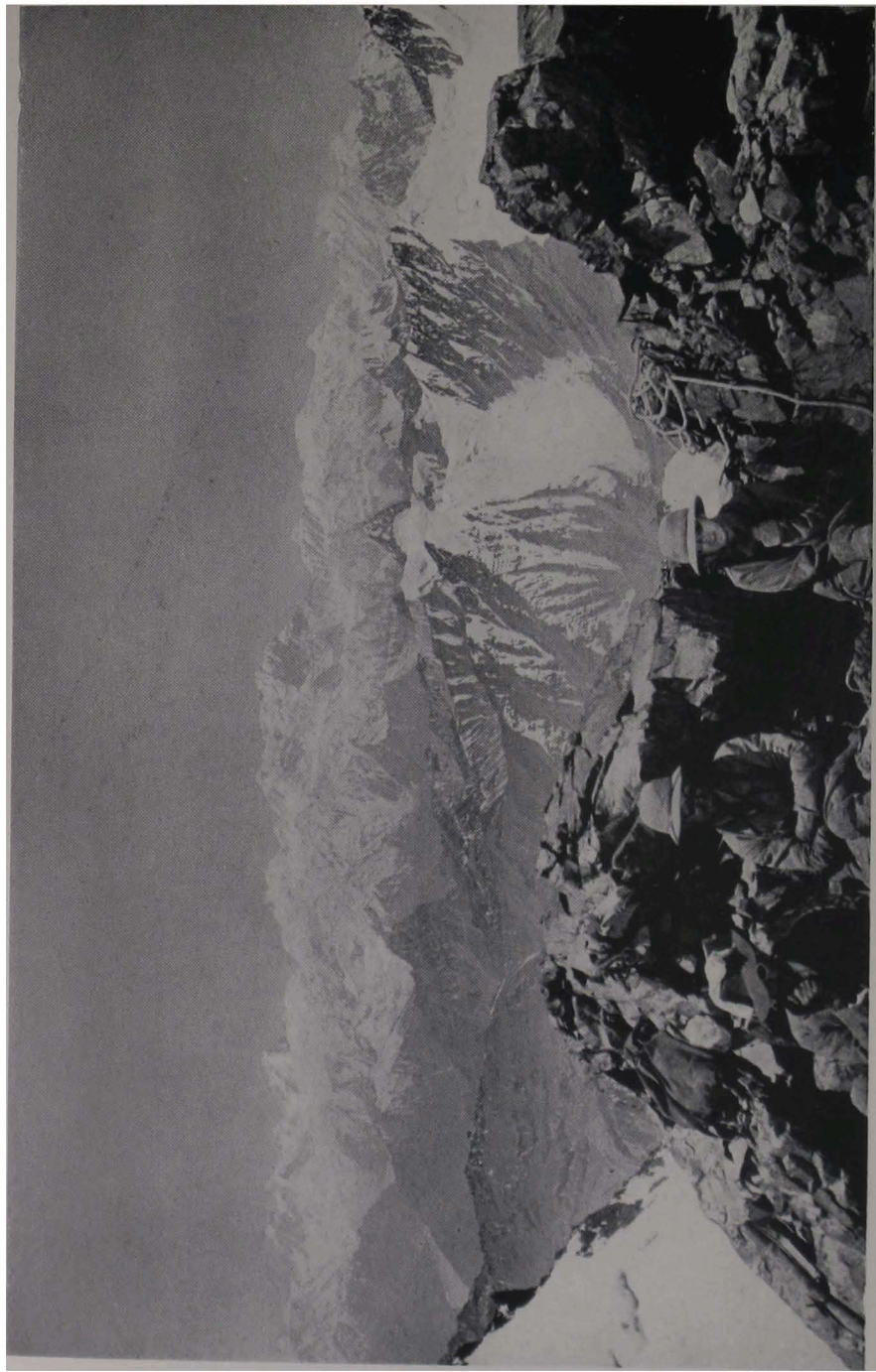
Terribly steep the couloir looked—terribly steep and plastered with thin patches of treacherous snow, hiding the ice underneath.

Franz scratched his head pensively, surveying the precipitous line of descent.

“Herr, it will go,” was all he said, and we devoutly hoped it would.

An hour’s rest on the top of the pass was all too short, but as soon as we saw the forerunners of our caravan arriving, looking like a line of little black specks on the white snow, we took one last look at the view and started the descent. We kept as close together as possible in order to avoid being hit by the falling stones which were inevitably dislodged. The rocks were all loose and the slightest movement sent them crashing down the precipice. Great care was needed in the slippery couloir as we found every now and then that the surface was covered by a thin layer of ice. The worst part was at the top: lower down it was filled by uneven ridges of snow which, though extremely tiring, prevented one from slipping.

On the glacier we stopped to watch the descending coolies. Perren had no easy task in getting them down safely, but with the help of the rope and much shouting and gesticulating, they and their loads all landed on the broad surface below without



ON THE WATERSHED BETWEEN THE SHINGSHAL AND GUIJRAB VALLEYS.



any damage being done. The rest of the way presented no more difficulties. We found the usual tiresome soft snow, the usual hateful moraine, before the scanty grass of an Alpine pasture came into view, where we discovered a suitable place for our tents.

We were now in a valley which seemed to be inhabited, and the next day we came upon the people themselves, a little settlement of Shingshali shepherds. They told us that it was impossible, owing to the water, to follow the stream much further. We would have to go a long way round and over three small passes in order to reach Shingshal. We asked them whether there was not a direct way across the mountains. According to our calculations this route, if it existed, must lead into the valley through which Afraz Gul was coming to Shingshal. They answered that they believed that it was possible, but warned us that it would be difficult.

The weather was fine: our provisions would still hold out for four days, which the shepherds said was the time we should want to get there by the usual way; we, therefore, decided to try the direct route.

We spent a pleasant hour on the grass in front of the huts. There were only two, but there seemed to be four or five women living there. They were too shy to bring us their milk themselves.

Feeling much refreshed we turned into the side valley directly above the alp, where a faint track led along terrible slopes of shale right above the gorge. Very soon the track stopped altogether, and it was little less than a miracle how we managed to get along the steep slopes of gravel where there was no foothold and the slightest slip would have sent one hurtling down the precipice.

I sat down on a little projecting rock to watch the others crawling like flies against a wall. There they came, the long row of coolies, and between them I was much amused to see Pete, who, with a great air of dignity, was "personally conducting" the little goat Franz had bought in the Gujirab. He was actually leading her on a string! The goat had probably been troublesome and the coolies had had the ingenious thought to tie her on to Pete, whom she seemed to follow with great docility. Pete, I suppose, had insisted on good behaviour. He was, indeed, a wise sheep.

After passing through the narrowest part of the gorge we found the valley became wider. There was a good camping place on grass, and the next morning after a climb of four hours over easy ground we reached the top of the pass. Here we enjoyed another superb view of the Kara-Korum mountains. The descent was steep, but quite easy compared with our experiences of two days ago, and in half an hour's time we had reached the bottom of the slope.

Our coolies now needed no encouragement: they ran along as if they had forgotten their loads, rejoicing in the prospect of nearing the journey's end. Their fears and their fatigue no longer existed: shouting and singing like children in a merry mood they ran. Down below, they said, we should find grass and water and wood, sheep and milk. We let them hurry on while we lingered behind to admire at our leisure the wondrous beauty of our surroundings. Was it only our happy mood, the feeling of relief that we had won through, that coloured our thoughts, or did the valley really possess a mysterious fascination, a magic charm, to which we all succumbed?

“This is one of the loveliest valleys I have ever seen,” said Franz, and we all agreed with him.

There was none of the dark gloom of the narrow gorges: on all sides the rocks rose in superb structures with beautifully sculptured, bold outlines and dolomite colours. Clear sparkling rivulets flowed through the Alpine meadows, spangled with gay flowers: there was a feeling of joy in the air, of joy and peace and all pervading beauty. Above stretched the deep blue sky and in the shining summer afternoon, in the pure fresh air, the goats grazed contentedly, nibbling at the fragrant thyme, which grew in a thick carpet at their feet. In the far distance the shimmering white peaks of Shingshal were visible: the great, silent guardians of the peaceful valley.

At a turn of the path we suddenly saw to our



surprise our jemindar and the head-man of Khan Sahib who together with some of the coolies had come to meet us. They said that Khan Sahib was waiting in a camp a little lower down, where he had safely arrived the day before. The coolies surrounded us with beaming faces and loud cries of "Salaam." Then suddenly they rushed upon me, tumbling over each other in their eager excitement. Before I realised what they were doing, the first one had lifted me on to his shoulders and had started running towards the camp. I had not the heart to deny them the pleasure of this triumphant entry. As soon as the man who was carrying me grew tired, another one took his place, keeping on running all the time as fast as he could go. Thus we reached the camp amidst great rejoicings. Khan Sahib gave us an enthusiastic welcome, eager to hear of our adventures.

We had won through in spite of all the difficulties, and the joy of the moment was shared by all who had traversed the long and arduous way.

We spent a wonderful evening in the beautiful Zardigarbin valley. Round the camp-fires the coolies sat chatting contentedly. Two bulky mail-bags had arrived for us: in this lonely spot we felt ourselves once more to be in touch with the civilised world; there were newspapers and letters: welcome news from far-away friends. How wonderful it seemed to get a letter again! How we marvelled as we held those flimsy little envelopes that they had been able

to find their way to us across the oceans and the plains, the terrible mountains and the swollen rivers!

There was a festival dinner to celebrate the occasion; not only the mail-bags, but two boxes with provisions had arrived, containing all kinds of delectable things: butter, condensed milk, sugar and tinned meat, salt, cheese and chocolate, tea and coffee, biscuits and cigars.

Afraz Gul sat in his tent working hard until late in the night. The blank space on the map, west of the watershed and north of Shingshal, had disappeared to his pride and delight. We were not less pleased with the results of our Khunjirab-Gujirab expedition. Since our departure from Pasu we had traversed a distance of 93 miles, a great part of which lay through unknown country. We had mapped a region of more than 1000 square miles. Perhaps the most important result from a geographical point of view was that we had fixed the position of a considerable part of the great Central Asian watershed. We had reached the sources of the Khunjirab, the Gujirab and several important side streams, amongst others the Bara Khun, besides discovering an extensive area of glaciers and several summits of 20,000 feet and more, one of them attaining a height of 22,000 feet. I had also added many interesting specimens to my collection of plants and butterflies.

We had been particularly fortunate in the weather, and had, indeed, reason to be grateful.

For a long time we sat in the gathering dusk, gazing at the great wall of the Kara-Korum peaks before us; as it grew darker they seemed ever more mysterious and remote, suffused with an unearthly tender light. Vaguely we dreamt of the past, and of the future, and again and again, leaping into clear consciousness, flashed the glad thought: "We have escaped: we have won through!"

The next morning, in a blithe, care-free mood we wandered down the goat-track to Shingshal. After barely two hours at the end of the ravine we saw the broad Shingshal valley before us. The village was situated on the other side of the river, where we soon distinguished its golden cornfields and groves of trees, contrasting pleasantly with the barren surroundings.

The villagers seemed to be aware of our approach. Our arrival apparently provoked great excitement, and from afar we saw the men and boys flocking together towards a spot on the river bank where we guessed the rope bridge to be. We hurried along on the opposite side in the wide stony valley bottom, but in vain we strained our eyes. Where was the bridge? We could see nothing but the angry, rushing water and on both sides a piled-up heap of stones indicating the place were perhaps once upon a time a bridge had existed. Now there was nothing at all. To the

right and to the left great cliffs rose sheer out of the stream, barring the way along the shore.

There was Shingshal, so near and yet so far! How were we to get across? It would be cruel indeed to be defeated at the last moment. Had we been too confident of success?

## CHAPTER IX

### OUR ARRIVAL AT SHINGSHAL

OUR happy frame of mind possessed us no longer, and gloomy thoughts arose as we sat among the boulders of the sandy river-bed watching the swiftly-rushing Shingshal carrying great pieces of ice in its drab-coloured water. It had a furious, sullen look: it was very broad and deep, and neither man nor beast could hope to cross it in safety; even my Gujirab yak would have found it too much for him. All the same something would have to be done: on this point we all agreed.

The only possible solution of the problem was to establish some sort of connection with the other side. Slowly but surely this dawned upon the staring groups on either bank. Gravely they debated, and then rousing themselves, burst into terrific activity. After much shouting and gesticulating they seemed to agree upon a definite course of action and all busily concentrated upon the task of making an enormous heap of stones opposite each other on either bank to hold the upright wooden beams which were to form the foundation of the "bridge." After two hours of hard work

the piles of stones had attained a height of about seven feet and the next move on the part of the bridge-builders was to connect them both by means of a rope weighted by a stone which an inhabitant of Shingshal, advancing into the river as far as he dared to go, hurled across to our side where it was deftly caught by one of our coolies who had also waded into the icy water so as to shorten the distance as much as possible. The rope was fastened to the wooden beams standing erect in the heap of stones, and was then drawn taut.

As soon as this stage of construction had been reached the rest was comparatively easy. Another rope made of five strands of roughly woven wool, each about an inch wide and consisting of a quantity of small bits knotted together, was also fastened to the pillars, and a wooden ring, provided with two smaller ropes enabling it to be pulled across from one side to the other, completed the bridge. A Shingshali youth brought the ring across, propelling himself along the rope in a horizontal position. He reminded me of a big monkey as he jerked his body along with his hands and feet. It was a marvellous performance, fearful to behold. We pictured ourselves dangling above the seething mass of water and, turning away, inwardly shuddered.

Our Indian servants did not trouble to conceal their dismay. Poor Abdul Ali, Khan Sahib's cook, who never was much of a hero, looked perfectly

terror-struck. His face was all drawn and yellow as he watched the acrobatic feat of the Shingshali.

Harinxma, after having tied himself firmly to the ring by a rope round his waist, was the first to venture across, holding on with both hands, while the men tugged and pulled with all their might. He landed safely on the other side and I followed him.

The knots in the rope were a great hindrance: the ring had to be jerked across, which caused a disagreeable swaying movement. This was augmented by the fact that the ever-stretching rope curved downwards in the middle, hanging perilously near to the surface of the water, so that the unfortunate traveller felt himself being caught by the legs and dashed to and fro by the swirling current.

Crossing oneself, however, was not as bad as seeing the others do it. It was rather a problem how to get Patiala safely across. Fortunately we found in the medicine chest a string hammock which we kept as a means of transport in case of sickness or accident, and into this my husband and Franz tied him as if it were a bag. Thus securely fastened, and looking a pathetic unwieldy bundle, he tasted some more of the terrors that fall to the lot of the dog who accompanies his masters "on exploring bound."

Pete's passage caused less trouble. In calm resignation he allowed himself to be tied to the ring



CROSSING THE SHINGSHAL RIVER.





by his four legs, and was pulled across hanging upside down.

My husband was tempted to try the local method. He had, however, not counted on the novel and disagreeable sensation of being suspended head downwards above the raging stream. The difficulty of passing the knots was also greater than he had imagined. Half-way across his arms and legs were so sore and bruised, and he felt so out of breath that he was compelled to give in and thankfully let the straining Shingshali haul him across for the remainder of the way.

After all these emotions and exertions we drank a cup of tea, surrounded by a gaping crowd of men and boys—the women-folk seemed to have been severely ordered to stay at home. Reclining on the river's bank, we anxiously watched the painful passage of Khan Sahib and the trembling servants. Abdul Ali arrived more dead than alive. Then the guides followed. Nearly every one, including the coolies, had bleeding wounds on arms and legs, caused by the friction of the rope.

It was a lengthy and tedious business to get all our men and all our boxes and bundles across ; in fact it took us the whole day ! The golden light of the warm summer afternoon had long since faded into darkness before the last coolie set foot on the Shingshal shore.

We did not get much of a meal that evening : by the time the camp equipment had arrived it was

too late to start cooking and we all felt weary. But when at last we went to rest in the dark orchard, under the spreading apricot trees where the men had pitched our tents by the flickering lamp-light, we closed our eyes with a feeling of deep gratitude. One more eventful episode of our journey lay behind us. For one awful moment the fear had seized us that after all we were still going to be caught in the rat-trap!

## CHAPTER X

### IN THE SHINGSHAL VALLEY

THE village of Shingshal takes its name from the wild and secluded valley in which it lies. We often wondered how it was possible that man had ever discovered this remote spot and what had induced him to select it as a dwelling-place. In the summer the only route by which it is possible to reach the Hunza valley is by the Karun Pir, an arduous climb much dreaded by the coolies. It is four marches to Murkhun, the village at the foot of the pass on the other side, where our store-keeper, abandoning the depot in Gircha, had now established the base-camp.

On our arrival we immediately sent down a coolie with our mail and with an order to send us fresh supplies. In the interval of waiting there was enough work for us to do. Besides, we all felt that we deserved a few days' rest.

The village was larger than we had expected it to be, and we found that the lumbardar could provide us with a certain amount of *ata* and with as many extra coolies as we should need.

The cultivated area stretched from the river right up the hill-side. The houses were very quaint, many of them having round or square towers which gave them a fort-like aspect. After so many weary marches in the uninhabited wilderness, it was a pleasant change to look upon the midsummer wealth of the ripening corn-fields and shady gardens surrounding us on all sides. Masses of purple flowers made patches of brilliant colour in the grass bordering the fields, and everywhere little rills of water gurgled merrily, irrigating the land.

In the camp peace and content reigned supreme. We gradually succumbed to a blessed sense of repose and freedom from anxiety, though none of us indulged in a *dolce far niente*; there was too much work to do—all kinds of pressing duties that had been postponed. There were diaries to be written up; reports and letters and newspaper articles to be completed; the collections had to be attended to and arranged; the notes revised; the photographs developed and printed. All this kept us occupied from morning to night. We marvelled how swiftly the hours fled.

In the neighbouring garden the crowd of coolies squatted on the ground round Khan Sahib's tent, where the rations were being weighed and distributed. And in our own kitchen department there was the same busy stir. The cook was engrossed in his baking, trying to make cakes without eggs, and embarking upon all kinds of culinary adventures

under Franz's supervision. Franz himself in the meanwhile was "buying a sheep." He had given out packets of soap and the servants were engaged in the occupation their souls delighted in, namely washing clothes. All day long I heard them beating the wet garments against the rocks with such furious energy that I wondered how even the strongest material could survive the thoroughness of Munir Khan's laundry methods. It reminded me of Mark Twain who, on his travels in India, saw a man trying to "break a rock with a shirt," and afterwards heard that it was the dhobi.

Perren was repairing the camp furniture that had got broken. Our precious chairs had developed the awkward habit of suddenly collapsing, which was very trying to one's temper.

But our boots particularly needed the guides' constant attention and all that clever cobbling could do for them. The amount of nails that we had already used was alarming, and the question whether they would hold out gave us some anxiety. We each had two pairs, but the damage caused by the sharp rocks and the eternal stones, day after day, was terrible, and we had to take great care to keep the boots in repair as much as possible.

In the valley, in dry weather, we often wore Kashmiri *chaplies*,<sup>1</sup> but we did not find them very practical as the small stones were apt to slip in between the sandal and the sole of one's foot,

<sup>1</sup> Chaplies : sandals, worn over leather socks.

causing great discomfort. Besides the leather socks did not afford enough protection.

The native foot-gear of the Hunza men is without doubt the most comfortable one could imagine, but it has the drawback of being worse than useless in wet places and also of giving no support round the ankle.

One afternoon during our stay in Shingshal we went to pay the lumbardar a visit in his house. The indescribable gloom and stuffiness of the interior were explained by the fact that the low room had no windows, a hole in the roof being the only means of letting in light and air and of getting rid of the smoke.

We were struck by the complete absence of any kind of furniture, rugs, or articles of household use. There was nothing at all: it was just a bare space with a mud floor, part of which was raised about a foot higher so as to serve as a sleeping-place. What must be the life of these people during the long winter days when they are imprisoned in these miserable hovels?

There were several men, besides the lumbardar, standing about, but we only saw one woman, a pathetic old creature, bowed down by age and extreme politeness as she advanced, deeply salaaming, to take the presents I had brought her,—a length of bright red Bokhara silk and a bottle that had once contained some scent of Guerlain's. A smile of content lit up her wrinkled features as she took the gifts and scurried away.

At the beginning of our stay in Shingshal we found it impossible to sleep owing to the noise of the river, although our camp was situated at some distance from the shore. The volume of water increased to such a degree, especially during the night, and such enormous quantities of ice were carried along by the raging torrent, that on more than one occasion we rushed out of our tents, greatly alarmed by the thundering sound which we thought was caused by an avalanche.

At daybreak we saw that the river-banks were crusted with ice which certainly must have come from some great glacier further up the valley. But which glacier? It was a problem that continually occupied our thoughts, and we determined, if we possibly could, to find its answer. Curiously enough, there was no glacier—not even a hypothetical glacier—to be found on the map at the head of the Shingshal valley. The whole track of country there again bore the word “Unsurveyed.”

Another interesting question was the reason of this amazing increase of the water in the river. Why did it thus occur all of a sudden? We had been told that many years ago the whole village had been swept away by a flood and that afterwards the houses had been rebuilt considerably nearer the hill-side. What had caused this catastrophe?

And last not least we were interested to know where the exact source of the river was situated.

All these problems inspired the desire to make



our next move up the valley instead of down, and although the Malangutti was the next item on our programme we decided first to follow the Shingshal river to its source before taking up our original project.

According to the villagers we should not be able to go much further as we should soon find the way barred by a mountain barrier. There was also some talk of a glacier lake. The lumbardar, they said, annually received a certain sum of money to send a man twice a year to report about its condition. This, of course, made us all the more curious, and we determined to go and have a look at the lake ourselves.

First, however, Franz and I took the precautionary measure of examining the contents of our boxes of supplies. We found that we were running short of most things. Our message to the store-keeper in Murkhun had had no satisfactory results, and we came to the conclusion that the only way of making it certain that our stay in the valley should run no danger of being shortened, owing to want of food, would be to send Perren down to Pasu to organise a transport of fresh supplies from the depot we had made there.

The journey over the Karun Pir would take him at least five days and five days back. He went off without further delay accompanied by the tall jemindar and four coolies. We had carefully made a list of the things we specially required.

On 17th July the rest of us started to go up the valley. We intended only to visit the mysterious lake and proposed to return to Shingshal after four or five days. However it all turned out very differently from what we had expected.

On the very first day we came upon an immense glacier emerging from a side valley to the left. We found that it was called the Yazghil glacier. It entirely filled the broad Shingshal valley, so that the river had to force its way beneath the ice. Here was the answer to the phenomenon that had so often startled us during the night. The great masses of ice borne along by the swiftly flowing current came from the advancing glacier. We first thought that this also explained the sudden rise of the water when the stupendous wall of ice had temporarily blocked its passage. On the other side, however, we found no traces of a periodic accumulation of water, so that we expected to find an answer to the problem further on.

It took us about an hour and a half to cross the broad expanse of gleaming ice-hillocks of the Yazghil and another half-hour to descend the crumbling moraine. On gaining the Shingshal valley an unexpected sight filled us with amazement. At a few miles' distance we sighted another tremendous glacier, which, however, did not issue from a side valley, but filled the head of the Shingshal valley itself. There before us lay the source of the Shingshal river.

Probably the inhabitants of the village regarded this spot as being the end of the valley just as the mariners of old thought that the horizon was the end of the world. For us, however, this end was to become a surprising beginning; the starting-point of a journey of discovery into an unknown region where there was no map to guide us, not even a single broken line to indicate the approximate position of the glaciers. No one had ever penetrated into this wild mountain stronghold of the Northern side of the Kara-Korum. Only one great glacier here was known, namely the Malangutti below Shingshal. In eager expectation we pressed forward, feeling that we were on the eve of thrilling discoveries and realising more than ever that we were indeed penetrating into one of the "most interesting but also one of the most difficult fields of exploration in the world!"

Wondering what new revelations the next day would bring, we sat listening to the booming sound of the river. Our tents were pitched in the desolate sandy waste of the bed of the stream. The hot sun beat down mercilessly; there was not a blade of grass, not a solitary tree for miles around. There was nothing to quench our thirst with, except the dirty water in the Shingshal river. But we were too excited to feel disappointed at the dreariness of our camp. On our right hand the cliffs of ice of the unknown glacier blocked the valley. Towards the West the jagged white seracs of the Yazghil

were sharply outlined against the dark rocks of the background. I could not keep my eyes from the fascinating picture they made. Nature had here reproduced the same colouring, the same effect, as one sees on an old Alpine print. It made the glacier look strangely unreal.

We went to bed at sunset, but none of us slept well: the river kept us awake. However one muffled one's ears, it was impossible not to hear its angry roar, waxing and waning, swelling with a deep, ominous note that again and again sent me to the entrance of the tent, expecting to see the rising water rushing upon us. But each time I only saw the same expanse of sand, wan and ghostly in the pale moonlight, and nothing happened.

The next morning we reached the great glacier at the head of the Shingshal valley. We first kept going along the side in a Southern direction, but soon were compelled to take to the ice, turning to the East in order to cross the glacier. It was completely covered with loose stones and dirt and we were continually forced to go up and down as a thousand hills and valleys of ice had been formed. It was extremely tiring, and though we toiled on and on, we did not seem to advance. We none of us had ever seen the like before. Even Franz was dumb with astonishment; it was the kind of nightmare glacier on which you might find yourself in a bad dream. To us, however, it was

horribly real. As soon as we had toiled up one ice-slope covered with loose stones, and all slippery underneath, we found ourselves separated from the next by a nasty little valley, and beyond there was another ice-ridge, and yet another, in endless succession.

All the time, however, we were steadily rising and getting a better view of our surroundings. At last Franz, who was scrambling on in front, stopped and looked round with a puzzled air. He signalled to us to come on quickly.

“What a glacier!” he exclaimed. “But look! there is another one and yet another!”

This was truly a most thrilling discovery. Scrambling up beside him we gazed upon an immensity of ice. Our glacier curved in a southern direction making a sharp bend, while there was another ice-filled valley parallel to it, and beyond, straight in front of us, to the East the snout of a third immense ice-stream appeared. It was as if three gigantic rivers came together, only the beds of the valleys were not filled with water, but with ice, a chaos of frozen waves. It was overwhelming, and all the more so as it was a complete surprise.

It took us more than three hours' steady going to reach the opposite edge of the glacier. Franz cut steps down the steep wall of ice, and we were delighted to find ourselves in one of the curious little moraine valleys that so frequently occur in

the Kara-Korum between the glacier and the mountain-side. The sandy, gently sloping ground was covered with shrubs bearing a profusion of beautiful purple flowers. It was an enchanting spot, and we sat down to rest and admire the view. The sky was overcast, and the mountains were half hidden in an enveloping shroud of mist. More than two hours passed before the weary coolies arrived and we could pitch our tents and set to work to prepare a meal.

We found that one of the men could give us some information about the end of the valley; the glacier lake was situated lower down, he said, between the two great glaciers which were known by the names of the Khurdopin and the Verjirab.

As twilight came upon us the clouds were gradually dissolved in the shadows of the night, and when at length the stars appeared overhead, the great white Kara-Korum giants stood out clearly against the dark background of the sky, fully revealed in their unearthly beauty. They stood there silent and majestic, guarding the secret frozen heart of the mountains, the innermost recesses, the hidden sanctuary where no human foot had trod.

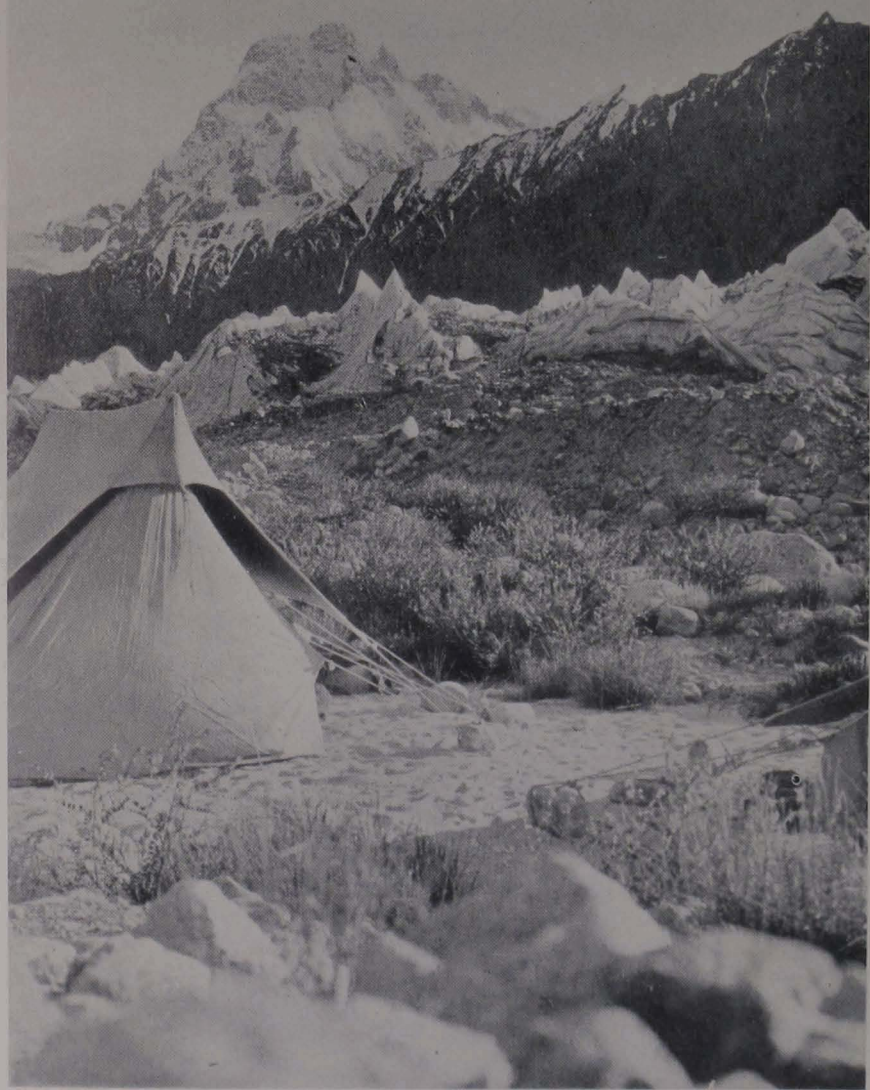
“What are these tiny mortals, venturesome intruders?” they seemed to ask.

And we could only answer that we came to them with, in our hearts, the love of the mountains and of all the wild places of the earth.

We called this camp the "Flower Camp," because of the wealth of purple blossoms growing near the edge of the glacier. It was a wonderful sight, varying infinitely according to the different effects of light and shade: most beautiful in the late afternoon, when the frail, feathery sprays were silhouetted against the pinnacles of ice, which then stood out in relief against the steep, dark wall of the rocks behind, crowned, high above, by the radiant glory of the snowy peaks. Here Nature had composed a masterpiece of contrasts: the jagged cruel ice, the sharp lines, clear and vivid, touched by the lingering golden rays of the sun, and, massed against this background, the soft warm splashes of colour of the flowers: joy blooming at the edge of the stream of death, heedless of its frozen kiss.

I got to know the "Flower Camp" well, as I stayed behind when the others started to explore the further end of the Khurdopin glacier. Patiala kept me company—Pete had remained in Shingshal to await our return in the lumbardar's garden—and the cook and Munir Khan spent long and peaceful days sleeping in the shade of the kitchen tent.

It was incredibly hot in the day-time although we were so near the ice. The camp was situated at about 10,450 feet. It was too low down to get the cool mountain air and the glare of the sun reflected on the sand was unbearable. As long as



SUNSET ON THE KHURDOPIN GLACIER.





one kept moving it was not too bad, but sitting still, exposed to the burning rays, was intolerable. My little tent with its double fly was cool and airy, and it was just wide enough to hold a table and a chair, besides the camp-bed, so that I could work quite comfortably at my flowers or writing.

The little valley was also a paradise for butterflies.

The sole cloud on the horizon was the food question. There was only some bread left and a few tins of meat: the lack of tea and sugar was the worst. Tea was our great solace, in the heat and in the cold, and we found that no other drink, either chocolate or coffee, could take its place. It was a great comfort to think that Perren would soon be back with all kinds of luxuries. I imagined him, toiling up and down the passes, urging the coolies on with their precious loads of tea and sugar, jam and biscuits, tinned fruit and vegetables. . . . And new books to read! We felt a veritable hunger for printed matter and used to hail with delight the arrival of the very old newspapers that reached us. But though we read with interest what was happening in the world, it all seemed very far away and tinged with unreality and not so very important after all—these things that were agitating Europe and her politicians. Real, very real was the thunder of the avalanches, the stone poised above our heads, the last crust of bread, the burning sun.

Two days after the others had left, some coolies

arrived from Shingshal with rations. I immediately dispatched them up the glacier, as I suspected the rations would be needed. On July the 23rd the Khurdopin party returned. My husband's narrative tells the story of their adventures.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE KHURDOPIN GLACIER

*By Ph. C. Visser*

OUR march, the first day, led us partly over the terribly broken ice, partly over endless moraines and steep slopes covered with debris. It was an expedition during which we made interesting discoveries, for, where on the map we had only found a blank space, there were gigantic, ice-clad peaks and fantastic, bold rock towers reaching a height of more than 23,000 feet. On the other side of the glacier incredibly steep walls rose, furrowed by couloirs through which all day long stones rattled and avalanches thundered. Above the high, white peaks great clouds of snow lingered, swept upwards by the terrific storm that was raging on the heights. It looked as if the mountains were steaming in the sun, though we knew that the white vapour was actually snow.

Not only was this spectacle of unrivalled mountain majesty revealed to us; we also found a row of idyllic little lakes in which were mirrored the weird structures of the ice pinnacles and cliffs of the glacier;

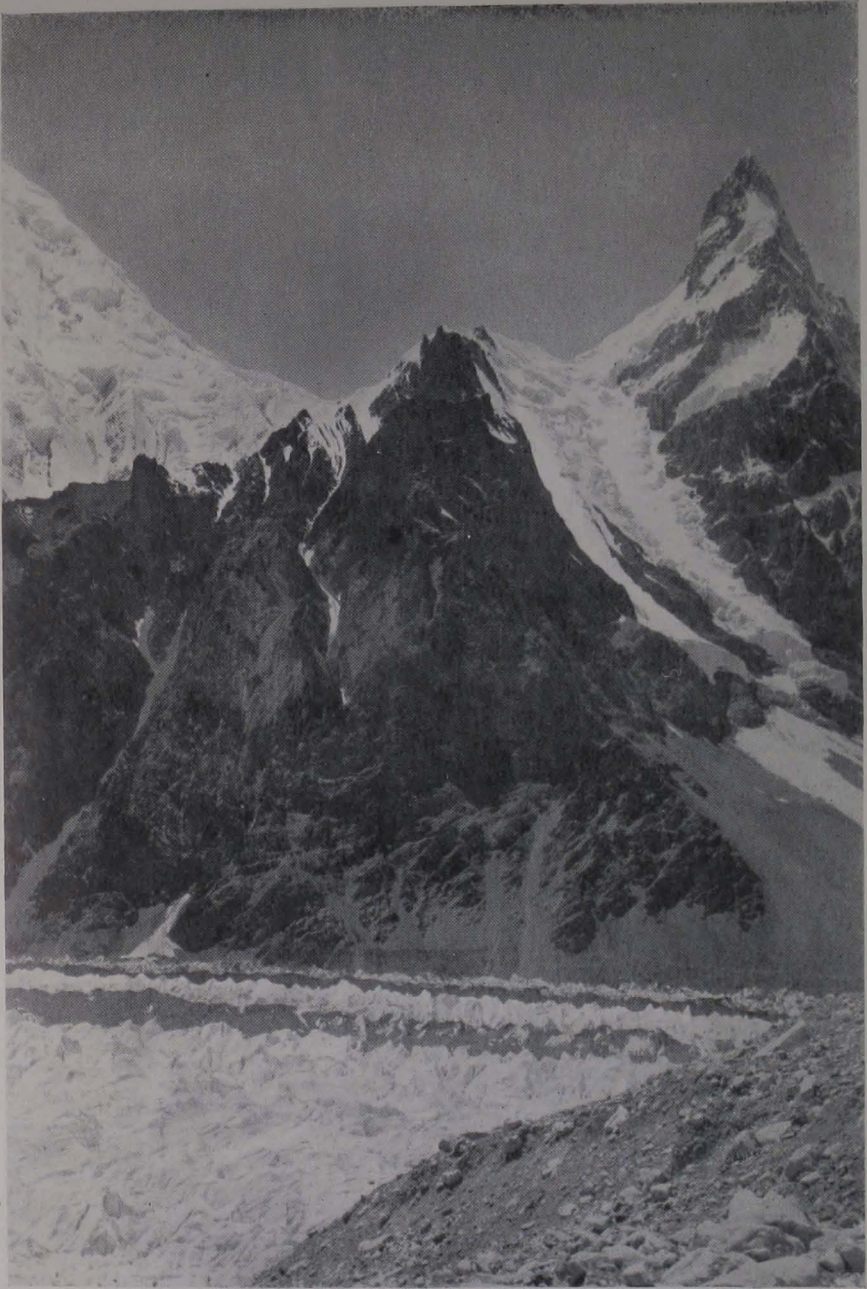
we also passed tiny, green, flower-decked oases hidden away between the stony wilderness and the menacing ice.

But it was the glacier itself that held our interest. Were we going to discover an ice-stream of great length? It seemed probable, as such considerable quantities of ice descending so far down the valley beneath the snow-line must be fed by an extensive snow-basin.

At first it had not been possible to see the glacier for more than about ten miles; it then curved in an Eastern direction. Impelled by the desire to find out what lay behind this curve, we hastened our steps, only to discover that another bend once more hid the view; but our supposition that the glacier was of great dimensions was already confirmed.

We had calculated that the next curve would be at about half an hour's distance from our camp, but when next day we resumed our journey through the stony desert at its edge, it took us three hours to get there. The scenery reached a superlative degree of terrible splendour: there was not one softly outlined mountain form to relieve the impression of Nature's relentless force: on every side the lofty, precipitous crags shut in the valley: from their steep flanks the hanging glaciers poured their cataracts of ice into the mighty stream of the main glacier. And still the end was invisible.

We noticed that the greatest quantity of ice



'A COUNTRY OF MATTERHORNS' - UNKNOWN COUNTRY AT THE HEAD OF THE SHINGSHAL VALLEY.



seemed to emerge from a southern side valley which made a sharp curve, and while Franz continued along the northern edge in order to search for a suitable camping-place, Harinxma, Afraz Gul and I proceeded to try to cross the glacier to have a look at this valley.

Lost in the immense ice wilderness we zig-zagged past sharp-pointed, slender pinnacles and threatening overhanging walls on which the sunlight seemed to burst asunder in a thousand rays; we crept through narrow ice-caverns dripping with water, where miniature rivers impetuously rushed forth. At last, surrounded on all sides by the labyrinth of crevasses, we halted and looked into the valley before us. But once more it was impossible to see the end of this branch of the glacier. From a higher plateau the ice hung suspended across the whole width of the valley, and although we cast admiring glances at the marvellous cascade, we felt that our discovery was not very satisfactory. Turning round we found that we could also overlook the other branch, which we now perceived to be the longer of the two. Here the ice also descended from a higher terrace, in a splendid ice-fall beyond which it was impossible to see. We wondered for how many miles the glacier continued and whether its secret would ever be revealed.

An ominous cracking noise disturbed our thoughts. At this time of the day the whole mountain world



seemed to come to life. Ice-towers collapsed, thundering into the bottomless chasms; great pieces of rock crashed along the dizzy heights; avalanches rushed downwards with terrific speed, raising great clouds of snow, which only gradually dispersed, filling the air with the dull, rumbling sound that we got to know so well.

Here in the heart of the mountains where all life seems to be extinct, where no animal can find nourishment, no flower survive, the primeval creative force is still at work. It is revealed in the titanic power that drives the slowly moving masses of ice as well as the feather-light, dancing snow-flakes, the power that animates the inert world of rocks and snow, and day by day, slowly but surely decomposes the mightiest mountain structures. But listening to the thunder of the avalanches in awe-struck acknowledgment of the annihilating force that destroys and ravages, we at the same time recognise here the constant, creative energy that renews and reconstructs, we glimpse the same master-hand that in the dim past modelled and remodelled the clumsy earth-folds until they resulted in the superb mountain forms which we now admire, the peaks and summits that for us have become personalities with an individual life, an individual character, capable of attracting or repulsing, of expressing the mystical meaning with which our imagination endows them.

Truly there is no place on earth where in such

a degree we still find the ancient primeval forces vibrating as in the stupendous mountain ranges of the innermost heart of Asia.

It was late in the evening when we reached our bivouac. Franz had not been able to find a suitable encampment near the glacier and had therefore pitched our tents in a northern side valley about a thousand feet higher up. We grumbled at the climb after our fatiguing expedition on the glacier, but when we arrived at the bivouac we agreed that the place had been well chosen and was most conveniently situated in view of our plans for the following day. Having realised that it was almost impossible to advance on the glacier itself, we proposed to climb up the side valley in which we now found ourselves. Maybe, we argued, we might discover a pass at its head by which we should be able to descend into another unknown valley situated to the north. Perhaps also we might find it possible to reach a high point which would give us at last the desired view of the end of the Khurdopin glacier.

The following morning we commenced our expedition along the glacier of our side valley, zig-zagging for hours together among the crevasses. As we ascended we saw a new, immense chain of mountains standing forth in the south, and right before us in a northern direction a steep snow-covered wall of rock. The glacier ended at the foot of these cliffs. If it was possible to climb them we

intended to make for the lowest notch in the ridge to see whether the gap could be used as a pass.

The first difficulty was the Bergschrund. We discovered, however, a snow bridge which, though it did not inspire much confidence, afforded a safe passage. As soon as we had reached the rocks we found that we had to take great care, as they were all loose. We advanced slowly, keeping the rope taut and at length approached the edge of the parapet. Franz was the first to sight the unknown land. I saw how he pushed his hat back and energetically scratched his head. This, we knew, was not a good sign. Hastily mounting the last few steps I found my doubts justified; looking over the edge my eye looked down a precipice of more than 3000 feet. The cliff fell sheer into a valley filled with ice.

My aneroid showed a height of 18,000 feet. Awkwardly seated on the sharp ridge we drank in the beauty of the view. It is no secret for the mountaineer that the higher one climbs, the greater becomes the impression of loftiness caused by the surrounding mountains. But I had never imagined that the great Kara-Korum peaks rising immediately around us to an altitude of nearly 25,500 feet would thus overwhelm us with the sense of their extreme height. To the north we saw the white mountain chains of the regions we had explored a few weeks ago. We recognised the summits we had discovered, the glaciers we had traversed. And we greeted

them with the pleasant sensation which the sight of old friends awakens. Over the passes far, far away in Chinese Turkestan, we saw other ranges rising like the billows of a mighty congealed ocean of ice and rocks.

There was not a breath of wind; not a single cloud sailed across the deep blue sky. But in our enjoyment of the scene a sense of defeat was mingled. We had to confess that we were beaten. There was no way out of the difficulty up here; and down below we had been caught in the immeasurable labyrinth of crevasses.

During the descent we again experienced the usual misery of the soft snow. Several times I thought that I was actually disappearing in a treacherous snow-covered chasm. "Macht nichts," said Franz, "ich halte schon!" tightening the trusty rope.

On our return in our camp we found that Khan Sahib, who had tried his luck in another direction, had been equally unsuccessful.

Much to our regret on the following day we were forced to return to the camp where my wife was waiting, as we had only taken food for six days. We should have to be content with the results we had thus far obtained.

In the evening Franz came to me. I had noticed already that he had something on his mind.

"Herr," he said, "may I try once more tomorrow to cross the big glacier and see if I can't find the end?"

I consented eagerly. Maybe he would be successful where we had failed. Khan Sahib would accompany him, while Harinxma and I conducted our caravan down the valley. We would go very slowly and Franz could rejoin us in the evening.

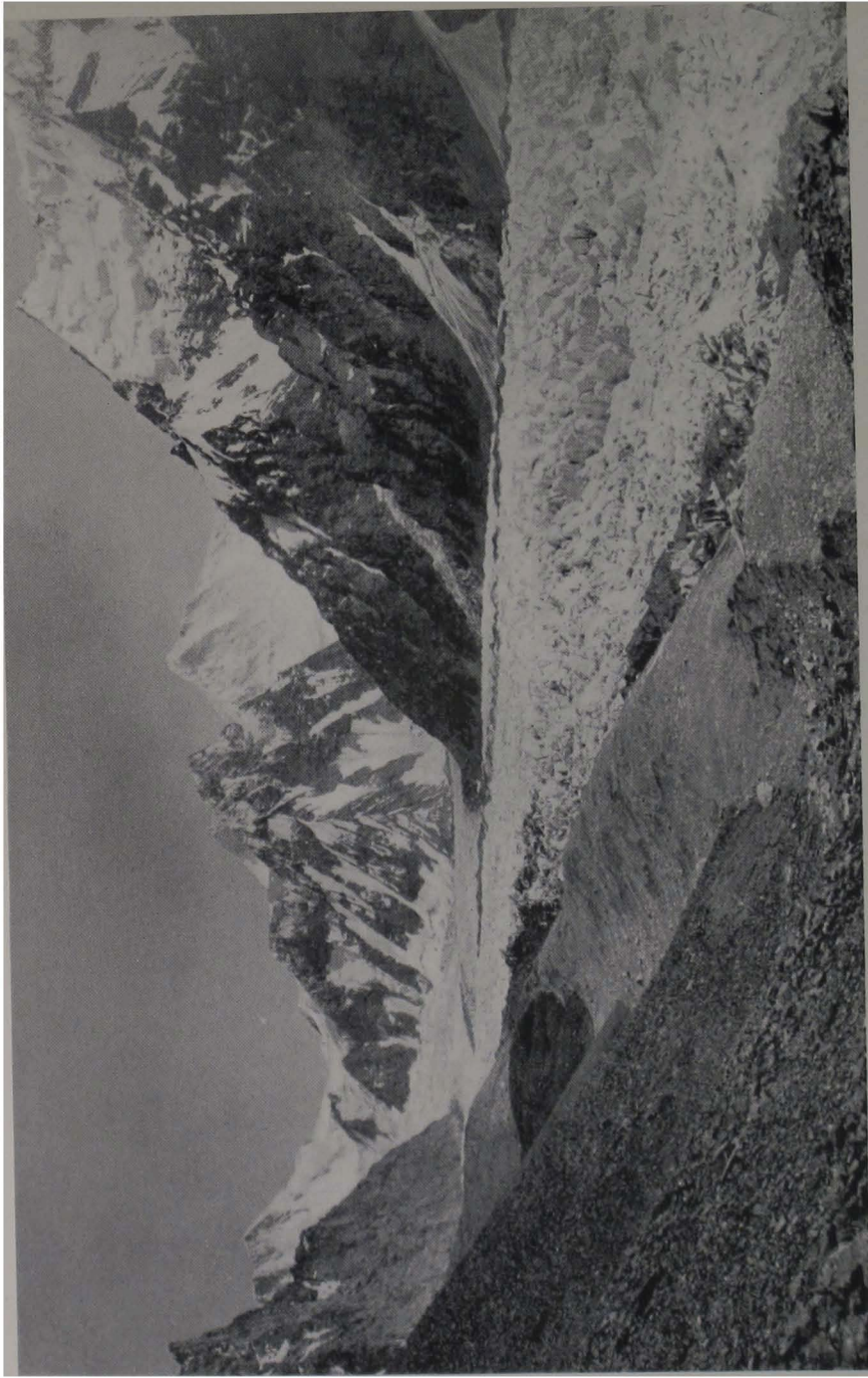
Seldom had I watched the approach of a caravan with such interest as I did on the following evening, when we sighted Franz and his little group of followers rapidly drawing near across the moraine.

Had their expedition been successful? On their arrival it appeared that Khan Sahib and Franz each had a different story to tell, judging the results from their own particular angles,—the topographical and the Alpine point of view.

“Unmöglich, Herr!” Franz called out, even before he had reached us. “Das sind halt gletscher!” And he commenced to tell us how it had taken him three full hours to cross the width of the glacier. At the other side he had tried to enter the same valley that had tempted us two days ago, but he also had been defeated.

“For the first time in my life I have known a feeling of fear on a glacier,” he said. “There were crevasses longer than a mile and 30 to 60 feet broad, immeasurably deep! Never before had I seen anything like it. One would be caught in the crevasses and never get out.”

He had climbed up the rocks, Khan Sahib breathlessly following him, and although Franz, the



ON THE KHURDOPIN GLACIER.



mountaineer, had been defeated and had not actually set his foot on the spot where it originated, it had revealed its secret to Khan Sahib, the maker of maps. From afar he had seen its end, had fixed its position and discovered that it had a length of 32 miles.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE VERJIRAB AND YAZGHIL GLACIERS

IT was a burning hot day on which the others returned from the Khurdopin. They had just arrived and I had sought shelter from the merciless glare when I heard Franz's voice outside :

“It is very dangerous here : we must move the tents at once !”

I pushed the flap aside and gazed at the peaceful scene which had given me such pleasure during the last few days. I saw nothing but the sandy little hollow tucked away between the gently undulating slopes, the graceful sprays of the purple flowers and the gleaming seracs beyond. A few butterflies were gaily chasing each other : the “little blues,” so pretty in their winged flight, so disappointingly grey when one held them in one's hand. The hot summer afternoon was fragrant with the scent of the flowers. It was very quiet. Far away one still heard the roar of the water, but it was subdued like a distant melody, faintly waxing and waning as the wandering breeze stirred the air.

I looked up at the mountain-side : surely no danger could threaten from that direction. We

were out of reach of any falling stones that might get loosened, and besides, it looked harmless enough: a dry, yellow slope dotted with tiny, greyish shrubs and here and there a solitary gnarled conifer.

“I could not sleep here for one moment,” Franz repeated with emphasis, and seeing that my husband also looked surprised, he added: “You remember, Herr, those little lakes we passed? Did you not notice that there was much more water in them to-day than on the way up?”

My husband nodded. He now remembered that it had struck him also.

“At any time,” Franz continued, “the subterranean passage under the glacier, through which the water finds an outlet, may be blocked up. A great many of the biggest seracs above one of the lakes had disappeared this morning: the ice is falling continually and who can tell what is happening right down in the glacier? If the water cannot get through there, it will come this way, and before we even had time to notice what was happening our whole camp would be swept away. Terribly treacherous they are, these glacier lakes! One never knows . . .”

I guessed that Franz was thinking of the stories of the catastrophes caused by the Märjelensee.

“Yes,” he said, “all of a sudden the water came rushing along and people were drowned in their beds like rats. The same thing might happen here at any moment. We are right down in the hollow: just where the water would come. We will put the

tents a little way up the slope—there is a nice flat place! then we shall be safe!”

We wondered whether these innocent-looking little lakes were the cause of the great flood that had destroyed the whole village of Shingshal many years ago.

Two days later, however, we found the answer to the problem. Keeping along the right bank of the ice we turned the corner into the Verjirab. Nearly the whole valley was filled by another big glacier lake; the entrance was blocked by the Khurdopin itself which pushed straight across. This lake was the one that had been mentioned by the villagers, and there was no doubt that it was a continual menace to the safety not only of the Shingshali, but also of the inhabitants of the Hunza valley. On the rocks we found traces showing that the volume of water must have been infinitely greater during certain periods; there were straight horizontal lines indicating the height it had reached. One of these lines was certainly more than 300 feet above the bottom of the valley.

With some uneasiness we stared at the capricious, treacherous lake which guarded the entrance to the Verjirab. Beyond, a stream flowed in the broad sandy stretch of ground continuing some way upwards before the black and grimy snout of the Verjirab glacier appeared.

The whole valley had a dismal, forbidding aspect: it was not surprising that the coolies did not show

much enthusiasm when Khan Sahib told them that we were not going back to Shingshal until we had entered it and explored the glacier. We feared that they were going to give us trouble again but they accepted our decision without further complaints.

On the Khurdopin glacier an amusing incident had occurred which showed what children they really were.

One evening a levy from Shingshal arrived bringing our mail. I had noticed that there had been some excitement and that great discussions took place round the fire that evening, in which the jemindar and the levy played a leading part. In the morning they announced that the levy had brought a message from the Mir: "Salaams to the Sahibs; Mir Sahib hoped that all was well, but he could not allow anyone to go any further."

The jemindar shook his unkempt, curly locks with great determination, and pointing down the valley, explained that the Mir's orders were that all the coolies had to go back.

He seemed to be very surprised that this wonderful piece of news did not immediately produce the desired effect, and that we did not break up the camp and without further delay go dashing down to Shingshal. We calmly told him that we could not think of changing our programme without the slightest reason and that we would explain this to the Mir. We prepared a letter which we ordered the levy to take to Hunza.

Four days later he reappeared, saying that he again brought a message from the Mir. "Salaams to the Sahibs; Mir Sahib was very pleased to hear that all was well, and the Sahibs were to go where they wished and could take the coolies wherever they wanted."

It was rather naïve of the levy to have forgotten that it would have taken him at least twelve days to get to Hunza and come back. When they saw that the plot had failed, the levy, taking fright, had quickly invented another message from the Mir.

We now anxiously awaited the arrival of Perren, who on his return to Shingshal would find a message telling him to join us in the Verjirab valley and to bring a sheep and a box of provisions. For the coolies we had enough rations.

The first evening we did not go further than just below the snout of the glacier. The heat of the sun reflected by the bare rocks and the sand was terrible. Fortunately Franz had discovered a kind of platform a little way up the slope where there was just enough room for us all to sit under a big overhanging rock. It was rather a perilous perch, but it was such a relief to get out of the scorching glare that we forgot the discomfort of our cramped position and were delighted at our improvised dining-room.

I could see that Franz did not like the look of the valley. I watched him staring with an anxious expression on his face at the gleaming stretch of

water we could still distinguish in the distance and I knew what he was thinking.

If the water should rise while we were on the Verjirab glacier! But still, there would always be a way out somewhere.

There were lots of "ifs" it was no good thinking about—*if* Perren did not come with the provisions . . . *if* one of us fell ill . . . *if* the coolies should take it into their heads to run away! So many "ifs" that were best banished to the back of one's mind.

As soon as the sun began to set, it became cooler. The night was even chilly, but once more the water prevented us from sleeping.

I lay awake listening to the thundering sound which filled the stillness with a dull sense of fear. Each minute it grew louder and louder. Or was it only imagination? Now certainly it was coming nearer, and I seized my slippers and tugged at the dog's chain, ready to rush out and rouse the others. But when I tore the tent open, I found that the ominous mass of water stealthily creeping upon us which I had seen in my imagination, did not yet exist in reality. The water was still far away: the sand stretched silent and blank to the river's edge. Nothing stirred in the ghostly dimness.

The Verjirab remains in our memory as the very worst glacier of the whole Kara-Korum. The difficulties of the marches were not relieved by the beauty of the scenery: it was not beautiful: it was downright ugly, desolate and dreary in the extreme.

There was no pleasant spot, not a single green thing, no glittering ice-pinnacles on which to rest the eye weary of gazing at the terrible chaos of stones and crumbling dirt. In fact there was no ice to be seen at all. The whole valley was filled with stones and boulders often of a tremendous size. The ice was underneath, hidden from view, treacherous as ever, but the gaping chasms were filled up, bridged over by stones and sand, so that the unwary traveller, thinking himself on the stable surface of the hill-side, was treading a veritable death-trap. Once Franz just sprang aside in time, feeling the apparently firm sand give way beneath his foot: a big round hole revealed a yawning abyss, and showed that there was only a thin surface crust with nothing underneath.

Franz was more indignant than alarmed. This was not fair play—it was not the thing an honest Swiss glacier would do.

It was no use getting further up the slope: the hill-side was just as treacherous as the ice, the menace of falling stones was ever present, the firmest foothold crumbled beneath one's foot.

We literally did not come across one solid rock, one flat space, during our whole march up the glacier. Wherever one put one's foot it was sure to slip away. As we laboured on, our hope that the scenery would change was not fulfilled. It remained the same monotonous, dreary, hopeless valley of death.

We were accustomed by now to scramble about among a chaos of stones, and we certainly had not expected a smooth path or even a reasonably decent track, but this was a mockery of our most pessimistic anticipations. It remained the standard by which we judged all our following experiences. If anyone grumbled on the Malangutti or on the Batura, he would instantly be reminded by one of us that it was bad, but not as bad as the Verjirab.

With some difficulty we found a place to pitch our tents, safe from exposure to falling stones. It was on the other side of the little stream that came rushing down a small nullah which we crossed in the afternoon. From the beginning we had kept to the left side of the glacier; we might have traversed to the other bank, but it looked just as hopeless.

We had been in camp about half an hour when we heard a loud noise we had not noticed previously, and climbing the stony slope which rose in front of our tents, we saw that the innocent, little "stream" had suddenly changed into a raging, muddy torrent three times as big as it had been before.

It was impossible to cross it, and we hoped that Perren would not arrive to find the way barred at the very last moment within sight of the camp. Probably a landslide had occurred somewhere above, causing the sudden deluge, for quantities of stones and mud were coming down with the water.



The cook fortunately had already filled the saucepans, for now there was only liquid mud.

It is no wonder that we had come to regard the water as the most uncertain and capricious element we had to reckon with. One day there would be a time when we would find a terrible raging flood, changing its course from minute to minute. I remember a comic-tragic scene in the Khunjirab, when on being roused in the early morning by a terrific tumult and excited cries, I saw Harinxma and Perren standing about in night attire, looking most miserable, and discovered that they had woken up to find their tents absolutely flooded. A wicked little stream, which had not existed the day before, had suddenly at daybreak commenced flowing down the hill-side right into their tents.

The next day brought us two pleasant distractions, besides the discovery of the end of the glacier. The first was the arrival of Perren with the provisions and a sheep from Shingshal; the second being Harinxma's return from a hunting expedition with two burhels. He had found a grassy place further up where there had been a whole herd of burhel.

The coolies were delighted to get their share of the meat and we were not less pleased at the abundance of good things which appeared at the evening meal.

We had found that the Verjirab glacier reached a length of about 26 miles. This important discovery was the reward for the dreary marches we had come,

and gave us new courage to face the return journey which, owing to a deceptive trick of our imagination, now seemed much shorter, though not less dangerous.

We had nearly reached the final ice-fall when we heard a loud cry of warning behind us and saw Khan Sahib's servant desperately scrambling towards the middle of the glacier. At the same time a loud, thundering noise shook the air. We stood still, but could not see anything. The sound increased. Then suddenly Franz took hold of my hand and pulled me after him up the stone-covered ice-hillocks. The others followed. Without realising exactly what was happening we ran, gasping, breathless, driven by the blind instinct of self-preservation, flying from the terrible, approaching thunder. On the highest dirt-covered ridge Franz halted.

“Kein gefahr mehr,” he cried, and we turned round to look. With a rumbling sound, as of a hundred trains, an immense stream of mud-splashed stones and rocks was flowing down a great couloir in the mountain-side. The living mass of splintering boulders crashed down with tremendous force, and having reached the foot of the cliff continued its course along the very place where we had been standing a minute ago.

We silently watched the passage of the avalanche of mud, which lasted about five minutes, a new flood continually coming down from above to increase the mighty stream; then we hurried down to our old camping-place below the tongue of the glacier.

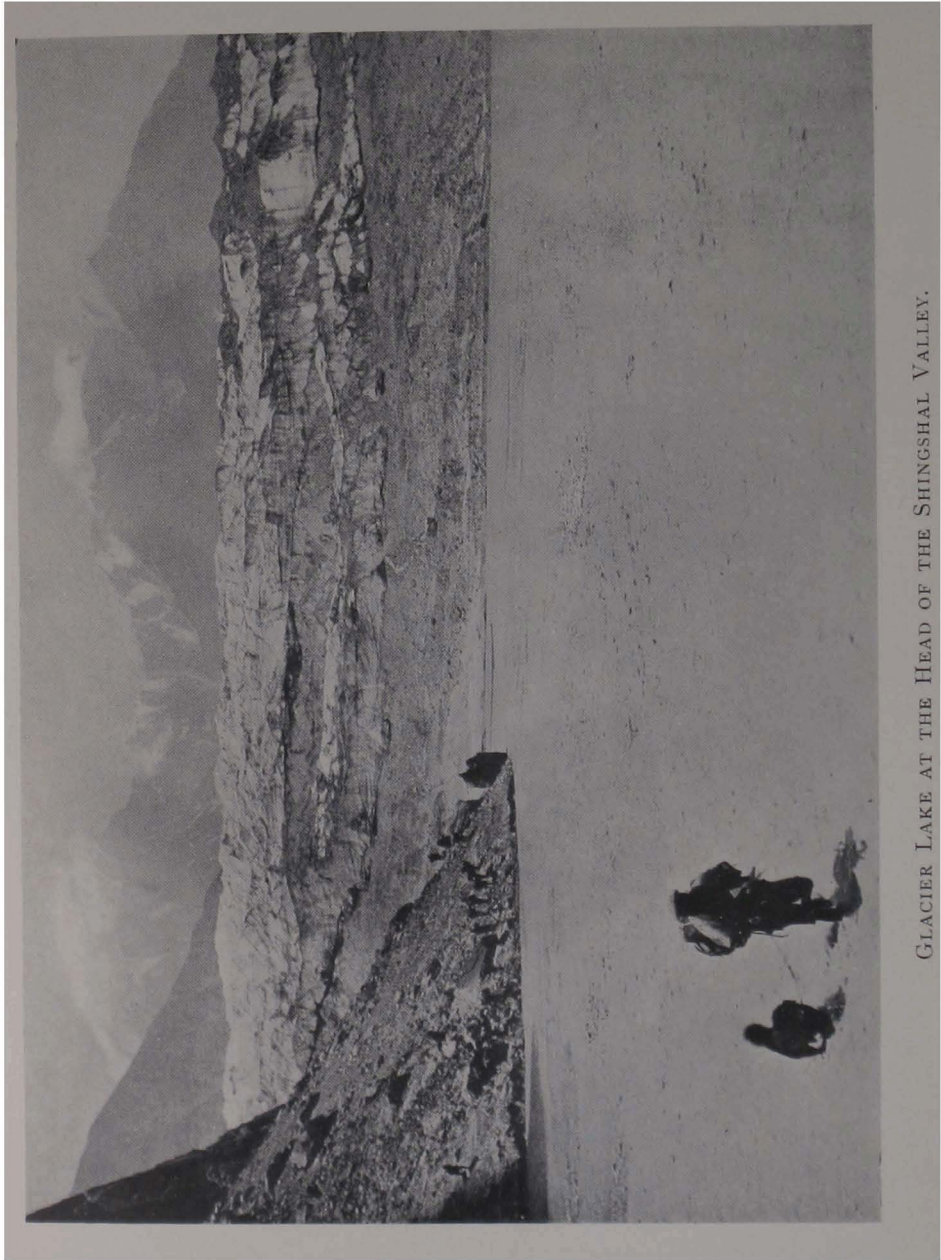
In the evening we saw another mud avalanche. Our tents were safe, but we thankfully realised that on the following day we should have seen the last of the Verjirab.

The next morning we passed the big glacier lake, and mounting the steep ice-cliff of the Khurdopin, found ourselves once more in the curious ice-labyrinth that separated us from the Shingshal valley.

We struck a new line across, fondly hoping we had found a short cut. But it proved to be a delusion: again it took us three hours to traverse the width of the ice-stream. On the other side we found our old track buried beneath heaps of stones and debris: here also the mountain goblins were getting restive. Very soon they began their game again; tiny bits of rock whistled through the air, and we hurried across the danger zone, anxiously keeping our eyes on the stone-swept slope. We had instinctively learnt to be always on the look-out: it was an unconscious gesture that fixed our glance on the hill-side above us, and I was much amused to see that my dog had also learnt the trick. He dreaded the falling stones just as much as we did.

The little hollow leading into the Shingshal valley was full of pink and white flowers and formed a pleasing contrast to the deadly monotony of the Verjirab. We hurried down, glad to return to more agreeable surroundings and to escape the ever-menacing danger of the stones and avalanches.

We had, however, hardly established our camp



GLACIER LAKE AT THE HEAD OF THE SHINGSHAL VALLEY.



on the site of our former bivouac, when we heard the stones again rattling down the slope we had just passed. A threatening black cloud of dust hung above the hill-side and drifted slowly past. The air was filled with dust and sand, the blue sky obscured, until a thick veil enveloping us completely shut out the view of the valley.

The whole afternoon and evening the stone avalanches swept the mountain. In the safety of the broad river-bed we listened in undisturbed repose, and when it grew dark, watching the coolies sitting contentedly round the camp-fires, we marvelled at the ease with which one grows accustomed to everything, even to the near vicinity of such startling phenomena as the stone avalanches of the Kara-Korum.

Only one more march separated us from Shingshal, but we decided, before returning there to visit the unknown Yazghil glacier, the snout of which we had already crossed on our way up the valley.

The Shingshali coolies told us that some grazing grounds existed on the right bank, and we found a rough track behind the crumbling side moraine which rose like a steep wall between the green hollow and the glacier. There were a few deserted stone huts, but although it was a tempting spot, we continued our march until we reached the point where the last little valley ended, abutting against

the glacier which stretched from one wall of rock to the other, a sea of torn and tortured ice.

If the Verjirab gained with us the reputation of being the ugliest glacier of Shingshal, we un-animously declared that the Yazghil deserved the prize for beauty.

Right down to where it throws itself across the thundering river, it glistens in immaculate purity, and although the Malangutti is its dangerous rival, the Yazghil presents a still more fantastic aspect of fissured ice. There is not one spot from beginning to end where its towering pinnacles and crests of frozen waves sink to a flat, unbroken surface.

The weather did not look very promising and we feared we were in for another spell of rain. All the same we resolved to go one march further in spite of the threatening clouds.

We had to take to the ice as the mountain-side dropped down in a sheer precipice and after an hour of step-cutting and zigzagging among the crevasses we once more found a way on the moraine. Here we pitched our tents at a second halting-place.

On the third day my husband with Franz and Afraz Gul managed to climb a small peak situated at the bend of the glacier where it curved in an Eastern direction. The clouds were hanging low and the snow had already begun to fall when they reached the top, but during a moment when it cleared, they had been able to see that the glacier continued endlessly, disappearing from sight in a Southern

direction. Here again we had discovered another great ice-stream.

Further progress, however, was impossible. Eighteen miles of the glacier had been visible and although it was hard to turn back without solving the problem of its origin, there was nothing else to be done. In a few hours' time the whole landscape was wreathed in clouds and the weather grew steadily worse.

The next day, making an extra long march, we reached Shingshal. The lumbardar came out to greet us and express his joy at our safe return. Instead of having been absent for three or four days as we had originally intended, our excursion to the head of the valley had lasted nearly three weeks. As Franz was fond of saying: "Man weisz halt nie!"—"one never knows!"

In our case it had certainly been true. Instead of going only two marches beyond the village we had traversed 100 miles in a totally unknown region and discovered three great new glaciers of a respective length of 32, 26 and 23 miles. And although all of us had seen many different mountain countries and had wandered about on the roof of the world in various parts of the globe, from the familiar playgrounds in the Alps and Norway to the snowy slopes of Kasbek and the great Himalayan giants, we agreed that the Verjirab and the Khurdopin outdid in terrible grandeur anything we had ever seen before, the reality here surpassing all one could dream of



mountain majesty and frightfulness, mountain glory and gloom.

It was very pleasant to find ourselves once more in the familiar orchard above the village; to see Pete again, back from his exile in the lumbardar's garden, wandering about, sticking his impudent black nose into the pots and pans; to find our tents in exactly the same place under the apricot trees. There were the low spreading branches against which one bumped one's head, and the tumbling stone walls; there was the same mysterious big hole before my tent, inviting sprained ankles and broken necks.

It had greatly intrigued me, as it looked as if it had been made on purpose. On inquiry I discovered that it was a kind of Shingshali larder. According to the ideas of the dwellers in these valleys the ghee or butter only acquires a delicate flavour after having been buried for some years in the ground. The older it is the better, declares the Hunza epicure. The result of this strange practice may well be imagined. The smell was enough to drive anyone from the vicinity of the coolies' camp when they were melting it over the fire, and though we were tempted to try it several times, as our own store of tinned butter was completely spoilt and we hopefully argued that this particular lot might prove an exception to the rule, we found it quite impossible to use.

The "chupattis" which formed the staple diet of the coolies and were made by mixing the *ata* with water and baking the resulting flat cakes in

a saucepan or on a flat stone above the fire, were quite good. We used to eat them from time to time when our own supply of bread gave out or when it too closely resembled a lump of heavy black clay to tempt even the most ravenous appetite.

Aziza bravely did his best, but Fate, the empty store-box, and the wind were too often against him. Also, in accordance with a psychological law, human nature wants what it cannot get! Never, we felt, had we fully appreciated the excellence of the humble potato or realised the true value of an ordinary egg. Beyond Hunza these delicacies were unknown, and we often regretted them as the eternal Maggi soup and dry rice appeared upon the table day after day.

I never before had felt a craving for potatoes, but as Franz said: "Man weisz halt nie!"

It was a pity the apricots were not yet ripe, but they only showed as yet as hard little green knobs among the leaves: it was still too early, although in the short time we had been away we found that the golden summer aspect of the village with its waving corn-fields had changed to a scene of busy harvesting. Many of the fields were bare already and the villagers were collecting the sheaves and bringing them to the threshing-floor.

August was beginning, and even now summer was waning. Wandering over the shorn fields we sensed the approach of autumn. The time limit was ever urging us on, and after a few days of rest

we knew that we must bid Shingshal farewell if the winter snows were not to overtake us before our task should be completed: there were the two great unknown glaciers, the Malangutti and the Batura, to be visited before the end of our journey.

The peaceful days in our apricot orchard passed all too swiftly. On the last evening it was the scene of a great tamasha.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A SHINGSHALI FAIRY-TALE

ANYONE who has travelled extensively has a rich store of memories hidden away at the back of his mind: memories of the strange scenes which have been revealed to him, of the beauties of Nature which have filled him with delight and the curious adventures which have enriched his experience. And although many impressions may have become blurred and vague, some remain like vivid pictures.

Such a picture recalls to my mind our camp at Shingshal.

It is night in the wild mountain country. Dusk has fallen in the valley, a black, impenetrable veil. There is no moon: it is very dark, very quiet. Not the slightest breeze is stirring and the flames of the huge camp-fire shoot high up above the crackling branches: ruddy, fiery tongues of flame, elfin spirits, dancing merrily, casting their fitful glow upon the gnarled trunks of the old apricot trees and the mysterious swaying shadows. The dull roar of the rushing river fills the air, but does not seem to break the silence; its constant murmur is all the more distinct because of the stillness around, its

low insistent melody accentuates the deadly quietness instead of disturbing it.

Not a sound! The proverbial pin, if it existed in Shingshal, might have been heard to drop,—for we are waiting . . . . waiting for the story-teller to begin.

Eager hands have pulled our chairs to the fire: they are the seats of honour. Franz and Perren are perched upon a fallen tree, familiar silhouettes, broad-hatted, pipe in mouth; the jemindar stands beside them, as motionless as a statue, his choga hanging in graceful folds from his broad shoulders, and crowded close together the men of Shingshal sit and stand in a wide circle round the village bard.

We have invited him to come to us to-night to tell us one of the tales with which he beguiles the dreary hours of the long winter evenings in the smoke-filled huts. The entertainment will be a lengthy one as three interpreters are needed. The lumbardar—the learned man of the village—will first translate from the Shingshal into the Hunza dialect, the jemindar from the latter into Urdu and Khan Sahib from Urdu into English.

Do we give our permission to begin? someone asks. And suddenly, in the pregnant silence, the story-teller slings his introductory phrase.

In spite of the numerous interruptions it is as if we were hearing the tale directly from the lips of the old man. Crouching by the fire, staring into the flames with an odd, unseeing look, he

pronounces the short sentences slowly, distinctly, in a monotonous, singsong voice.

Strangely fascinating it is—suggestive of many thoughts—to watch the picturesque scene, to feel all around the impenetrable gloom of the mysterious Central Asian night, brooding over the wild, desolate mountain solitude, and to note the expression of rapt attention on the faces of the listeners.

“Tell us a story!” It is the old cry we ourselves have not forgotten, although in our sophisticated civilisation we answer it differently. But here there are no theatres, no novels or cinema shows to distract and excite, to provide an escape from the dullness of daily life. There is only the ancient lore, the tradition of the treasured stories which are handed down from one generation to another. Interesting as these are from many points of view, one of their most valuable aspects is that they permit the outsider to gain a glimpse into the simple minds of the primitive folk amongst whom they originated.

“Tell us a story!”—the old, familiar cry. . . . This is the story we heard by the camp-fire in Shingshal:

Once upon a time there was a mighty king who had a son. One night in a dream the son saw a beautiful princess. She was so exceedingly lovely and charming, of such enchanting grace, that the prince instantly fell in love with her. But when he awoke and found himself alone he felt a terrible

sadness fill his heart, so that he would not even drink the tea a servant had brought him.

The king grew very anxious about his son and pondered by what means he could restore his cheerful humour. But nothing availed to distract the young prince from his sorrow, not even the promise of a wife chosen from amongst the fairest maidens of the land.

Never, said the faithful lover, could he forget the lady of his dream, and so tragic was his grief, so insistent were his prayers, that at last the king consented that he should gird his loins and, taking his trusty sword and his bow and arrow, go forth to search for his beloved, even unto the ends of the earth.

After many weary marches he came at length to a broad, swollen river. But there was no rope bridge and it was impossible to cross to the other side. Higher up he saw a glacier filling the upper part of the valley, but he could not reach it because of the great cliffs barring the way.

As he sat on the river's bank lost in sad thoughts, he suddenly became aware of a huge bird approaching him. It was so big that the prince in alarm drew an arrow and shot at it. Instead of killing the bird, however, the arrow pierced a bad abscess from which it had been suffering severe pain: the poisoned blood came spurting out of the wound, and the bird in great joy advanced towards the young man to thank him for saving its life. To

show its gratitude it told the prince that any wish of his would be granted.

“Help me to cross the river,” said the king’s son.

“That is an easy matter,” replied the bird. “I will carry you across on my back.”

When they had arrived safely on the other side, it pointed out two roads which were there, saying that one of them was the road which led to that which was good, and the other to that which was evil.

“Follow this path,” it said, indicating the first one, and giving the prince one of its feathers, it added: “If you should ever need my help, throw this feather into the fire and I will come to you.”

It then vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

The king’s son, resuming his journey, after many days reached a large city which seemed to be the capital of the kingdom. He was surprised to see that all the inhabitants wore a dejected air and to hear sounds of wailing and mourning on all sides. He asked what was the cause of the people’s sorrow and heard that a devil had kidnapped the beautiful daughter of the king. The old chief was bowed down with grief, and in his despair he had promised that the man who brought his daughter back in safety should become his son-in-law, besides receiving a large portion of the realm.

The prince, touched by the pitiable sight of the sorrowing father, declared that he would try to rescue the girl, even if it should cost him his life. He asked



to be given seven men and a long rope, having heard that the devil had disappeared with his victim into a dark hole in the ground. He tied the rope round his waist, and instructing the men to hold on firmly and on no account to leave the mouth of the pit, he began the descent.

He soon found himself in a dark cavern. At the end of a long passage he distinguished a faint light, and as he approached, stumbling in the dark, the soft glow increased until he saw in its radiance the features of a beautiful woman. Imagine his surprise and his joy when in the king's daughter he had set out to rescue he beheld the beloved princess of his dream. On her knees the head of the one-eyed devil was pillowed. He was fast asleep.

“Go away,” the princess whispered, “you are in great danger here.”

But the king's son refused to go without her. He carefully put a stone under the sleeping devil's head, and taking the princess in his arms he hurried along with his fair burden to the bottom of the pit; then, tying the rope round her waist, he gave the signal and the seven strong men began to pull. As soon as she was in safety they let down the rope again. But the prince was careful to test the good-will of the men above before trusting himself to the rope, so he fastened a heavy piece of wood on to it before going up himself, and waited to see what would happen. When it was half-way up, it suddenly came crashing down. The rope had been cut by the

treacherous men above, who, quarrelling violently, ran to the king, each saying that he had saved the princess and had the right to claim the reward.

In the meantime the prince was sitting in despair in the dark pit. Suddenly he remembered the amiable bird and its promise of help. He made a fire and threw the feather into the flames. The next moment he heard the flapping of wings. The great bird appeared and the prince was soon carried upwards towards the daylight. The king received him with great rejoicing and gratitude. His daughter had already denounced the treacherous scoundrels who had tried to kill him, and had told her father the true tale of the rescue. And thus after many difficulties and tribulations the prince won his beautiful princess, and they lived happily ever afterwards on the land the king had given them.

With a sigh of relief we all heard the happy ending. It struck us that the story might have been taken from Grimm's fairy-tales: it is not only the Shingshali who love to hear about mighty kings and brave princes and beautiful princesses.

The tamasha that evening lasted far into the night.

The next items on the programme were Hunza songs and dances. The music has a charm all its own. The only two instruments Shingshal could produce were a kind of primitive mandolin and a huge kettle-drum, the latter proving to be a most

effective accompaniment when the dancing began. It reminded me of a jazz band at home; the Shing-shali who played it would have been a wonderful asset to the "Yellow Yappers" or the "Pennsylvania Serenaders."

The rhythm is kept up wonderfully. The spectators sit in a large circle all round the ring: one of them starts the melody, which is taken up by the others, all clapping their hands, beating time and swaying their bodies to the measure. When they are well started, the dancer, as if moved by a sudden impulse, gracefully leaps into the open space, and commences circling round and round, curving his arms, lifting them above his head, swaying and bending as he pirouettes and turns. Sometimes the dance is stately and slow, sometimes it steadily gets quicker and quicker, the drum begins to beat furiously, the surging grows louder; with fierce exaltation the refrain is repeated again and again. Gradually the wild chant casts its spell on the singers and the dancer alike; louder and louder sounds the chorus. Eagerly bending forward the men watch the solitary figure whirling madly to the exultant rhythm; a wave of strange, fierce excitement passes round the circle, as they urge the dancer on and on, until the climax is reached, and he falls back exhausted.

What is the magic of rhythm, passion-inspiring, inflaming the hearts of men? Who shall solve its mystery? Who shall deny its power to quicken the

pulses and excite to warlike ardour and savage lust?  
To drive to exaltation akin to madness?

Thus in the olden days, to the furious beating of the tom-toms, did the tribesmen answer the call of war.

Several of the songs we heard were those sung on the occasion of a marriage festival, beginning with the words :

“In the name of God  
We wish happiness.  
All work is God’s work.  
We know that God will help us.”

The language of Shingshal and the upper part of the Hunza valley is quite different from that which is spoken in Baltit. It contains many Turki words. The inhabitants of the part of the country stretching from Gulmit to the passes over the Hindu Kush, the district called Gujhal, originally came from the Afghan province of Wakhan, and still speak their own dialect. Kanjut or Hunza proper is inhabited by Dards of the Yeshkun caste speaking Burishushki.

We thus find a narrow strip of country inhabited by an Aryan race, surrounded on all sides by Mongolians. The true origin of the Hunza and Nagar people has long been a mystery to the ethnologist. Alexander the Great, the mighty Iskander, plays a significant part in the tradition of the Hunza and Nagar folk. In a conversation with the Mir of Nagar concerning the origin of his family he most emphatically claimed to be a descendant of the

great warrior himself. I believe he added something about family papers by which he could prove it, but which unfortunately had been lost, a sad case of the missing link, which is not confined to Hunza and Nagar.

We were very much interested in any information we could glean during our short stay in the country concerning the traditions, ceremonies and customs of the dwellers in these remote valleys. It was a tempting subject, but our sojourn amongst them was too brief to give us the opportunity of learning much about it.

On one occasion when I was passing through Gilgit I asked to be told about the fairies, the belief in which still exists. I received the quaint reply that as a real fairy had now come among them they were no longer interested in the fairies of their own country, a most gracefully turned compliment, which thwarted my folkloristic researches.

Religion, with these Mohammedans of the Maulai sect, who acknowledge the Agha Khan in Bombay as their spiritual chief and reject the Koran, plays a very small part in their daily lives.

We never noticed any signs of it among our coolies, excepting the wearing of charms and amulets. In Shingshal there was a mud hut rather more spacious than the others, with carved wooden door-posts, which they told us was the Ziarat or place of worship, but it was always shut. Once or twice we came across a heap of stones crowned

by ibex horns and tattered flags, which marked the burial-place of a holy man.

In the Hunza valley the women seemed to go about freely, but in Shingshal they were either of a more retiring nature or more severely guarded by the men. We occasionally caught a glimpse of one or two in the fields, but they generally fled as soon as they saw us approaching. We met hardly any children: probably many of them were up on the alp, as during the summer the village is deserted by part of the population, especially the women and children, who accompany the flocks of sheep and goats to the grazing grounds, which are often situated at a considerable elevation. Life must be pleasant on these beautiful alps at the foot of the glaciers in the fresh, invigorating air, where the cool breeze tempers the glare of the hot sun, and the flocks wander idly about on the sweet-scented fragrant pastures. The gloom of the ice-bound valley in the winter must be all the more striking. In January and February it is very cold in Shingshal, and the snow in the village often reaches a depth of three or four feet. This is the season for weaving the thick kind of home-spun, light-coloured almost white cloth, of which the chogas are fashioned. We heard on more than one occasion that the Shingshal material is greatly prized, and it seems to be of particularly good quality.

As the people have no means of lighting their

interiors except by the smoking wood fires, the short daylight time must pass all too quickly, and the long hours of darkness and enforced idleness must seem endless.

In the winter the story-teller is in great demand ; he, together with the village mandolin and the kettle-drum, has to provide all the entertainment.

Weddings are great occasions for merry-making. The boys are married when they are about sixteen, the girls between the age of six and twelve. The Shingshali seek their wives among their own folk and also import them from Gulmit and other villages of Gujhal, but not from Hunza. The men generally have two or more wives.

Another occasion for feasting and rejoicing is the first day of the harvesting. We had already noticed that on several of the threshing - floors a small sheaf of corn had been tied to the central post. If it had been in Sweden at Christmas-time we should have recognised it as the sheaf that is placed in front of every house for the birds. It looked exactly like it. The explanation was that the first bundle of the stalks of corn that are cut is divided into two parts. The grain of one half is eaten with the meat that is partaken of at the festive meal, while the other half is tied to the post on the threshing-floor, where it serves as a good omen. The grain is afterwards strewn over the rest of the corn.

During the autumn the store of wood for the

winter must be fetched from the nullahs along the glaciers, or from the precipitous mountain slopes where, perched on some dizzy ledge or jammed in a narrow cleft between the rocks, a solitary twisted conifer defies the storms. Trees will thus be found growing sometimes in the most unexpected places up to a height of 13,000 feet, and the men diligently search the hill-side far and wide for wood. We came upon traces of their labour a great distance from the villages. The men were very clever at getting down the trees. During the quiet afternoons in camp I used to hear their voices echoing and re-echoing against the cliffs, where they were visible, clinging like monkeys on to some perilous hold above the precipice, involved in wonderful manœuvres to secure the precious wood which at length came crashing down the face of the rock.

Shingshal, although a large community according to Hunza standards, does not possess the maidan or open space of ground which is nearly always to be found even in the tiniest village, and which is used for the favourite game of polo. As a horse seems to be an unknown animal in Shingshal,—indeed there is no pass by which even the most acrobatically inclined pony could enter the valley—a polo-ground would not be of much use, and the Shingshali are deprived of one of the most popular amusements of the country. We were, however, surprised to find that another kind of sport was familiar to them, several of our coolies enjoying a swim—and swimming



remarkably well!—in the little glacier lake above our camp on the Khurdopin glacier.

It was noticeable that the Shingshali and the Hunza men kept most strictly apart. They were all of them fond of a good fight now and then, when some quarrel arose. On one occasion they became so violent, hurling stones through the air and knocking each other about with their sticks, that Khan Sahib in great agitation came running to my husband, begging him to intervene as he feared that there would be bloodshed. They were soon brought to reason, but a few had bleeding wounds which had to be attended to. This caused the victims great satisfaction, as there was nothing they loved so much as receiving a pill or a plaster out of the medicine-chest.

One man had dealt another coolie a particularly nasty blow on the head. In order to punish the culprit my husband ordered him to come up and with his own hands to wash and bandage the wound he had inflicted. He did so with a shamefaced air, while his comrades sat around watching the proceedings with the greatest interest, all the time roaring with laughter at his discomfiture.

At times they might be difficult to deal with, but we found that these primitive folk had the saving grace of a sense of humour which often showed in their quaint speeches. They were also absolutely honest, although whether this was prompted by motives of fear or was a genuine virtue, it is im-

possible to tell. But we never missed a single thing during all the months we wandered about the country.

On August the 8th our stay in Shingshal was brought to an end and we once more resumed our journey. This time we turned westwards down the valley towards the great Malangutti glacier, which reaches the main valley about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles below Shingshal. Coming from the village it is not visible until the very last moment: like the Batura it is hidden away behind the high walls of its moraines.

There is no track along a great part of the valley, and the only "road" is the bed of the river, a chaos of tumbling stones. As one approaches the spot where the mighty ice-flow descends to the edge of the stream, there is a long, sandy stretch to be traversed, followed by a short but stiff grind up the moraine.

We had started late, as the first day of marching unavoidably involves a lot of wearisome business before the caravan once more is set in motion. There are the farewell salaams and the farewell baksheesh to be distributed; the last arrangements to be made, while the dismantled camp assumes a forlorn and tragic air, with the village children searching for treasures among the abandoned rubbish and the coolies squabbling about the loads.

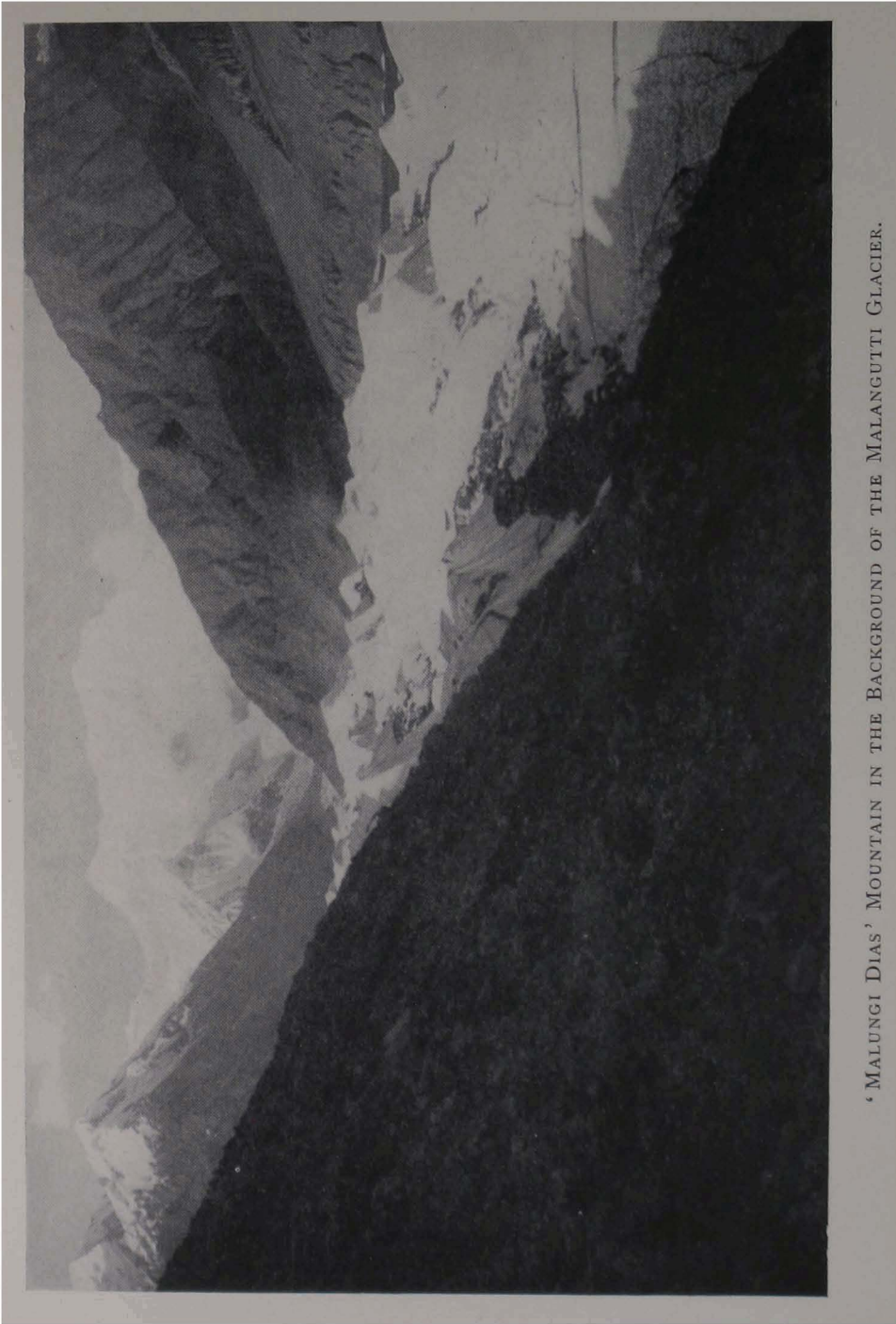
The sun was almost setting before we saw the last stragglers starting on the climb up the moraine; it was too late to go much further and we therefore

decided to remain in the little valley on the right bank of the ice-stream.

General Cockerill, on his expedition to Shing-shal in 1892, had seen a conspicuous peak of great height situated at the end of the Malangutti glacier and had received the impression that the glacier did not terminate at the foot of the mountain but, curving round it, flowed down from the southern side. If this supposition should prove to be correct the glacier must be of great dimensions. Major Mason afterwards saw the same peak from two fixed points above the Hunza valley, so that he could fix the height, which was found to be 25,668 feet, thus probably being the highest summit west of K<sup>2</sup>.

The Survey of India was particularly anxious to obtain more accurate information about the Malangutti, and we also were very curious to see it. The view from the site of our camp, however, was disappointing, and on climbing the slope which hid the glacier from us, we discovered that only part of it was visible. There were some fine seracs in the direction of the river, but it did not look as difficult as the Yazghil and the Khurdopin. The mountains were particularly disappointing and we could not make out which could be the "Malangi Dias," neither did our inquiries among the coolies result in any helpful information.

As soon as the sun had withdrawn it grew chilly, and I had just closed the tent when I heard



'MALUNGI DIAS' MOUNTAIN IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE MALANGUTTI GLACIER.



my husband calling to me to look outside. Above the peaks which formed the background of the glacier the clouds had partly drifted away, suddenly revealing a vision of ethereal beauty: a great snow mountain of incredible height. It looked so unearthly, so sublime, wreathed by the veils of mist, so translucent in its rose and golden glory of the setting sun, that we could hardly believe that it was a real mountain.

The peaks in the foreground seemed suddenly dwarfed now that the eye could compare their proportions to the masses of snow towering above them: they who had first so proudly reared their heads, that we had imagined one among their number to be the Malangi Dias itself, now were humbled before the monarch of mountains and crouched at its foot in the attitude of insignificant courtiers bowing low before the true majesty of the highest of all.

Only for a few minutes the veil was rent asunder, and as suddenly as they had dispersed the drifting clouds were massed together, obscuring the radiant vision which we had greeted in amazed silence.

But the momentary glimpse, short though it had been, had sufficed to reveal to us the true "Malangi Dias."

Khan Sahib had also seen the peak, and pointing it out to the coolies, had heard from them the name by which it was known in Shingshal, which is Dasto Ghil. This, in their language, signifies the stone

wall which they build to protect their flocks, and the mountain is thus named because it has the same shape.

The glacier is called Malangutti, while the word "Yaz" means snow or ice. When General Cockerill asked the mountain's name he probably pointed up the glacier and was told that it was called Malangutti Yaz, which word he understood as Malangi Dias. This easily explains the misunderstanding.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE MALANGUTTI GLACIER

THE next morning we started to cross the glacier. It was almost flat and in spite of the tremendous seracs and several very broad crevasses quite easy to traverse. The ordinary route from Shingshal to Hunza crosses the ice lower down, but perhaps in the winter it is possible to avoid the glacier by marching in the river-bed.

It was not covered with dirt like the Khurdopin and the Verjirab, but was beautifully clean. We had only to cut a few steps. Half-way across we found a curious hole opening in a great wall of ice. It looked exactly like the artificially made ice-caves which are one of the attractions visited by the tourists of Grindelwald and Chamonix. The ice-cave of the Malangutti proved to be a tunnel: it was just wide and high enough to leave sufficient space to walk through it, and was of a wonderful blue colour. A diminutive stream rushed along at the bottom. We emerged into the daylight through a hole at the other end.

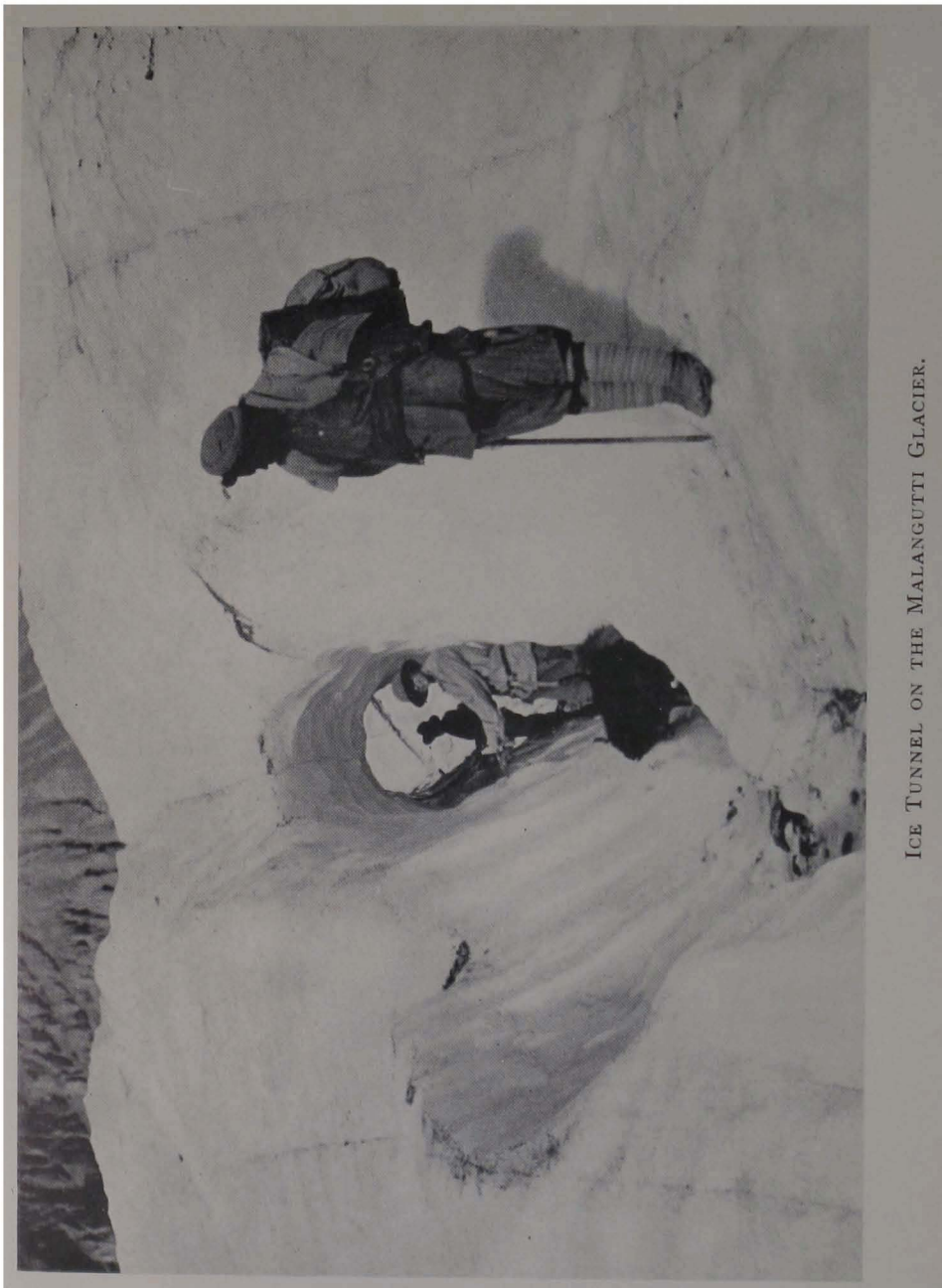
The Dasto Ghil was still wreathed in clouds and



we did not get a good view of the mountain and the upper part of the glacier that day.

About a mile and a half above the Shingshal valley we struck the lateral moraine on the left bank and descending along the stony slope found ourselves in an enchanting little paradise. There were thick groves of rose-bushes, which grew here to a height of more than 10 feet, and although the real flowering season must be in June and the beginning of July, many of the trees still bore the last lingering roses of summer. These were mostly pink, but there were a few white ones. I wished I could have seen the place six weeks earlier; it had surely been a wonderful sight. As it was, it was charming enough. The thick shrubs and dense undergrowth made the little glen a favourite haunt for a crowd of feathered and furry denizens of the woods. Birds flew twittering into the air, and hares scampered away at our approach. A lovely, sparkling stream, crystal clear, meandered down the gently undulating valley; the grass was a thick, green carpet, an unaccustomed luxury to tired feet, sore and blistered and cut by endless stones and moraines. It was too good to be true, and we felt that we could not drag our protesting coolies past such an ideal camping-place to the howling wilderness beyond.

We spent a peaceful afternoon in this sylvan retreat, reclining in the shade by the bubbling stream, for once free from anxiety and the fear that our camp might be overwhelmed either by avalanches or floods.



ICE TUNNEL ON THE MALANGUTTI GLACIER.



The next day we found that we could still follow the little valley upwards, for about an hour, until it ceased abruptly on the top of a crumbling crest falling sheer into the yawning chasms below, as if cut by a knife. We climbed up the steep wall of the moraine on our left-hand side and peeped over the edge. There was a perpendicular drop of about 50 feet down to the glacier and a big crevasse at the foot.

It appeared to be a hopeless impasse and we sat down dejectedly at the top. The coolies came up, one by one, and glanced in dismay down the precipice, while the jemindar, leaning on his staff in a picturesque attitude, gave a long speech in which he impressed upon us the folly of going any further, as we should find no place to pitch our tents, and neither wood nor water. No one ever went there, he said; in fact there was nothing! An exceedingly logical argument this, and true enough, from his point of view. There was indeed nothing but rocks and snow and ice, which, strange as it must have seemed to the jemindar, was exactly what we were seeking: the rocks and snow and ice of the Malangutti.

At this point, however, the glacier seemed to have erected an impassable barrier. Wondering what to do next, we remained sitting disconsolately on the stony ridge surrounded by the groups of coolies, who had thrown off their heavy loads and rested their tired backs against the rocks.

“ Franz, whatever are you doing ? ” I cried, as I suddenly noticed the broad-brimmed hat of our guide disappearing over the edge of the precipice. Peeping over the parapet I saw him holding on to the top of the ledge with one hand and hacking away at the hard mixture of sun-baked clay and pebbles as if it were a wall of ice.

“ It will go here, ” was all he said, chopping at the treacherous stuff. We watched him anxiously. At last he had made a series of pigeon-holes right down to the bottom, where he landed upon the ice and beckoned to us to follow.

It was all very well for Franz, down below, to tell us to hurry up, but we each in turn gazed doubtfully at the precipitous line of descent and retired one by one to our perch upon the ridge.

However, as we could not remain there all day long, I scrambled over the edge of the cliff and with the thought “ now or never, ” placed my foot in the first step. The footholds were uneven and slippery besides having a treacherous tendency to crumble away and leave one suspended awkwardly in the air. One bit especially, where it was necessary to turn round and change the direction in which one had been going, made a clumsy, two-legged mortal envy the lizards darting so merrily up and down the sun-warmed rocks.

Whenever I looked up I saw the long row of the coolies' heads peeping over the ridge ; between them the arched, black nose of Pete, who was an

interested spectator, and the frightened face of Khan Sahib's cook, poor Abdul Ali.

The lower notches were easier and I soon joined Franz on the glacier where we watched the descent of the others. Pete and Patiala did not make any fuss at all—although it was a remarkable feat for a dog! They had become quite expert mountaineers and always followed exactly in the steps. But the strange sheep who accompanied us,—I dared not inquire what would be its ultimate fate—made frantic efforts to evade the ordeal and nearly knocked a coolie over the edge of the precipice in its terrified struggles to escape. It had to be ignominiously carried down the wall, Pete looking on with a superior air.

I wished I had some cinema apparatus with me: the jemindar taking hold of Khan Sahib's feet and carefully inserting them in the holes would have made a wonderful picture.

On the ice we found that we could advance without difficulty and for the next two hours we plodded steadily along keeping as near to the left edge as possible, marvelling all the while at the wonderful view. As the panorama widened the surrounding mountains seemed to increase in height and the extensive range of the glistening snow-fields of the Dasto Ghil became apparent. The sharp aiguilles on the other side of the Shingshal valley seemed to rise straight from the glacier and it was hard to believe that the broad river existed there, flowing

at the foot of the frowning crags which pierced the cloudless blue sky.

In a hollow where a glacier stream rushed forth we stopped to quench our thirst and examine the contents of the tiffin basket. This was always one of the most pleasant moments of the day, and the lunch hours in the Kara-Korum conjure before my mind's eye visions of delightful spots, with Kalbi casting down his load heaving a sigh of relief, and Patiala, his coat covered with dust, and his tongue hanging out of his mouth, rushing up to seek a patch of shade by my side. Sometimes it was a niche among the rocks, where the slightest unforeseen movement would have sent one tumbling down the precipice; sometimes it was in a sandy cove by the rushing stream, where there was room to recline in the most luxurious way; sometimes it was just simply upon the ice, with the knobbly, gleaming wall of a serac to lean one's back against, but always with the magnificent mountain country all around to feast one's eyes upon and make one forget the unappetising meal of dry crusts of bread. It was not always as bad as that however; sometimes the tiffin basket would reveal a wonderful assortment of delicacies: a tasty bit of cold ram chikor,<sup>1</sup> tinned rye bread and the crowning treat of a tin of fruit, peaches, strawberries and cherries floating in their own sweet syrup. Then with a satisfied sigh Franz would survey the last crumbs and bones lying about, and taking out

<sup>1</sup> Ram chikor = hill partridge.

his pipe, solemnly announce that it had been "a good lunch."

I would fain have lingered longer in these charming nooks, but the uncertainty as to how far we might have to extend the day's march and where the next suitable camping-place would be found, generally urged us onwards long before I had exhausted the delights of the mid-day halt.

On the first day, however, of our expedition up the Malangutti, Franz had already from afar espied a small green patch on the rocks above the glacier, which, if we could reach it, would certainly prove to be a suitable site for an encampment. We had even detected a tree which would provide the necessary fuel. A rather risky passage up a steep ice-slope under some tottering seracs brought us to the foot of the cliff, which we speedily climbed, emerging on to a kind of little, grassy plateau. The sun had become unbearably hot and we fled into the welcome shade of a solitary rose-bush which we still found growing at this height. The little plateau was situated at about 12,000 feet, the last verdant spot jutting into the wilderness of stones and ice.

While the tents were being set up, we continued a short way along the ridge to get a better view of our surroundings. The Dasto Ghil, seen from this point, did not form one single peak as we had imagined from below, but in reality appeared to be a broad chain with three summits rising from the ridge. It towered at the end of the ice-filled



valley like a stupendous barrier and nowhere did its glistening ramparts show a vulnerable point. The vague hope we had harboured that an attack upon its virgin snows might be possible, became fainter and fainter as we gazed at the great wall of ice.

Although the lower portion of the glacier did not present unsurmountable difficulties, higher up it became terribly broken. Cascades of ice hung from a terrace half-way up the great mountain wall and descended to its base: the final slopes leading to the summit seemed to be less steep but the whole face was swept by avalanches.

Together with Franz we discussed imaginary routes. As he pointed out, although one might be able to climb the upper part, it would not be possible to reach the first terraced plateau above the great ice-cliffs without being exposed to continual danger from avalanches. We realised that the Malangi Dias had nothing to fear, on this side at least, from our invasion.

The glacier valley seemed to curve in a western direction, and as it was most important to know how far it continued Franz and Perren went out on a reconnoitring expedition the next morning. On their return they told us that they had seen that there was no valley beyond the bend, but a kind of amphitheatre surrounded on three sides by perpendicular walls of rock. They had more interesting news to tell. Our supposition that the

Malangutti glacier did not curve round the mountain in an eastern direction towards the region situated at its southern base seemed to be confirmed by Franz's observations. From our camp we had already noticed that the ridge running eastwards from the summit did not become much lower.

It certainly did not give one the impression that a valley was situated there, out of which the glacier could come. All we could see was a very high, not very conspicuous notch or gap where the glacier might possibly begin. I calculated that the height of this pass must be about 24,000 feet. If the ice-stream rose beyond this gap the basin lying behind it would necessarily be higher than 24,000 feet and would be surrounded by mountains not less than 25,000 and 26,000 feet high, which appeared to be very unlikely. Neither had the guides been able to discover to the east a valley leading to the southern side of the great mountain.

On the other hand if our supposition was correct, what could then lie behind the Dasto Ghil? According to the maps of Sir Martin Conway and the Workmans who had explored the Hispar glacier situated to the south of the main range of the Kara-Korum, the watershed was further south and the Malangi Dias with the neighbouring peaks formed a separate and quite different chain. From a geographical point of view it was therefore valuable to discover what was situated between these two ranges. It certainly

must be filled by a region of ice and snow. If the investigations of the above-mentioned explorers were correct, this area could only drain towards the east in the Yazghil glacier.

The only means of answering the problem was to try in some way or other to reach a point from which a view of the region between the two ranges could be obtained. From the Shingshal side, however, this was clearly impossible. The northern slopes of the Kara-Korum chain present the aspect of one continuous precipice: the cliffs seem to be cut off with a knife and the glaciers at their feet are broken to such a degree that the wildest flight of the imagination cannot picture the chaos of seracs and crevasses they present.

The only possible chance of succeeding would be to make a venture from the Hispar side, starting from Nagar, situated opposite Baltit, the capital of Hunza.

We decided that it certainly would be worth while to attempt to carry out this plan, if time and other circumstances permitted it, after having finished the task we had set ourselves on the Batura.

Although we had discovered that an attempt to reach a summit or a pass on the Dasto Ghil would be of no avail, we wanted to try to bring our camp one or two marches higher up for purposes of topographical investigation. But the next morning when we looked outside our tents at day-

break we saw a dense grey pall of mist hanging over the glacier and in the afternoon a most depressing drizzle of rain began to fall. The weather which had looked so promising the day before had changed completely. Perren had returned from an expedition to the other side of the glacier with an ibex, so that it was particularly bad luck, now that we had an abundance of supplies and the necessary equipment and warm clothing for the coolies—we had ordered this to be brought up from Murkhun — to find ourselves unable to do anything because of the threatening condition of the weather. We decided to wait one or two days more, hoping that it would clear up.

It actually stopped raining for a short time and the sky at sunset was suffused with a pale primrose tint, the lower peaks emerging from the rifts in the clouds and gleaming faintly in the strange, wan light against the rain-washed sky, but soon the weather grew worse again. All night long we heard the rattling stones, the sudden crash of the falling seracs and the dull roar of the snow avalanches. The mountain giants were at play.

The dawn broke dull and cheerless. It was not raining however and a good breakfast with a comforting cup of tea and a wonderful dish of ibex liver, fried in tomato sauce, tended to raise our forlorn spirits. We shut out the damp, cold world, brought out our books and snuggling into the soft warmth of fur rugs and chogas and sleeping-bags,

blessed the cosy interiors of our tents. An occasional glimpse outside showed us nothing but grey mist and clouds, while it grew steadily colder. The Malangi Dias had veiled its face and was no more visible; dreary gloom, sinister and oppressive, heavy clouded, leaden grey, brooded over the wild glacier region.

Towards the evening it began to snow. Franz, who all day long had anxiously listened to the eternal cannonade of the mountains and watched the slopes above with critical apprehension, came to warn us that it would be desirable to seek another site for our encampment. Had it kept dry we would not have run any risk, but the rain, loosening the stones, was likely to bring down avalanches and our tents were in a dangerous position.

It was exceedingly annoying to have to move our belongings at this late hour. It was nearly dark and the snow was falling fast. The grumbling coolies carried the boxes and bundles up to the only safe spot we had been able to find, about 600 feet higher up, on an old secondary side moraine where we were out of reach of stones coming down the mountain-side and were protected by the ridge of the lateral moraine.

The ground was slanting and we had to pitch the tents in a puddle of mud; everything was soaking and we felt thoroughly miserable, shivering on the snowy moraine while the servants arranged our beds

by the light of the lantern. Khan Sahib, either prompted by the fatalism of the Islam or unwilling to be disturbed at this inconvenient moment, announced that he was not going to move his tent. My husband insisted, however, that he should do so. It proved to be a wise precaution for in the early morning next day we saw the stones rattling merrily down the slope and sweeping over the former site of Khan Sahib's bivouac. The next moment a great rock tumbled down on the sangar, the wall made of heaped stones surrounding an enclosure, behind which the coolies had been sleeping.

We spent an uncomfortable night and found in the morning that a considerable amount of snow had fallen on the higher peaks, so that, in spite of the improvement in the weather,—the rain had ceased—there was no question of advancing.

Taking a last look at our surroundings we packed up our belongings and once more turned towards the Shingshal valley. The coolies did not disguise their satisfaction at the prospect of quitting the inhospitable Malangutti and hurried downwards as fast as their legs could carry them. We passed our little green valley, which looked as enchanting as ever, and halted for the night a mile or so lower down in a secluded spot near the snout of the glacier, where there was a fine grazing ground.

The prickly shrubs surrounding our tents had already donned the colours of autumn, and gaily flaunted their yellow leaves and bunches of berries,

now turning red. It was mid-August, but already the indescribable atmosphere of the year's last golden days, of the last ripe glory preceding its slow decay, brooded over the land. The magic touch of the flaming fingers of autumn was already visible, had tinged the landscape with the soft hues which were but the prelude to the ultimate triumphant riot of colour. Already the splashes of gold and the crimsoning leaves reminded us of the swift passage of the months, so that we paused in amazement. It seemed but yesterday that, standing by the foaming Khunjirab, and watching the valley awaken from the bondage of winter, we had greeted the signs of the rebirth of nature in the leaping wave, the jubilant song of the birds, the first shy primulas peeping forth on the alpine pasture.

Swiftly, relentlessly the weeks were speeding by, as day by day we wandered from camp to camp over glaciers and mountains and moraines.

But although we could not suppress a sigh of regret at the passing of the summer, we felt that fate had been kind to us. In the short allotted space of time we had already achieved more than we had ever hoped to be able to accomplish. The Malangutti had defeated us, but we still hoped to discover on its southern side the secret that the great mountain guarded so jealously.

In the evening as we strolled about the encampment we bid farewell to the Dasto Ghil. For a short moment the clouds drifted away and it was revealed

once more in the lingering rays of the setting sun, a veritable throne of the gods, a mother of the snows, wrapped in golden glory.

We wondered who would retrace our steps one day and set his foot on its proud summit ?



## CHAPTER XV

### OVER THE KARUN PIR TO PASU

ON August the 15th we took leave of the lum-bardar of Shingshal, who had come up to our camp to say good-bye to us. He seemed very pleased with the baksheesh and the knife we presented him with to show him our appreciation of the services he had rendered us, and we saw him start to return to his village with a contented air, pulling up his choga and sticking his new treasure into the blue scarf he always wore tied as a sash round his waist. It must have been an exceptionally busy and profitable summer for Shingshal.

The way we now took was the ordinary summer route to the Hunza valley, but it is seldom used, as the best time for travelling in this district is in the early winter or early spring, when the water in the river is low enough to enable the bed of the stream to be followed. Now we were continually forced to scramble higher and higher up among the loose boulders above the river.

After a couple of hours we came to the place marked Ziarat on the map. Perren had camped

here on his way through, but it did not look a very tempting spot. There was a single dirty stone hut, which our guide had already explored and which contained a "holy book." He brought it out for our inspection. It was written on parchment and finely illuminated.

It was always hard to get the coolies past any customary camping-place; they used to come up and throw down their loads with an air of finality which was meant to convince the obstinate Sahibs that there had been enough exercise for one day. Very often, however, the traditional bivouac-places were the reverse of pleasant and were littered with the dirt of preceding caravans. We also always took care to avoid the vicinity of the filthy huts which our men greeted with such delight.

To their disappointment they found that we did not wish to halt at Ziarat, but that we intended to continue on our way through the valley. We could now keep to the river-bed for some distance, which made the walking much easier, as it was flat and sandy. Perren had told us that there was one bad spot which had to be passed at this point and we perceived it from afar. After the wet weather of the last few days it was particularly dangerous, and more than half an hour before we had reached it, we saw the ominous haze hanging above the slope.

Every now and then the stones came down from above. Sometimes it would be a big piece of rock which, raising a cloud of dust where it swept the

sandy track, made a queer, dull noise as it rolled over and over, loosening a shower of smaller missiles which rattled in its wake. From an incredible height a single projectile would from time to time descend, ricocheting with the velocity of a bullet, whirring through the air and hitting whatever came in its way with a sharp crack. Then, for a brief interval, quiet would reign on the hill-side until suddenly the bombardment began again.

We paused for a moment on the sandy shore of the river. The water, further on, entirely filled the bed of the stream, and we had to pass directly under the slope for a short distance. It was not very far, but all the same it was an unpleasant passage. However we had to face it as there was no other way.

We waited for another pause in the cannonade, in the meantime anxiously scanning the treacherous slopes. Nothing more came down. It was quiet as death; one could almost hear the beating of one's heart.

"Etwasz schnell hier," said Franz with icy calm, but he suddenly clutched my hand with an iron grip and darted forward with all the speed his long legs could muster. He did not relax his hold until we had reached safer ground. I did my best, panting and breathless, to keep up with him on the steep, rough surface, the others following close behind.

It was a disagreeable place to pass with such a big caravan, but although there were some narrow

escapes—Perren's topee was hit by a stone—all the men got safely across the danger zone.

We camped in the bed of the river at the foot of the first little pass.

Munir Khan was one of the last to arrive. He slipped noiselessly into my tent with a guilty air, and took off the bag he always carried on a strap over his shoulder, which contained various small articles, such as note-books, plasters, bandages, lanolin, etc.

Suddenly I noticed a strong smell of ammonia.

“Whatever has happened?” I asked him.

“The bottle is broken,” he answered sadly. “A big stone came and we all ran; Allah Baksh ran and fell down, and the jemindar ran and fell down, and I ran, but the stone hit the bag.”

It sounded as if there must have been a lot of running and falling down, but it was fortunate that only the bottle was broken and no one's head.

In the evening a strong wind sprang up blowing the sand into our eyes and into the saucepans and cups. The tea was decidedly gritty and the bread tasted of petroleum. Even Pete turned his nose away in disdain. We discovered that someone had spilt the contents of the hurricane lamp over a sack of *ata*.

It was a day of minor misfortunes, but the teasing wind and the reeking, petroleum-soaked flour could not disturb our good-humour. With the pleasing thought that we were well on our way to the Hunza

valley and that the wrathful mountain spirits had threatened us in vain, we retired for the night.

The following march began with a stiff climb up to a height of 11,770 feet, as perpendicular cliffs once more barred the way in the valley. On the top of the rocky crest we sat down for a while to contemplate the view. Perren pointed out to us the great, bare ridge on the opposite side of the gorge to the north-west, where the Karun Pir pass is situated. It was quite unnecessary for him to add that we should find it rather a grind: measuring the height with a critical glance, and doubtfully surveying the desolate slopes of rocks and shale, we were speedily convinced of the veracity of this statement. We could only hope that on the morrow the sun would repeat its tactful behaviour of the day on which we descended the dreaded Hattu Pir to the Devil's Gap in the Indus valley, and would veil its face behind the clouds.

Crossing the second little pass which, like the former, was really a passage over a ridge descending from the heights above, we came to a steep downward track along a slope overlooking the trough of another great glacier, running in the same direction as the Malangutti. It bore the name of the Momhil glacier. At the foot of the slope the coolies went down to the little stream to fetch some water. It was impossible to reach it further on, as it flowed through a narrow cleft between slabs of polished rock, where an exceedingly rickety bridge spanned

the gorge. It looked as if it would not bear the weight of a chicken and would go crashing down the chasm as soon as one set foot upon it. However, our whole caravan got safely across and joined us at the spot where we halted for the night, just before the track once more reached the Shingshal river.

Knowing that a strenuous day lay before us we made all the preparations we could for an early start. There was a height of nearly 7000 feet to be climbed, the first part of the way terribly steep, and without a single drop of water to be found anywhere during the ascent.

Perren, when he had gone over the pass, had spent the night at the point marked Chukur on the map, but he and the coolies had had a miserable time without any means of quenching their thirst, and without wood to light a fire. We decided that it would be best to cross the pass in one day.

The next morning the valley was still plunged in chilly darkness, and the sun was only just gilding the highest peaks when we crossed the bridge over the Shingshal river and began toiling up the slope. It was really most vexing to have to make a detour of such length involving such a tedious climb, as the distance through the gorge to Pasu was not more than four miles. If we could have followed the Shingshal valley we should not have needed more than a few hours to arrive at the same spot which it now would take us four days to reach.

The dawn broke bright and clear, but fortunately

the glare of the sun was not too unbearably hot, and a cool breeze brought relief as we steadily mounted, leaving the valley far below. Later on great billowy clouds drifted against the background of the blue sky, and Khan Sahib anxiously hurried on, fearing that the view of the peaks and glaciers opposite would be obscured before he reached the top.

The first steep bit having been successfully negotiated, there was nothing to break the monotony of the endless slopes of shale. After we had climbed for about three or four hours we indulged in a good rest and emptied a tin of strawberries before tackling the final ascent. Poor Patiala came snuffling at the thermos flask, most plainly begging for a drop of something to drink. If there was formerly water to be found at Chukur, there is none there now, the source having probably dried up or existing only in the early winter and spring.

The view of the range of aiguilles which runs from the Hunza valley, from Pasu, directly to the north, was superb. They were now directly opposite us, and seen at such close quarters lost nothing of their fascination. They are among the most marvellous rock peaks I have ever met with, and we were most sorely tempted to try our luck on one of them. However, reason prevailed, as we knew all too well that our time was limited, and there was not a day to be lost if we wanted to complete our programme.

Casting many a longing glance at the magnificent crags, we toiled onwards to the top of the pass, which was strangely elusive. Perren had already two hours ago pointed out the gap on the crest of the arête. It had seemed to me that we must reach it in half an hour, as we were already to all appearance on the ridge itself, but there was always another slope, and yet another. At length, however, most unexpectedly at the last moment, we stood upon the pass.

The Karun Pir attains an elevation of 15,932 feet, and although it is so much higher, it reminded me, at least in its upper part, of the same tedious, uninteresting variety of passes one finds in Switzerland immediately below the snow-line at about 9000 feet, the kind of thing that is commonly recommended to those unfortunate people who are considered to be "good walkers" but are believed to take fright at an ice-step or to turn giddy at a "mauvais pas" in the rocks, and are thus condemned to the fearful dullness of endless slopes of grass or shale.

The view on the top of the pass was obstructed to the north by some minor peaks directly opposite, and on the other side it was the same as we had already seen on our climb upwards.

A few tiny snow-drifts still lingered in the hollows of the shale-covered saddle. Patiala's delight knew no bounds; he rushed forward and rolled over and over in the snow, trying to dig



himself in, behaving like a mad dog, eating huge mouthfuls, which must have melted on his parched tongue like food of the gods.

Below the pass the northern slope was for some distance still covered with snow and to our joy we soon found water which, though icy cold, was good to drink. Eagerly we flung ourselves down by the first tiny trickle we espied; the thermos flasks had long since been drained to their last drop. It seemed a long time before the first little group of coolies appeared upon the ridge. A cold wind had begun to blow and the clouds grew gradually thicker. The sudden difference in the temperature was striking; if an hour ago we had been complaining of the heat, now we were freezing.

A swift descent brought us to a milder clime; about 2000 feet below the pass we came to a lovely alp. There was abundance of grass and besides a variety of flowers which I had not found before, for the first time we here saw edelweiss growing. It was a delightful change to light upon these pleasant pastures after having marched so many dreary miles through the desolate wilderness of stony glacier valleys. After the monotony of the arid slopes of shale on the other side of the ridge the grass here seemed greener, the flowers brighter than they would have appeared to eyes less accustomed to the desert-like region of the gorges of Shingshal. Forgetting our fatigue we gaily ran down the winding track. As we passed, a yak

standing knee-deep in the grass, lifted its great shaggy head and stared at us in amazement.

By a clear stream, on grass carpeted with edelweiss, we halted, and as soon as the cook and Kalbi appeared, brewed a welcome cup of tea. We could not continue the descent much further as the coolies did not arrive until the sun was setting, the last of them only turning up when it was quite dark.

There was no doubt about it that they had had a hard day's work. It is no light matter even for men accustomed to the rough life of the mountains to carry a load of forty to fifty pounds 7000 feet up a barren precipitous slope, exposed to the fierce rays of the sun, to a height of nearly 16,000 feet, without being able to obtain a drop of water on the way or the chance of finding the merest semblance of shade. No wonder that they do not consider the Karun Pir a pleasure jaunt for a summer day. They had deserved their extra baksheesh and we felt that we could not grumble too much even if we had to go to bed without our supper.

But just as we had resigned ourselves to the non-appearance of the evening meal, Franz's cheerful voice was heard outside the tent:

“Kommen Sie nur.”

We came and found that in the pitch-dark our open-air dining-room had been beautifully installed. The table and chairs had been set up, and although in the flickering light of a single candle we could

hardly tell what we were eating, we all of us agreed that never in our lives had we had such a satisfactory dinner.

The next day we remained on the alp, as we had to send our Shingshali coolies back and the men from Murkhun had not yet arrived. We did not regret the delay as there was a lot of writing which had to be finished for the next mail, and I availed myself of the opportunity to collect plants on the meadows above our camp.

Early in the morning on 19th August the jemin-dar came back from Murkhun where he had obtained the necessary transport. It was a surprise to us to see, on looking outside our tents, that the smiling green alp had disappeared and been transformed to a wintry scene. During the night it had been snowing hard and our surroundings now presented quite a different aspect in their immaculate white garb. The coolies wandered about dismally in the snow, wrapped up in their chogas. It was quite an unusual sight to see a group of dejected-looking ponies and donkeys standing a short distance away, waiting to take their share of the loads. Baggage animals had been an unknown quantity ever since we had left Gircha, two and a half months ago.

The snow seemed to bring with it a deadly quiet, and across the white space the voices of the coolies in Khan Sahib's camp sounded with queer distinctness. It was still snowing. The heavy dull clouds overhead, the little moving figures of

the men and the pathetic, gaunt animals all fitted into the picture of dead white and black and grey. The world of colours existed no more.

I found that a riding pony had been specially brought up "for the Mem-sahib," and wrapping myself in a rain-cloak, started off down the slushy slope on my funny little beast, the faithful Kalbi hanging on to its tail.

We found that had we been a quarter of an hour's walk lower down our camp would have been out of the snow. The pastures of Pariar, where there were a few shepherds' huts, were green once more. In spite of the damp, uninspiring weather the day's march was one of the most enjoyable which had fallen to our lot. Even the clouds could not spoil the charm of the beautiful valley. We soon reached the first trees and descended into a grove of rose-bushes, laden with the ruddy fruits of autumn.

Further down there was another little village with some cultivation. The gorge then grew narrow and a stream flowed through a rocky ravine where my pony performed fearful acrobatic feats. As we approached the Hunza valley the nullah gradually widened until we saw, situated at its entrance, the clustering houses of Murkhun.

Here we found our store-keeper and the remains of our depot.

The next day saw us retracing our steps along the Hunza road. It gave us a strange sense of

ease and security to be moving along a broad, well-kept path. We had become so accustomed to stumble painfully among a chaos of boulders, and cling like flies to precipitous slopes of slippery shale and gravel, that we were surprised to find what a superb highway the Gilgit-Kashgar mail route really is. The relativity of all things strikes the mind of the wanderer, on emerging from the innermost gorges of the side valleys, with persistent intensity. If on our outward journey we had uttered disparaging remarks about the roughness of the track, we now commented on its smoothness and marvelled at the unwonted luxury of finding a real path.

The villages too, which formerly had only impressed us by their wretched appearance and the inadequacy of their miserable houses as fit habitations for human beings, now assumed another aspect. Although to the outer eye they were nothing but a group of clustering mud hovels they plainly showed that here man could dwell with some tranquillity, exempt to a certain degree from the eternal menace of nature; that although existence might be rude and laborious, here he could lay his head down and sleep; that here in the midst of the desert was a spot where he could wrest "his pittance from the soil." These tumbling walls represented a certain guarantee of safety. The mere presence of other human beings, after the solitude of the wilderness, meant that there would be food and shelter of some kind.

The same train of thought applied to our appreciation of the scenery. Our eyes had become so accustomed to the gigantic proportions of the frightful cliffs and the tortuous ice-streams of the narrower side valleys that we found that the precipices at which we had gazed with such awe as we came up the valley had, owing to the mental process which we had undergone, dwindled in some strange fashion and lost their element of terror.

Relativity has a wonderful way of changing one's outlook and one's estimate of the true value of things : it does not impoverish but on the contrary enlarges one's horizon.

How much for instance did it not add to our enjoyment of these most wonderful mountains that we had not come to them as strangers to the hills ; that the lofty crests and stupendous glaciers seen here, stood out against a mental picture formed from old, familiar tracks we had often trodden, winding up the Mer de Glace or the Gorner glacier ? The bygone days spent on the peaks and passes of the far-away Alps now perfected our vision of these summits of one of the mightiest realms of snow and ice existing outside the Polar regions, so that we could measure their scale according to Alpine traditions and judge them in the light of comparative values.

It is profoundly true that he alone, who is able to say, not merely : "That is great," but who can add : "But this is greater," can claim to have appreciated a thing to its utmost extent.

As in Shingshal, we discovered also in the Hunza valley that the summer would soon be gone. The crops had been reaped and the fields lay dry and bare. The heat, however, was still intense as long as the sun stood high in the sky, but the nights were already growing colder.

Along the road clumps of particularly decorative thistles with huge silvery spiky heads growing in pure sand, made a pleasing effect. We soon came to the little ravine which bars the approach to the flat ledge above the river on which Khaiber is situated. To our regret we found that the picturesque door which had formerly existed there, had been broken away. It was explained to us that the luggage of the new Consul-General in Kashgar, who had travelled through a month ago, had been too voluminous to pass under the gateway. We hoped that although useless from a practical point of view, since peace now reigns in Khaiber, the primitive portal would be rebuilt, as it was a most picturesque survival of the times when bands of robbers were wont to pounce upon the villages, which were built like forts to protect the inmates against the assault of strange foes. On the field below the bungalow we sat down to watch our caravan pass on the upper road. Pete came along proudly in the row of coolies. Khan Sahib had told us that his reappearance had caused surprised comment. No one could believe that this fat and well-rounded animal was the same meagre, miserable-looking sheep that had wandered

up the valley with us. Still less could they understand that if this were really true, he had not long ago provided us with a succulent repast. Indeed in the days when we had watched our diminishing supplies with anxiety, Khan Sahib had more than once shared their surprise, asking us in his quaint manner: "You will not eat this Peter?"

But he had survived in spite of all. Perren decided that he would suffer too much from the heat in the valley and that it was time for him to be shorn. At the next camp the deed was done and he appeared looking unrecognisable and terribly naked without his thick fleece. Franz, who is nothing if not practical, made a most luxurious cushion with the wool as a stuffing.

We found that the summer travellers had made quite a smooth track across the Batura; it was now even possible to traverse it with laden animals and I took my pony on with me to the other side, although I crossed the glacier on foot.

It was noticeable that there was already much less water in the Hunza river. The scenery as we approached Pasu struck us as being wonderfully familiar. One can distinguish the green oasis at a great distance as one descends the moraine, and although it looks quite near it takes more than an hour to reach the village. We never grew quite accustomed to the deceptive illusions of its vicinity, and the long stretch across the burning sand of the arid waste seemed endless. We greeted the Shingshal



aiguilles as old friends and cast a specially interested glance towards the entrance of the gorge, which was scarcely visible between the advancing walls of rock.

Passing the Mullah's burial-place on the outskirts of the village with its fluttering little white and red flags peeping above the wall and the spreading elm whispering mysteriously above the sacred grave, I urged my lagging pony on, and came in sight of our former camping-place.

A crowd of smiling, ragged urchins rushed forth to meet us, carrying bowls and baskets, heaped up with a profusion of golden apricots and apples. The orchard looked beautifully cool and shady, and the lumbardar with many salaams welcomed us back in his domain. It proved once more to be a true haven of rest.

There were new arrangements to be made for obtaining the necessary transport and rations for our coolies before we started for the Batura, and during the interval of waiting for Khan Sahib who had gone to Gulmit, one march further down the valley, to telephone to the Mir of Hunza, we enjoyed a few quiet days in our retreat in the apricot orchard.

From early morning until late at night an interested crowd of spectators watched us from afar. There was generally a row of heads to be seen discreetly peeping above the low stone wall surrounding our garden, a row of flat dark caps with just two dark eyes visible below them, and a mass of tumbled elfin locks, or a straight sleek fringe. Everywhere

there were prying eyes. Mysterious shadows flitted among the trees of the enclosure behind our tents, the timid girls preferring that more secluded point of vantage, screened by the intervening foliage. One could be sure that every single movement that one made was noticed with interest by a pair of bright eyes and commented upon in awestruck whispers. The people, however, were very well-behaved and there was much less begging for baksheesh than among the Ladakhi.

One day one of the ladies of Pasu came to visit me. She had donned her best Sunday clothes and looked very smart in a flat little embroidered cap, a loose, oatmeal-coloured, woollen smock, gaily-striped trousers of green and brown, and high, felt boots, made of soft, brown leather, very wide, and reaching to the knee. Indeed, the Russian boots that I saw promenading the streets of London on my return to Europe reminded me strongly of the boots of the lady of Pasu.

The resemblance, however, to the modern silhouette did not extend above the knees: it did not seem to be the fashion yet for the women of the Hunza valley to imitate the men's coiffure, although the latter sometimes had beautifully bobbed hair; the ladies still stuck to their plaits, doubled and looped up, hanging over their ears.

I much regretted that I could not converse with my fair visitor. She hung her head with an abashed air, and seemed too timid to raise her

eyes, until I produced my work-bag. I showed her its contents which she found extremely fascinating, and she was delighted when I offered her one of my few remaining needles, some safety-pins and a skein of gaily-coloured silk. With many salaams and smiles she retired.

In this part of the country the women seemed to be allowed to go about freely. They were generally busily engaged in working in the fields, surrounded by a group of chattering youngsters.

The children were often jolly-looking little creatures with rosy cheeks and a merry, mischievous smile. They were kindly treated by the elders and seemed to have a happy time. They had soon found out that I still had a store of chocolates and sweetmeats, and used to scamper up to my tent with offerings of fruit and flowers in their grimy, little fists.

There was no lack now of fresh fruit and it was a delightful change after our somewhat monotonous diet. We all enjoyed the ripe apricots which often had a delicious flavour. Pete showed a great preference for them. He had a quick eye and a cunning way where apricots were concerned. There would be a big plate of them standing on the table and Pete grazing innocently at a short distance. Under the disguise of a stupid, silly sheep the quaint creature harboured the spirit of a perfect comedian. Although to all appearance he was busily engaged in browsing among the scanty tufts of grass and

weeds all around, his bold, prominent eye had long ago caught sight of the luscious fruit. Just for a moment we would turn our backs and approaching once more we would find nothing but the empty table, the plate on the ground and beside it a neat little pile of apricot stones.

It was such a funny sight to see him gobbling away with incredible speed and spitting out the stones that we forgot to scold him. He was altogether too clever for us, and for the rest of the apricot season Munir Khan had strict orders to put away the fruit in one of our tents.

We led a most luxurious existence in Pasu, waiting for the coolie question to be solved. Sometimes we worked, and sometimes we just lazed about and enjoyed long, drowsy hours of delightful idleness. There was a batch of newspapers waiting to be read and we felt ourselves once more in touch with the world of mundane events and political happenings.

Politics! The influence of the spoken word, the power that in the present day governs Europe, exists throughout the world, even in far away Hunza, even in the small community formed by the members of our caravan. On the second evening of our stay in Pasu, Khan Sahib came to tell us that a small revolutionary party had been formed amongst the coolies. Some of them had come to the conclusion that they had had enough of the glaciers and wanted to go home.

The refractory group consisted of five members, who were some of our best porters.

"What is the reason of this sudden revolt?" my husband asked.

Khan Sahib shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"They are stupid people," he said. "One of them talked and talked until he had four followers, and now they want to do what he says."

My husband ordered the five men to come before him. They stood in a row, shuffling their feet and looking thoroughly uncomfortable.

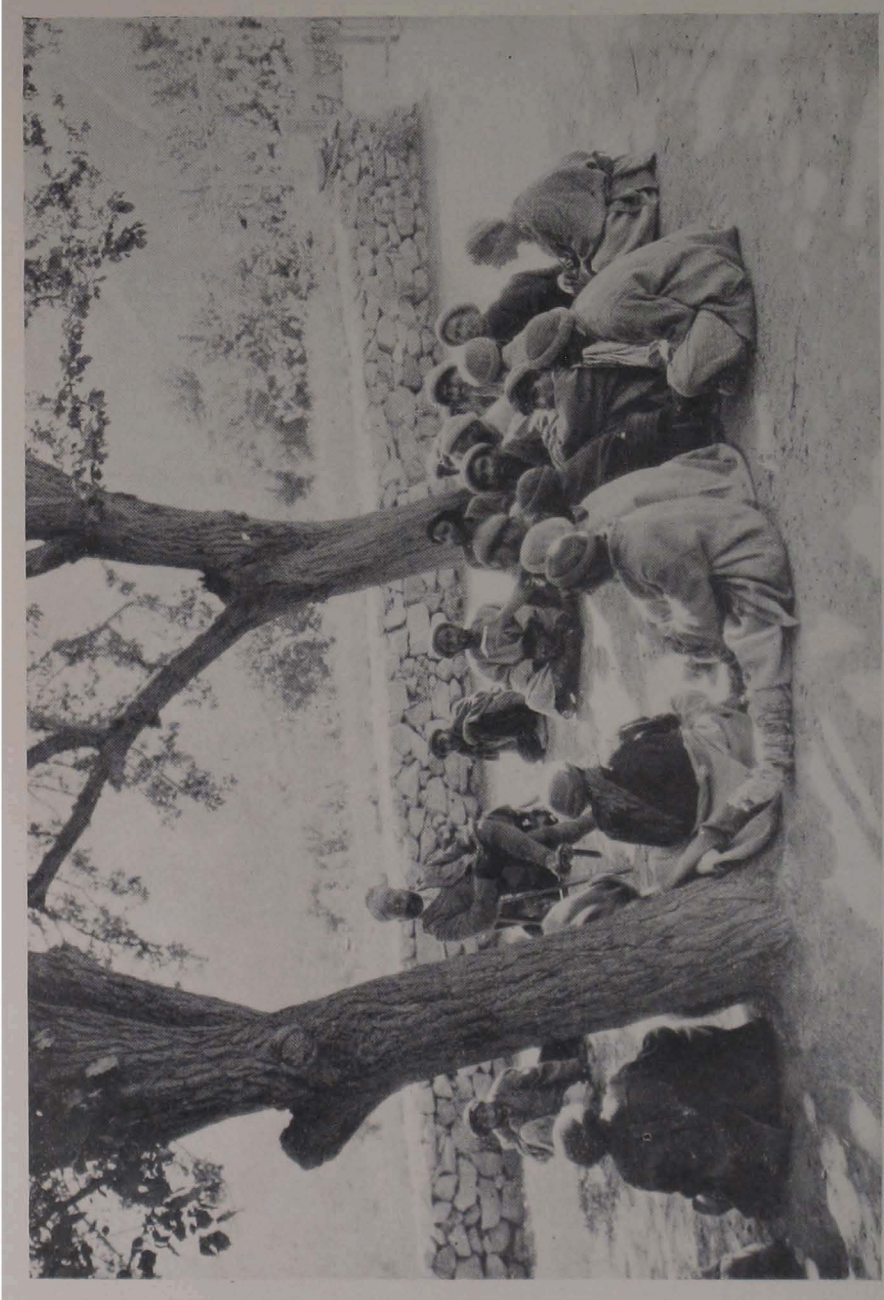
"Well, what is the matter?" my husband asked.

Number 1 rubbed his hand over his whole body and declared that he had aches and pains everywhere.

Number 2, whose name was Sheppie, and who, besides being an excellent porter, could deftly handle a needle and repaired all our tents and hold-alls, pointed to his big toe, which though abominably dirty, looked quite normal.

Number 3 and Number 4 could not even produce an injured toe and were at a loss what to say.

Number 5, a big, strong fellow, who was one of our most energetic dancers, showed an almost invisible scratch on his leg. He not only used to dance, but he also performed the function of hair-dresser. My husband, Harinxma and the guides all submitted their heads from time to time to his fantastic scissors, which left them crowned by Kara-Korum ridges of hair.



IN THE GARDEN AT PASU—KHAN SAHIB AND THE COOLIES.



My husband asked if he left us who would cut the Sahibs' hair and who would dance for the coolies ?

An eager chorus of voices chimed in saying that he could not go, but must stay, and the dancer, looking very proud and pleased, stepped out of the row.

This movement on his part provoked a storm of indignant protests from the other four men, who began to abuse him with great force and vigour. It appeared that he had persuaded them to desert, and now was the first to leave them in the lurch.

Khan Sahib made an indignant remark about such scandalous behaviour, but we reflected that it was a proceeding apt to occur in civilised countries as well as among a handful of Hunza coolies.

The affair had a humorous ending, for the four other coolies promptly expressed their desire to remain with us, saying that they would rather walk themselves to death than listen again to the eloquent speeches of the perfidious barber.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BATURA GLACIER

ON August the 25th we once more left our peaceful orchard and started for the Batura. Harinxma was not with us as he had gone to the Kilik pass to shoot *Ovis Poli*. Curiously enough our approach began by going in the opposite direction. It is not possible—or if it should prove to be so, it would undoubtedly be a lengthy and difficult undertaking owing to the crevasses and seracs of the final ice-fall—to ascend the glacier directly from the snout. The first part of the route, therefore, took us up the Pasu glacier: first over easy ice, where it was not even necessary to cut steps, and then along a nasty bit of moraine and a little sandy valley until the point was reached where, bending to the North-west, the track leads up to a kind of plateau or gently undulating depression between two spurs of low hills running parallel to the Hunza valley. At the end of this plateau one emerges upon the ridge immediately above the Batura glacier. The glorious view, suddenly bursting upon one, comes as a complete surprise.

It would be an ideal spot for a Chalet Milchbach

or an Hotel du Glacier. Now there are only a few shepherds' huts. The sunny Alp basks in peaceful solitude; at the foot of the steep cliff the glacier lies, a huge, white, glistening stream of ice, against which the dark rocks of the mountains opposite, and the fantastic spires of the Shingshal peaks are shown in vivid contrast.

Pasu was already plunged in shade while we sat contentedly sunning ourselves on our lofty promontory. The huts were inhabited by two shepherdesses—no dainty porcelain figures these—indeed, I am afraid Franz and Perren made some not very complimentary remarks, expressing their candid opinion that they did not compare favourably to the “Senerinnen” of St Niklaus. They certainly looked very weather-beaten and distressingly dirty as they darted to and fro in their drab, shapeless garments, endeavouring to collect the scattered flock of sheep and goats that was returning to the enclosure for the night. It was quite a lively scene; the funny restless creatures came scampering along, pushing each other and crowding together in a dense mass of moving bodies, and little quivering tails: perky, diminutive goats with long silky hair, and black, white and brown little sheep with tightly curled wool.

This was an occasion to do a bit of profitable business with the women in charge of the flock. Prices on the Alp must necessarily be lower than in Pasu, Franz argued, and after a terrific bout of bargaining we acquired three sheep: one for the

coolies, one for the jemindars, and one for our own consumption.

This transaction proved to be an extremely popular inauguration of the Batura expedition amongst our followers, and the prospect of the good meals, which would be forthcoming as the result of Franz's timely purchase, seemed to put the whole party in a most satisfactory state of good humour.

The evening on the Alp passed pleasantly enough as we discussed our plans. These, however, would naturally depend on what revelations the Batura had in store for us, and as nobody among the villagers had ever been beyond the first two or three marches, no one could tell what the region at its head would be like. There is no need to impress upon a mountaineer the pleasurable anticipation we experienced; though it was of a less materialistic quality than that of our coolies, just alluded to, it was not less keen; the sharp edge of our appetite for new discoveries was not yet blunted, and the Alpinist and the pioneer will readily imagine what an interesting task lay before us and what our feelings were on the eve of setting out to explore one of the greatest ice-streams of our globe, untrodden as yet by any human being.

The weather was perfect, with the clear, bright, calmness of the autumnal season, which if one chances upon it in the high mountains, is even preferable to the hotter days of summer. There was absolutely no wind, and hoping that this was a good omen for the immediate future, we turned

in after one more look at the great ice-stream, gleaming mysteriously in the dim light.

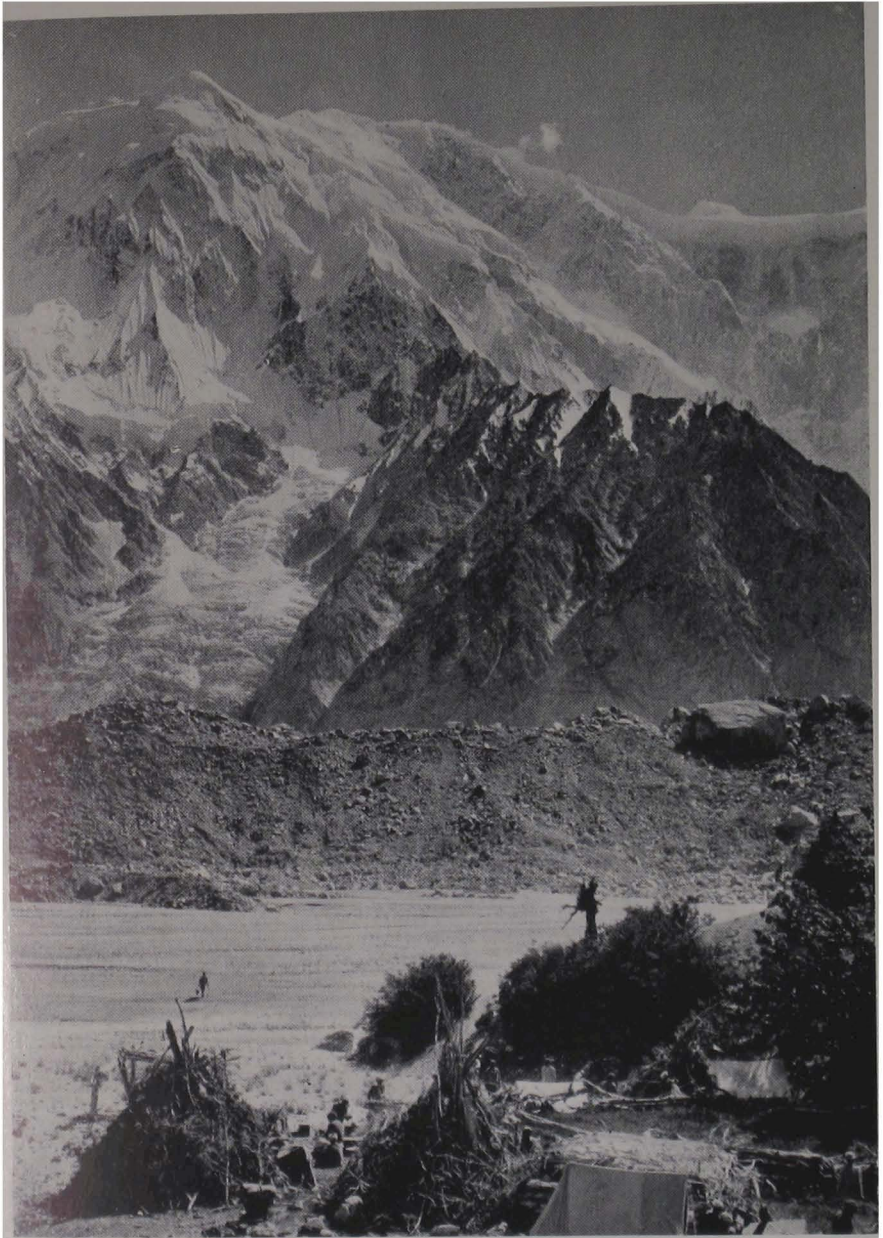
The next morning dawn broke with the promise of a glorious day and in high spirits we dispatched a hasty breakfast and made ready to start. Our camp was situated at the very edge of the plateau jutting out above the glacier and we began the day's march with an exceedingly steep descent down the crumbling cliff, which speedily brought us on a level with the ice. There was however enough space at the foot of the slope to advance there, and we even found a track leading along the right bank of the glacier which at times became quite a decent path. This was an unaccustomed luxury after the trackless wastes of the Shingshal valleys and we were able, as we progressed, to admire our surroundings at leisure. The glacier was almost flat and we marvelled at the prodigious force which had propelled the great ice-flow along such a tremendous distance at such a slight inclination.

Along the edge, every now and then, we came upon a tiny glacier lake. These curious little pools formed a most picturesque feature of the landscape. Sometimes the water was of a lovely turquoise colour, which, with the background of towering seracs gleaming in the sun's first golden rays, made a bizarre and beautiful effect. Little dream lakes they were, belonging to another world, strangely unreal with queerly shaped, miniature icebergs floating, half submerged, on their enchanted surface,

guarding the mountains' secrets in their icy, blue-green depths, placid and serene, but withal unfathomable. They formed a jewelled band of turquoises along the glacier: turquoises encrusted in a sparkling crystal setting. And nothing, we acknowledged, could have been more appropriate, more fitting than to find this girdle of gems surrounding the mild and beautiful Batura, the queen amongst glaciers. There was a majestic serenity, a benign and regal calm brooding over the wide spaces of the sunlit, ice-filled valley.

On either side the mountains rose with outlines of superb grandeur, nobly sculptured, fitted to a sublime plan, with nothing crude or weird or savage to break the pure harmony of the gentle contours. The steep rounded slopes were covered with luxuriant verdure which reached up to the foot of the eternal snows: seen from a distance they were of a bright emerald-green, interspersed with shaded hues of golden-yellow and wonderful tints of red and brown where the foliage and flowers of autumn showed patches of vivid colour. High above them the white glistening peaks emerged in dazzling radiance, lifting their crowns of glory to the blue canopy of the clear, cloudless sky.

After two hours and a half we came to another shepherd's hut, higher up the slope. The track, however, did not end here, but continued over great stretches of shale and stones, the remains of former landslides. Descending again, it reached the bottom



CAMP ON THE BATURA GLACIER.



of the valley, where a secluded sandy bay, between the ice and the hill-side, formed an ideal camping-place.

Numerous rushing streams and gaily babbling rivulets descended from the heights above, which accounted for the wealth of vegetation. Franz gazed at the mountains with an air of approval. He had sorely missed, on the Shingshal glaciers, the green pastures which would have reminded him of his own beloved Alp in the Zermatt valley where the good cow, Britannia—the name is a tribute to the glory of England—peacefully grazes, the heavy bell suspended from her neck clanging melodiously as she roams about.

“This is the most wonderful glacier of all,” he said, lost in profound admiration. And not only Franz, but all of us succumbed to the spell of the subtle beauty, the mellow richness, the pure, still serenity of those golden autumn days on the Batura.

It was remarkable what a greater abundance and larger variety of trees existed here than in any of the other glacier valleys we had visited. We had tea under the drooping branches of a tall shrub laden with clusters of scarlet berries. The coolies, who noticed and took pleasure in the flowers we found growing on the way, adorned their caps with the red bunches, which proved to be a most effective decoration in the flat Dard head-dress.

Khan Sahib did not approve of this streak of Hunza dandyism. I suppose that, strangely enough, he regarded it as revealing a frivolous, worthless



nature, for on more than one occasion, when we were selecting servants or coolies from a group of candidates, he would come up and whisper mysteriously :

“Sahib, perhaps it is better not to take that man with the flowers in his cap. He will not be a good man !”

However, in spite of Khan Sahib's theory, we found that some of our Hunza dandies were amongst the best men we had.

In the evening the jemindar came and asked whether the coolies might dance for us. We always found it a good sign that they had enough surplus energy to expend on such a strenuous form of amusement after a long and tiring march, and on this occasion it showed that their happy mood had not yet vanished.

In the coolies' opinion another good point in favour of the Batura must have been the splendid dancing floors it provided. No one would have dreamt of dancing on the Verjirab for instance. Here they found a big, flat, open space, a natural amphitheatre, unencumbered by stones or rocks, which just simply seemed to be crying out an “invitation to waltz.” There was also an abundance of wood and we soon had started an immense fire which illuminated the circle of spectators with its cheery blaze.

There were several enthusiastic performers, and the lack of an orchestra was made up by the

audience all joining in the chorus, repeating the refrain with tireless energy, clapping their hands to mark the rhythm and instigating the dancers to fresh efforts.

Akbar, one of the younger coolies, a slender lad of great strength and endurance, did a very fine sword dance, using two sticks, which he whirled about his head with amazing rapidity. He was the *jeune premier* of the ballet.

Then two men executed a dance together, moving round the circle behind each other, the last man imitating the leader's gestures with automatic precision, all the while chanting a monotonous refrain which the chorus of spectators repeated with gusto.

One of the men presented a comical sight stepping along coquettishly in a manner that would have befitted a dainty damsel, but seemed quite inappropriate to a sturdy ruffian enveloped in a voluminous dirty choga, with his legs encased in clumsy, ragged Russian boots. Some of the dancers sprang high in the air, like leaping fauns, which must have been a tiring performance.

There were different variations of dances, as each village has its own particular style. It was amusing to watch for a while, and even more so to note the men's pleasure in this simple merry-making. They all thoroughly enjoyed it. Even Abdul Ali, Khan Sahib's cook, was persuaded to enter the ring and exhibit his Terpsichorean talents amidst a roar of delighted laughter.

Poor Abdul Ali! he was no hero, and did not pretend to be one. He quite frankly showed his fear and horror at the frightful situations he found himself in. I am sure he died a thousand imaginary deaths on the way, tumbling off precipices, being crushed under falling rocks, suffocated in snowy avalanches, swallowed up by gaping chasms and drowned in lakes and rivers. In his worst moments he turned as yellow as a lemon, and he used to put out his tongue in a most expressive way which signified that he just simply "hated the whole show!"

Besides these tribulations he had difficulties of another nature. His home was above Godhai near Astor, where Khan Sahib, to the immense pride of Abdul Ali, had taken him on as his servant instead of the retainer who had fallen ill on the Burzil. But having himself risen as it were from the ranks, he found it extremely hard to maintain his dignity among the coolies, who had a wicked way of teasing him. As his was an emotional nature, he was nearly always in tears.

He was most devoted to Khan Sahib and perfectly honest; and, in spite of his fears and lamentations, he very bravely stuck it out until the end.

His happiest days were spent in the apricot orchards at Shingshal and Pasu; he was overjoyed when we returned to the safety of our peaceful camp in the Hunza valley, and he could indulge there in an orgy of cooking among his pots and

pans. On hearing of our intention of quitting this El Dorado for the inhospitable wilderness of the Batura, he had sadly commented on the folly of the Sahibs who, instead of thanking Allah on their knees for their safe return after such dangerous exploits, must directly set forth again to encounter new horrors.

“Here is a good place,” he had said. “Here we eat and grow fat, and life is pleasant. But alas! we are as the sheep in the story of the Princess and the Tiger.”

I asked Khan Sahib for the story, and heard the following tale:

“Once upon a time there was a king who gave some sheep to one of his retainers, saying that he might keep the wool of the animals if at the end of a certain time he brought them back exactly as they had been, neither fatter nor thinner. The man took them out to graze, but to his despair he saw them growing fatter and fatter. If, however, he went to the other extreme and starved them, they got too thin. He was much worried about the problem, and was wondering what to do, when the princess, seeing his trouble, gave him a piece of good advice.

“‘This is quite a simple matter,’ she said. ‘Feed them well and let them graze to their heart’s content. When they have grown too fat, you must show them a tiger, and then from sheer fright they will become thin again.’”

“We are as the sheep,” Abdul Ali had explained, “and the Sahibs, showing us the glaciers, are as the tiger, so that in spite of the good food, each time we grow thin from fright.”

After the dances were finished, each man came up in turn to receive a cigarette. They were very fond of smoking these, and it was a great treat for them to get one, a reward which was reserved for some special occasion.

The next day the jemindar had told us we should have to cross to the other side of the valley.

The weather, when we awoke, was again perfect and we continued our way over a flat space of sand where a stream meandered along, spread into shallow channels of fresh, clear water. We kept as long as possible to the right bank, but after another few hours came to a point where we decided that the moment had come to cross the glacier.

It was not particularly difficult at first, but after a short time we were surrounded on all sides by huge crevasses, so that we had to do a lot of zigzagging and sometimes found ourselves to all appearances walking back to Pasu. Franz was hard at work making veritable staircases for us up and down steep walls of ice, but the slopes on the opposite side of the valley, in spite of all our labour, never seemed to draw any nearer.

We made our midday halt on the glacier and had a good look at our surroundings as we ate

our lunch. On the right bank which we had just left the green slopes abruptly ceased, and further up the great cliffs of ice fell abruptly to the foot of the mountains. The precipitous flanks were covered with hanging glaciers above which the snowy domes of the highest summits appeared. The ice-stream which was running directly west, now seemed to turn to a more northern direction, but we could not see very far. On the left bank there was still some verdure, and we could distinguish trees dotting the slope.

It still looked very far away. Kalbi picked up the empty tiffin basket and on we went again, alternately advancing and retreating, as every now and then a yawning abyss gaped before our feet.

We balanced like tight-rope dancers on ice-ridges resembling the proverbial razor, Patiala calmly following in the slippery steps; but after toiling on for another hour, we never seemed to come any nearer. All the same, the stones which now began to cover the ice, showed that we were approaching the moraine, and suddenly, on gaining the top of a ridge, we looked down into a wide flat valley, where a broad stream rushed along, and the sandy soil was dotted with trees. It was such an unexpected sight that we paused in amazement.

A little further on, at the side of another stream issuing from a ravine, we found a grassy spot, where the hill-side curving in a semicircle was covered

with a tangled mass of vegetation. It seemed to be a real shepherd's camp: there was an enclosure surrounded by a stone wall where the sheep and goats could spend the night in safety, and several huts most ingeniously constructed of branches and brushwood with roofs of dried grass. One of them was built like a wigwam, so that we gave to this camp the name of the "wigwam camp."

Tall yellow flowers were growing all around in the grass, and the foliage of the trees and shrubs was turning crimson. In the sandy soil a plant with grey leaves and small white and pink flowers, like an immortelle, thrust its roots far under the stones, and the slabs of rock were covered with a thick carpet of sweet-smelling thyme. It was a delightful spot, not only because of its immediate surroundings, but also on account of the wonderful view it commanded of the mountain-chain on the opposite side of the glacier.

This rose directly from the valley bottom as one great wall of snow and ice. One did not see, as when looking from the Gornergrat, masses of mountains like Monte Rosa and Lyskamm, nor a ridge with sharp peaks like the Mischabel, but one continuous arête at an enormous height topped by rounded domes of snow, with, from this distance at least, hardly perceptible passes or saddles separating them. There was no safe line of ascent anywhere. The ribs of rocks were also powdered with the snow of avalanches.

Franz gazed long and attentively at the great wall, and though I am sure that he was busily imagining routes, he did not seem to find a peak anywhere that might possibly yield to an attack.

In the evening we wandered a little way further up the valley to get a last view of the panorama at the lower end of the glacier. The next march would take us round the bend and the crags of the Shingshal valley and the snows of the Momhil and Malangutti would disappear from sight. The afterglow of the setting sun still illuminated the highest peaks, bathing them in a wonderful rosy light; it was the real "alpenglühn," a sight of incredible beauty.

The next day we discovered a narrow track which continued along the edge of the glacier at the side of the rushing, foaming torrent. It was a strange phenomenon to find the stream here between the hill-side and the glacier, at times it was even quite broad and so effectively barred the way now and then that we had to climb up to the top of the high ridge of the moraine to be able to advance. Thus we reached a broad plain. Another tributary little torrent joined the main stream; its water was so beautifully clear that one could count the pebbles lying at the bottom. Further on there was a broad stretch of meagre grazing ground where we pitched our tents.

It was only a short march but the coolies lagged behind. They probably did not want to pass this spot, for against the mountain-side on the other bank



of the stream there were a few stone huts which it seemed were inhabited by a couple of shepherds from Pasu, with whom they carried on a lively and vociferous conversation. Most of the time we were in camp there was someone standing on the bank yelling and shouting to the other side. This place, it seemed, was called Guchisham.

The promise of the perfect evening had not been fulfilled. To our dismay the sky became gradually overcast and a few drops of rain fell as the men were setting up the camp.

In the night a strong wind rose, blowing in fitful gusts and sweeping with such force across the sandy plain, that it threatened to loosen the pegs that secured our tents.

When we peeped outside next morning wreaths of dark storm clouds were piled up in the sky and it was raining heavily, so that we crept back to bed with gloomy forebodings.

However at twelve o'clock there was a decided improvement in the weather and as it had ceased raining we stirred up the reluctant coolies, who after much bawling and shouting to their friends on the other side of the stream, shouldered their loads and followed us up the stony slope, which now barred the valley. A glorious view of the glacier was revealed to us on the top. Passing a most picturesque little pool of clear water surrounded by rocks, where the trampled mud showed that the cattle came to drink, and which reminded us of the beautiful tiny mountain

lakes of Switzerland, we found that the track had abruptly ceased and that we were left to stumble along as best we could among the enormous boulders lying on the moraine.

We anxiously looked out for a camping-place; for, having made such a late start, we could not hope to reach the point we now saw ahead of us where a broad side valley seemed to join the main trough of the glacier and which we presumed must be the so-called junction.

There had been much talk about this junction. It even figured in a legend about the Batura which Khan Sahib had heard from the coolies.

It seemed that long ago one of the former Mirs of Hunza had sent seven men up the glacier to discover where it led to. They had got as far as the junction, but there they had been attacked by seven red ravens. A fight had ensued and the men had killed the birds. They then returned to Hunza, but soon afterwards they all died.

Therefore, the jemindar said, we might be able to get as far as the junction where the seven men had been, but not beyond.

The valley at the side of the glacier had ceased, but we discovered a grassy ledge high up the slope, where a little ravine opened and a babbling stream came trickling down. Perren climbed up to see whether it would not be a suitable spot for a camp, and within a short time we saw him beckoning to us to follow him.

On the steep grassy slope he had found two or three flat places which, banked up with stones, were large enough to take our tents. Higher up there was a little lake, wedged in between two walls of rock. It was half covered still by the remains of an old avalanche.

It really was a wonderful site for a camp although there was practically not a single flat spot on the steep slope. There was abundant water close at hand, and we were quite safe from falling stones or avalanches. The view was superb. We were now at a height of 12,399 feet and directly opposite us rose the buttresses of the great chain which forms the southern wall of the Batura.

I found that Perren had made a beautiful little terrace for my tent. He had just finished as I came up and proudly showed it to me.

*“Hier haben sie ein schönes Balkon,”* he said, hitting on just the right word to describe the situation. I felt exactly as if I was perched on a balcony overhanging the precipice, and I had to take great care on entering or leaving my tent not to knock down the big stones which banked up the little platform and formed its foundation, as this would have had most disastrous results and would have sent me tumbling down the steep slope, head over heels.

Towards the evening the sky was quite clear again and we discussed our next move. As we had only been able to get ten extra coolies it had not been possible to take with us all the food we should

probably need, and it became necessary to send some of the men back to Pasu to fetch a further supply of rations.

My husband therefore, with the two guides and Khan Sahib, proposed to go further up the glacier, while I remained in the camp with the jemindar and our two servants. This would leave nine coolies free to return to the Hunza valley to fetch the supplies.

On August the 30th the advancing party left us and the coolies departed to Pasu. Fortunately the weather was on good behaviour once more. All day long the sun shone from a cloudless sky, and the little Alp beamed and blossomed in an atmosphere of perfect bliss. The flowers exhaled their sweetest fragrance and the butterflies darted through the air flashing radiant wings of blue and green and gold. One could almost fancy that that steep and grassy slope above the Batura, hanging, as it were suspended, between the ice and the snows, surrounded on all sides by the chaos of gigantic boulders, was a tiny bit of Paradise, that had dropped from God's own fingers out of the heavens above.

All along the diminutive stream, which joyfully leapt down the cliff, forming miniature cascades as it tumbled over the projecting rocks, masses of flowers hung over the water's edge; short-stemmed, mauve marguerites, little starry faces, shyly peeping forth from the tangle of grass,

apparently delighting in the moist soil, and another pretty flower flecked with yellow and purple, reminding me of what we used to call 'my lady's own slippers.' There were tall nodding campanulas and a plant with red and pink spiky blossoms, sometimes showing a white variety, which spread in great masses and made glowing patches of colour.

Many plants had leaves which were now turning red. The predominant shades in this perfect rock-garden of nature's own design were, according to the law of the autumnal season, mostly crimson and gold; deep crimson, interwoven with dull red and softest pink, and gold shading from the colour of ripe corn to amber and rust-brown. Lovingly the plants clung to the rude rocks, throwing their soft caress over the rough surface, snugly filling the tiniest crevices, covering the face of the earth with wide-flung splendour and digging their roots deep down to its very heart, twining their life-stems so tightly among the stones that I nearly risked breaking my knife in my endeavour to loosen them. Deep-hued and warm, rich and soul-satisfying was the colour of the crimson patches overflowing into the green around. And above the tufts of grass, autumn gaily hoisted its banners of golden blossoms, catching and holding the sun's last radiance as they lifted bravely, brightly, on sturdy stalks their shining, yellow heads.

Other colours there were too, but more subdued and scattered; cushions of thyme, aromatic and

sweet-smelling, and a variety of low-growing blue larkspurs, which also flourished on the right bank of the Malangutti.

My favourite was an elegant, slender denizen of the enchanted garden with a spur-shaped calyx of dainty yellow, quivering on its long stem at the slightest caress of the wandering breeze, and emanating the most delicious perfume which ever flower gave forth. The blossoms did not last longer than one day, but on a single plant there were often four or five of the fragrant, pale fairy bells swaying gracefully in the wind.

It was a delight to wander about the little Alp which revealed more and more of its treasures as one got to know every nook and cranny. I found more than twenty-one different kinds of flowers, remarkable indeed, in such a restricted area and considering that the elevation exceeded 12,000 feet.

The butterflies too seemed to love this sunny corner. I had noticed very few on our way up, but here I watched them all day long, gaily fluttering about. There were the elusive little blues and some beautifully coloured ones with wings of orange-brown and silvery green.

But although the blue sky was stretched above the peaceful, flower-decked Alp in undiminished glory, and the hot sun poured forth its powerful rays as if the year were still in its prime, one knew it to be the deceptive illusion of an Indian summer. There was the same subtle enchantment, the same haunting

sense of fugitive beauty and piercing sweetness which lingers in the last note of an exquisite melody, that we fain would hold for ever, but which cannot be recaptured once it dies away.

From my balcony I watched the changing shadows on the ice-clad mountains opposite. Scarcely an hour passed without hearing the dull, booming sound of an avalanche. Sometimes I could see them falling, raising a cloud of white spray as they poured over a projecting cliff in an immense powdery cascade.

The weather in spite of its favourable appearance was not really settled. One night I was roused by a terrible storm which suddenly swept over the hill-side. It raged with such terrific force that I feared that my tent would be literally carried away as the ropes were not very securely fastened. The only thing to do was to hold the flap down to prevent the current of air entering and getting underneath. I had a regular fight with the wind; crouching down I desperately tugged at the flapping canvas which an invisible hand seemed to be tearing away. My "balcony" was rather a precarious perch in stormy weather and I wondered when the moment would come when the whole tent and Patiala and I would go toppling over the cliff.

It was impossible to make the servants hear, however one bawled and shouted, as the wind came howling down the little ravine with an unearthly noise.



FALLING AVALANCHE ON THE BATURA GLACIER.





However the storm suddenly subsided in the same strange, abrupt way in which it had burst upon us, and as all grew quiet again I crept back to the snug warmth of my bed and resumed my disturbed night's rest.

At noon on September the 7th the jemindar came and told me that he could see my husband's party returning on the glacier. We could distinguish them a long time before they reached the foot of the slope. At last one by one they re-emerged upon the ledge, tired and thirsty and sunburnt, but very satisfied with the results of the expedition. They had reached the end of the glacier and had found that the Batura attained a length of 37 miles, thus belonging to the greatest glaciers on earth and rivalling the other gigantic ice-streams of the Kara-Korum.

I will, however, leave my husband to tell the tale himself.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE DISCOVERY OF THE UPPER END OF THE BATURA

*By Ph. C. Visser*

THE expedition further up the glacier brought us into the most terrible moraine region I had ever seen. After a few hours we could follow the level ice-stream, but soon landed again in the midst of the chaos of stones. It is very curious that on the ice we found several dead birds: an eagle, and a few ducks and hill partridges.

On the sixth day after our departure from Pasu we imagined that we could see the upper part of the glacier. This was actually at the point where the topographers of the Survey of India had thought its origin would be, namely where the last of the series of high peaks were visible. If this should prove to be accurate, the glacier would attain a length of about 30 miles.

But the Batura, which had sprung so many surprises upon us, had reserved an unlooked-for and important revelation for this occasion. For on the seventh day as we scrambled along amidst the ice-towers and crevasses, Perren, who had been attentively

scanning the landscape in front of us, suddenly cried out :

“Herr, it is not the end of the glacier that we are now looking at. It bends to the North !”

A lively discussion ensued. Franz was not convinced, but was inclined to think that it was only a small bay. However, on reaching the curve, instead of finding there the final basin, we saw nothing but a great expanse of frozen waves which came sweeping round another bend. It was indeed an unexpected discovery and our curiosity grew even greater. We had to wait until the next day, however, to solve the problem of what lay ahead, as our coolies did not arrive until late in the afternoon, so that we could not go beyond the corner. They had needed more than ten hours to reach this spot owing to the difficulties of the march.

We camped on the glacier surrounded by jagged ice-pinnacles and gaping chasms. Here we were less exposed to the danger of avalanches. Every day these seemed to become more frequent. I had no difficulty in taking a photograph of one of these tremendous cataracts of snow in the very act of falling. Now and then we could feel the icy cold impact of the wave of air they displaced.

We resumed our march the next morning under less favourable circumstances. Snow had fallen during the night and the boulders on the moraine were covered with a soft powdery layer, which did not facilitate our progress. Its effect on the morale

of the coolies was specially unfortunate. They gave vent to loud lamentations and protests. The stupendous, white wilderness inspired them with fear, and they intensely disliked the cold. They made a great deal of noise, and gesticulated wildly, commencing long discussions with the jemindar. Every now and then they sat down, looking most miserable, and, I suppose, cursing the malignant fate which had landed them in such an unpleasant situation.

But we were in no mood to heed their protests. We were, all four of us, consumed by the desire to reach the upper end of the glacier, and we could not turn back before the Batura had revealed its last secret to us and the blank space on the map had been filled in. On we laboured through the soft snow, sinking through up to our knees. We passed a rocky spur, but still did not see the end. The glacier seemed to be endless, continuing mile after mile, and apparently now coming from an Eastern direction.

The contrasts in the temperature were enormous. In the night it had been freezing hard, but in the daytime the heat seemed to be thrown back by the ice of the glacier with tremendous force. The thermometer exposed to the direct rays of the sun mounted to 140° Fahrenheit.

Another curve appeared. We pushed on with greater speed, breathing heavily, for we were above 16,000 feet and . . . at last we caught sight of our goal. Before us lay an extensive basin, filled with

ice and surrounded on three sides by steep walls of granite; here was the spot where the snow of the Batura accumulated, before it embarked upon its lengthy journey downwards to the Hunza valley.

With the aid of three fixed points we could ascertain with accuracy where we were.

“Thirty-seven miles, sir,” Khan Sahib exclaimed triumphantly.

Thirty-seven miles of ice, probably more than 600 feet thick and in most places 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide. There are no such tremendous glaciers outside the Polar regions, and it was a wonderful sensation to realise that we had ascended to its source one of the mightiest ice-streams on earth, as yet virgin ground, which no human foot had ever trod. We were the first to gaze upon the innermost recesses of this remote ice-hung world.

Worthily the Batura ranged itself as the fourth longest glacier among its mighty rivals—the Siachen, with its 45 miles, the Tuylchek in the Tian Shan, with its 44 miles and the Hispar with its 38 miles. One can gain an idea of its great length when one realises that the Aletsch glacier, the longest glacier in the Alps, is only  $10\frac{1}{2}$  miles.

“I shall never be able to talk about this in St Niklaus,” said Franz with emphasis as he stared at the white landscape.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Because no one would believe me,” he answered. “Our own Gorner glacier is not more than  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles!”

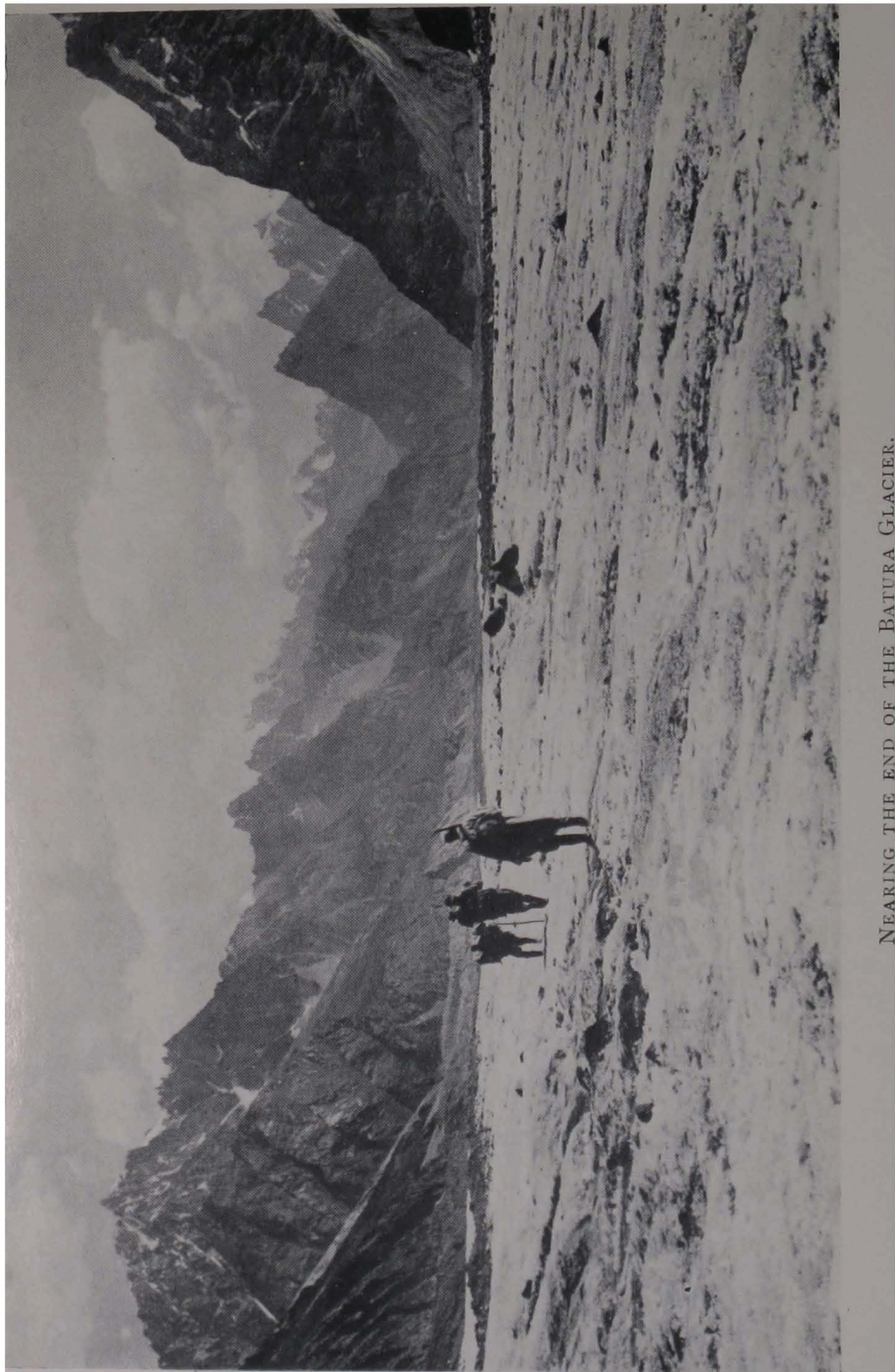
It was difficult to find a suitable place for our camp. We could not pitch our tents in the soft snow. At last we found a narrow ledge in the steep wall of granite about 250 feet directly above the glacier, at a height of about 18,000 feet. With a few of the most obliging coolies we managed to disengage some of the pieces of rock and fill in the spaces with smaller stones so as to make a place for our sleeping-bags. It was not possible to pitch the tents properly; they flapped about like collapsing balloons.

“Do not move too much to-night,” counselled Franz, a good piece of advice as it looked as if the slightest vibration would cause the sleeping-bag to tumble down the precipice. Above us hung some ominous-looking slabs of rock. They were poised at such an angle that one had the impression that the feeblest gust of wind would send them crashing down upon us. Not only above us, but also beneath us the formation of the rocks showed the same enormous flat, thin pieces, airily suspended in space. During the ascent whenever I shoved a loose boulder lying in the way, over the edge of the cliff, I had experienced a strange sensation as if the earth was trembling. Khan Sahib had also felt it.

Franz climbed down and examined the wall of rock.

“It is quite safe,” he said, “if there is no earthquake!”

We hoped for the best, but only felt partly reassured.



NEARING THE END OF THE BATURA GLACIER.





Slowly the shadows of the night fell. The sunset was of an incredible beauty in these sublime surroundings. But as the peaks, gleaming in the golden light, were gradually enveloped in darkness, and an icy wind wandered with a soft lament over the snow-fields, hushing the sound of the water and blowing out the last glowing flame on the mountains, an overwhelming sense of solitude and loneliness filled us with a yearning sadness.

Quietly the night closed in on all sides and the thermometer fell to 18° beneath freezing-point.

It was bitterly cold in the early morning. In the dim light the ice- and snow- fields showed vaguely, but high above the whole mountain world the sky was illuminated with a golden haze. Franz brought me a cup of tea in my tent; it tasted of smoke, and I found it more useful to warm my hands with than fit to be consumed as a refreshing stimulant. I had placed my heavy mountain boots in my sleeping-bag to keep the leather soft so as to be able to put them on without difficulty. We made the preparations to strike camp as hastily as we could, stamping our feet and blowing on our freezing hands all the while. Some of the coolies came to help us. The rest wandered forlornly about, wrapped up in their chogas. With folded hands they came to entreat us not to go any further, to give them permission to start on the long journey, 37 miles over the ice, back to the warm Hunza

valley. I asked Khan Sahib to tell them that they could prepare themselves to start downwards. He shouted his cheerful message in his usual thundering tones, and his shivering servant came up to me and touched my feet with his folded hands to signify his immense gratitude and relief. He had reached the limit of his endurance. Fatigue, fear, cold, the difficulty of breathing in the rarefied air, the alarming sense of solitude, all had combined to weaken his energy; a host of frightful sensations were in league against him and he melted into tears. The greater part of the members of our caravan, who a few days ago had been in such a felicitous mood, now did not seem to be in great form, and I do not think that I could have got them on much further.

Franz, Perren and I decided to try to continue a short way further on to try to reach the watershed and discover what lay on the other side of the wall of rock at the head of the Batura glacier. My guides showed an admirable spirit of pluck and enterprise, setting the coolies a good example. I appreciated it all the more as I knew that Franz was not feeling well and had not been able to sleep. One of the coolies showed more courage than the rest and offered to accompany us.

“ Franz, where shall we try our luck ? ” I asked.

He pointed to the upper end of the glacier where the steep snow slope joined the perpendicular granite cliff, which was furrowed by vertical couloirs.

The ridge seemed to form its greatest depression there.

We descended rather slowly and clumsily from our nocturnal retreat, as our limbs still felt stiff and cramped. Then we zigzagged upwards between the crevasses. It was bitterly cold, much colder, it seemed to me, than in our bivouac, and my feet especially felt numb and frozen. After about an hour the slope grew steeper, and we cautiously crossed a snow bridge over the bergschrund. The angle of the slope increased again and Franz began to swing his ice-axe, making small, but good steps where we could stand with safety. We found that it was not easy to get on to the rocks from the snows.

The coolie behind us began to emit sounds of distress. He held up his hands with the usual expressive gesture, pleading us to take pity on him, and signified that he could not go any further. We unroped him and left him behind in a snug little corner, where the rays of the sun just appearing over the ridge could reach him. He contentedly rolled himself up into a kind of ball and promptly fell asleep.

We now changed places, Perren going in front; then Franz, who would not give in, in spite of the fact that he felt far from well, and who, taking the second place, could thus give the leader some help if he should need it, while I myself followed in the rear.

A critical examination of the wall of rock in front of us had revealed a couloir which appeared to be practicable, and which ascended in a slanting direction. It was a splendid but difficult rock climb, resembling the couloirs of the Grand Chamois above Chamonix.

We soon became aware that the melting snow sought its way down here, as the granite was glazed with ice.

We generally moved only one at a time, making use of the tiny protuberances we found as hand-holds, so as to be able to pull ourselves up. There was scarcely room to place one's foot. Sometimes we found a narrow crack where we could work ourselves up, our weight supported by our backs and knees.

It was not possible to advance with great speed. A strenuous rock climb at an elevation of more than 16,000 feet cannot be compared to the same climb at a lower altitude. And the rocks were intensely cold! I tried to warm my frozen hands by holding them under my coat and breathing on them every now and then.

In the Alps an exhilarating rock climb is a joy; it inspires an increase of energy and becomes an exciting battle, with the mountain as one's adversary. Here it is also a struggle with the mountain, but even more a fight with one's self, with one's own endurance and sinking energy.

Now and then Franz broke the silence with a

short indication: "There is a good foothold! Higher up! The left hand!"

Once I called out to him to wait for one moment, as panting painfully I fought for more breath, clinging to the rocks in an awkward, cramped position. Sometimes just before reaching a safe spot above me, I had to give up at the last moment and let myself down again to gain fresh strength before trying once more.

At last we stood all three together on a tiny flat space. I looked down and saw to my surprise that we were already about 600 feet above the snow. But I also saw the sheer drop of the buttress which fell in an almost vertical line to the glacier. We seemed to be quite near the top of the ridge.

While I rested a moment, Perren went on in front. The couloir now appeared to be absolutely perpendicular. Cautiously as if glued to the rocks, he pushed his body slowly upwards. But there was an obstacle to be overcome; a thick chunk of ice hanging in the crack like a frozen waterfall. Standing on the shoulders of Franz, and using great caution not to lose his balance, he cut hand-holds in the ice, then pulled himself up, while Franz helped him from below. Wriggling upwards in the crack, he endeavoured to reach the top of the ice. There were no foot-holds and he had to trust entirely to the strength of his arms. It was a sporting attempt, but I had had enough of these acrobatic performances above a precipice of 600

feet, and I saw that his strength was giving way. It seemed to me that I was hanging there myself, straining every muscle in a frantic endeavour. Franz also anxiously called out to him to take care.

For another breathless moment he remained suspended in the air, and then he slowly sank back until his feet found support on the ice-axe leaning against the rocks. He cautiously stepped on to Franz's shoulders and slowly let himself down again, avoiding the least abrupt movement which would have been disastrous in their precarious position. I heaved a sigh of relief when I saw that he had regained the little platform in safety. With bated breath and tense muscles I had watched his risky venture.

"It was the cold," he said. "Otherwise I could have done it!"

His fingers were completely numbed and Franz was soon hard at work rubbing them with snow.

"Could you see anything?" I asked him anxiously.

"Yes, Herr," he answered dolefully. "If I could have got up about another 15 feet I would have reached the end of the rocks, and there was only a steep snow slope, which would have led us in about a quarter of an hour up to the ridge."

It was a cruel disappointment to have to turn back about 150 feet below our goal, below the spot where we could have gained a view of the unknown

region to the north. But I had had enough thrilling sensations, and the guides had made every effort that was humanly possible,

The sun had now reached our little platform and we decided to rest a while, basking in the comforting warmth. Indeed a good rest was necessary to give our lungs and hearts the chance to resume their functions in a normal way, and we waited until our gasping breath was no more audible, until we were warm through and through, and we could once more enjoy a pipe of good tobacco and admire the wonderful view.

Perched upon that tiny ledge at a height of 17,100 feet, with 37 miles of glacier ice separating us from the inhabited world, we played a game of dominoes. This was not because we were suddenly bereft of our senses, but owing to the fact that the said game was included in the series of physiological tests we had undertaken to make.

Then we took one more good look at our surroundings before preparing to descend. Far away a row of tiny black specks was visible on the dazzling white expanse of snow, moving slowly downwards; our happy coolies! Khan Sahib and his cook, now certainly weeping tears of joy!

The descent proved to be less difficult than I had imagined. It was even a pleasure, as although the rocks were not easy, it cost less energy to descend than to climb upwards, and I did not notice the effects of the rarefied air. We tied the coolie



we had left behind to the rope. He gazed with awe at the cliff above his head and seemed greatly impressed by our exploit, I suppose thanking his stars that he had remained quietly below.

Then we ran down the glacier and towards evening reached the camp, where we found the coolies in a happier frame of mind than the preceding night.

The next day starting as early as possible we made a double march, but the men walked with such speed that one could almost believe that the mountain spirits they secretly feared were pursuing them.

It was delightful to see in the distance the little flag flying from my wife's tent, and know that we would soon be back, in our flower-decked oasis above the glacier. The coolies from the camp above came down to meet us and bring us water from the sparkling stream and soon we were resting again on the grassy slope among the flowers.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE BATURA

AZIZA had prepared a splendid repast to welcome back the climbers. We had soup and meat and tinned vegetables, and a cup of tea with cake and biscuits as a finish. We talked over our next move; the coolies had returned from Pasu with the rations, so we could now start with the whole caravan complete. An atrocious moraine still separated us from the "junction": in passing this the advance party had observed that the ice of the Northern branch did not seem to be very much broken. We wished to find out how far it extended and also to discover a pass leading into the Lupghar valley, which debouched into the Chapursan valley. If possible we wanted to return by this route, because although it would not probably be any shorter, it would nevertheless be more interesting, as it would partially cover new ground, namely up to the Chapursan.

However a few hours afterwards I was not thinking any more about the problem of the Northern branch of the Batura, but was wondering whatever was the matter with me. I had never felt so ill in all my life. Although in the morning I had been

as fit as usual, I now was thoroughly miserable and absolutely unable to move. My temperature had suddenly risen to  $101.8^{\circ}$  and I ached all over, from head to foot.

It would never do to fall ill in the heart of the icy wilderness of the Batura! A perusal of the book of medical advice we always kept in the medicine chest, did not exactly tend to raise one's spirits. The symptoms accompanying my illness seemed to fit the description of almost any disease: I hovered between typhoid, cholera and smallpox, but finally decided that a dose of aspirin would be the safest remedy.

Towards the evening I felt much better and the next morning, although a little bit shaky, I was nearly normal again, the temperature having gone down.

On my return to Gilgit I asked the doctor there what this strange and sudden malady could have been. He told me that it probably was a heat-stroke, which would account for the sudden rise in temperature. It is true that the sun was still incredibly hot and that as we had been unable to find a place in the shade, we had had our meal sitting in the sun.

On September the 6th we sent on Perren and Afraz Gul with a few coolies to reconnoitre the route up the Northern branch. We followed the next day with Franz and the rest of our caravan. The sky was overcast and the weather did not look very promising. After traversing an indescribable chaos

of tremendous boulders, poised at such an angle that the slightest touch sent them crashing down, and composed of a slippery kind of rock which gave no hold to the foot, we turned the corner of the side valley. The mountains here appeared to be of a less imposing character owing to the fact that the higher peaks were veiled in a heavy pall of mist.

There was no trace of verdure to be seen anywhere and the stones reached down to the edge of the glacier. It was altogether a dreary scene, desolate and gloomy, with dark clouds overhead, heavy with the snow that soon commenced to fall. Perren had sent back one of his coolies to fetch wood. The man brought us a note, saying that we should find a good camping-place about two hours further on. He wrote that he and Khan Sahib would try to push on to another camp.

We found the spot Perren had indicated: a little basin of sand with gigantic boulders strewn about in wild confusion.

The next morning the sun was shining again and we continued along the left bank of the glacier until we reached a spot where Perren had built a cairn to show us that he had entered a small side valley, which probably would lead to a pass into the Lupghar valley. There was a broad, open space for our tents and a stream came rushing down the cleft which opened towards the North.

We could now see the end of the glacier. The main ice-stream curved to the North-west, and

formed another short lateral branch going directly West. The glacier basin was surrounded by fine peaks, but soon after our arrival in camp wreaths of mist drifted across the higher summits and towards the evening the whole world of snow and ice lay bleak and forlorn, wrapped in a grey mist. A cold wind blew across the glacier and tugged at the ropes of our tents. The canvas fluttered and flapped as if one of the giants of the mountains wanted to blow us away. Great masses of cloud crept up from the Batura, driven along by the wind, and from the heights all around the dense grey veil descended, closing us in on all sides.

Suddenly the first white flakes whirled along the dark moraine ridge above our tents, and soon it was snowing fast.

The next morning when we awoke it was still snowing, a kind of undecided drizzle, as if the weather had not yet made up its mind what to do,—whether to give us a sample of its worst humour or gradually to better its ways. The dismal curtain of mist still shut out the view of the upper basin of the glacier and the surrounding peaks. It was damp and chilly, and we were as undecided as the weather. If we got caught in a snow-storm higher up we should be much worse off than where we were now, but on the other hand it seemed a pity to waste a day in inactivity, as we had rations for not more than six days.

We were anxious to know how the advance party

had fared. At 10 o'clock a messenger from Khan Sahib arrived. He wrote that he and Perren were encamped about two hours above our camp at the foot of what they believed would be a pass. However as the weather was extremely bad, and no view could be obtained, they had not made an effort as yet to reach the col. It was freezing hard where they were and it was bitterly cold. Khan Sahib had spent the night with seven coolies in his tent and Perren had sheltered two of the unfortunate men, as they had not taken a tent with them. They were without food or fuel, and asked to be allowed to rejoin us.

We speedily dispatched the coolie with a note telling them to come down at once, and in the evening they arrived, looking none the worse for the night they had spent on the snowy hill-side, packed together like herrings in a tin.

The morning of September the 10th dawned with radiant brilliance. From a dazzling blue sky where soft billowy clouds floated languidly along, the sun burst forth upon a glittering snow-carpeted world.

We decided that the best plan would be for Perren and Khan Sahib to make a dash for the pass and see what lay ahead. We would follow slowly with the bulk of the caravan, but we would first wait to hear if the route down to the Lupghar valley would be feasible. We held ourselves in readiness to start as soon as we should have received

a message. In the afternoon we saw the jemindar coming down the valley.

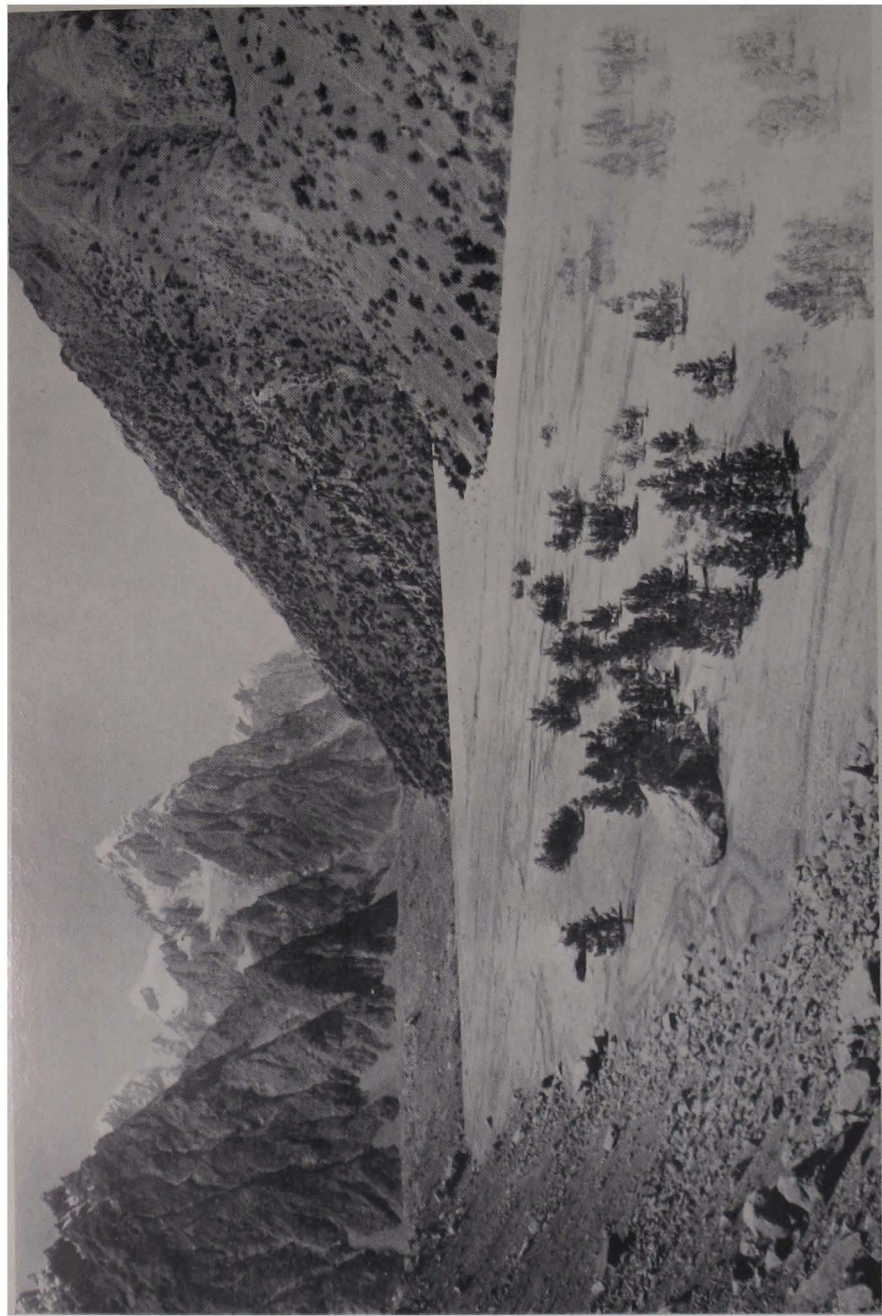
Perren's news was disappointing. He wrote that they had reached the pass, which was very easy on this side. They had found however that the descent on the other side was terribly steep and that it would need the greatest care and take a long time to get the coolies safely down.

There was a dangerous wall of snow and ice, which would require much step-cutting, and the coolies would have to be let down one by one on the rope.

It would be altogether too risky an enterprise with a large caravan in uncertain weather and with a shortage of rations, especially as the descent would land us in an unknown region, and the retreat would be cut off.

We much regretted that we had to give up our plan of returning to Hunza through the Lupghar valley, but it certainly was the wisest course to retrace our steps by the way we had come. It was a satisfaction anyhow to know that in spite of all our difficulties, and bad luck with the weather, the Batura and all its side branches had been surveyed. In spite of this last defeat our labours had not been in vain, and with the feeling that the Batura had not treated us badly after all, we started to go downwards.

The first march was only a short one. Perren and Khan Sahib rejoined us in the evening, and the next day we reached Guchisham.



SMALL VALLEY BETWEEN THE BATURA GLACIER AND THE MOUNTAIN SLOPE.





We had only been away a few days, but the golden autumn glory had vanished from the hill-side. Gone were the fragrant blossoms and the dancing butterflies. There were only withered stalks and decaying leaves, and I searched in vain for the throng of tiny, swift-winged creatures of joy, which had chased each other so merrily above the sunny slope.

Below Guchisham we kept on further along the left bank of the glacier and found that the broad valley continued some way down beyond the point we had reached on our ascent.

Our next camp was one of the prettiest that we had come across. There was no grass, but an abundance of water and shade, and the trees made enchanting little groves. The coolies could not resist the tempting sight of another of the Batura's splendid "dancing-floors," and there was a grand performance in the evening.

We made an early start the next morning. Our way now took us first across the glacier, where we found an easier route than our previous one higher up. Two of the coolies were in front: the jemindar had told us that they had come over before with the cattle, and they had probably made up their minds that they could show us the way.

This however was too much for Franz's professional pride, and he calmly struck out on a line of his own. As we approached the other side we caught sight of the two coolies searching in vain for a way out of the labyrinth of crevasses, and to our

guides' secret satisfaction, after a while we saw them give up the attempt and return to our track.

At about 4 o'clock we reached the steep cliff mounting to the Alp where we had camped on the first night.

It seemed to have grown twice as steep and as high since the day we had descended it, coming as it did at the end of a long and tiring march. But we had secretly resolved, if it were possible, to reach Pasu that same evening. Franz held out the reward of a cup of tea at the top, and I urged my weary limbs to make a last effort.

We found the Alp deserted. The huts were empty; the goat girls and their frolicsome charges had sought other pastures. Instead of the gay yellow flowers there were only bare stalks sticking forlornly into the air with bunches of rustling, empty brown seed-pods, crumbling to dust at the touch of one's fingers.

But the glorious view was unchanged.

Kalbi fetched some water from the glacier and Franz brewed us a luxurious cup of tea. Perren, Khan Sahib and the coolies had gone on in front, eager to return to our camp in the village, but we could not tear ourselves away from this last outpost above the great glacier which we now knew so well, and which perhaps we should never see again, and we lingered behind to bid the Batura a last farewell.

With Franz, our trusty mountain comrade of

countless adventurous climbs, we spent one of those hours which remain in one's memory when so many others have faded away, hours when the peace of the mountains steals into one's heart after moments of stress and endeavour, golden hours which, though maybe not a word is spoken, seal the bond of friendship for ever. In such moments, rare and beautiful, fixed as stars in a monotonous dark heaven, the soul breaks its prison-door, frees itself from its fetters, and the splendour all around "enlivens the conscious full heart within."

We drank in the view, watching the outlines grow clearer in the pure light of the evening, recalling mountain memories of former days, and forgetting the swiftly passing minutes.

"Five o'clock!" Franz cried, looking at his watch, "we must be going."

In half an hour we had reached the track leading down to the moraine of the Pasu glacier. It was remarkable how the tremendous seracs that had been there early in the year had all vanished. They had completely melted away during the summer in the fierce heat of the sun.

We slid downwards amongst the tumbling stones as fast as we could, and gave a sigh of relief when we once more stood upon the ice. From here the way held no more difficulties. The sun had disappeared from the valley long ago, but the peaks were still suffused with faintest rose, and little golden clouds like soft feathery plumes floated

against the flaming sky. We were still on the ice when we saw Zadig, the old Shingshali and two small boys approaching us with baskets of apples and apricots. A little lower down the son of the lumbardar of Pasu, a slim lad with fair hair and refined features, stood waiting for us. As we neared the village our escort grew more numerous, the jemindars came leaping along, more sedately followed by the lumbardar himself, by the sick babu who was on his way to Misgar, by all the old men and worthies of the village, so that we were surrounded by a large crowd when at last we reached our orchard.

Here we found Harinxma, who had returned from the Kilik pass some days before. He had had no luck with the *ovis poli*.

It was quite dark before the supper was served, but we enjoyed it all the more for having waited so long. Allah Baksh had cooked the meal, as Aziza had only just returned. He came up to the table and presented me with a dish with an extra solemn expression on his face, as if this were a great occasion. A delicious smell rose to my nostrils: I peered at the savoury mess in the uncertain light of the flickering lamp.

“Allah Baksh!” I cried, “what is this? Onions and potatoes?”

“Yes, Mem-sahib,” he said gravely, “it is Irish stew.”

It may seem an incredible thing to the jaded

dweller in civilisation, but that evening in Pasu we went into raptures over Allah Baksh's dish of Irish stew! Even I who take flight at the smell of an onion, gloated over it.

And thus ended the long day. The Batura expedition lay behind us, and with the Batura we had finished the most important part of our programme. Like visions seen in a dream, the scenes and events of the last months, with the manifold hardships and dangers we had endured, the moments of supreme enjoyment we had possessed, passed before our mind's eye, and we were overwhelmed by a sense of gratitude and profound joy.

That evening Khan Sahib came up to my husband and, as he wished him good-night, from the depth of his heart, he added :

“Sir, God was very kind to us!”

We spent two more days in Pasu in order to give our camp a good rest before continuing our journey. We repacked the yakdams, dividing the luggage into two batches, and separating what would be needed for the Hispar expedition from the rest which could remain in Hunza, until we came back to fetch it.

The coolies had to be paid and the last accounts with the lumbardars of the various villages to be settled, so that all day long there were groups of men hanging about the camp or squatting in a circle, while lively discussions took place.

The two jemindars, now that we had left the

glacier region behind us, had made themselves very smart. They appeared in clean trousers and chogas and shared between them a magnificent Norfolk coat of tweed, which they wore in turns.

Allah Baksh and Munir Khan had another grand orgy of washing, delighting to shake out the clothes under the very noses of the interested spectators.

Perren busily distributed pills and bandages, while all the halt and the lame and the blind of the village passed before my husband, who had gained a great reputation as a healer of the sick, owing to the fact that one of the men, suffering from a horrible sore on his leg, had got quite well after using the ointment he had given him.

Some of our coolies too had bad wounds on their legs and feet. They were tremendously pleased and proud to be seen wearing a beautiful, white bandage, but like the children they were, they could not resist the temptation of pulling it off every now and then to have a look at the wound: a foolish trick which infuriated Perren, as he had to begin his work all over again.

The lumbardar of Pasu, who was a kinsman of the Mir's, seemed to be a more independent character than most of his kind. His son was a special friend of ours. We had noticed him directly among the other lads of the village because of his blond, almost reddish hair and fair skin. He gave the impression of being an exceedingly intelligent boy. We asked

his father whether he would not like to send him to the school at Gilgit and promised to pay all his expenses there, but after much deliberation we received the reply that the old man preferred to keep the money we would otherwise have spent on the boy's schooling for himself, and that he did not consider that all this education would make his son any happier.

He would be discontented when he returned to Pasu, the lumbardar argued, and he would not be willing to work any more on his father's land, and spend his days in tilling the soil and herding the cows. We had offered to take the boy with us to Gilgit, but his father's stern refusal was final.

On September the 16th we departed with all our belongings, about a hundred coolie-loads in all. I found the same piebald pony waiting for me, that had carried us across the foaming Khunjirab. With the lumbardar's son at the horse's head, I followed the winding path overgrown with tangled weeds and grass, and crossing the Pasu stream came to the frontier line of demarcation between the rank vegetation at the extreme limit of the irrigated area and the arid, sandy desert beyond.

For the last time I turned back to look at the little green oasis, with its clustering mud-houses and shady groves of trees which the fierce sun smote with blinding light. In the background towered the dark, massive wall of the Shingshal peaks, throwing its mighty barrier across the valley. Far away, aloof



and serene, the snow-crowned summits glistened, looking impassively down upon the scene below. There, all remained unchanged as the centuries rolled by; men lived and died, and gave their women in marriage; they wore the same clothes and tilled the soil in the same way, tended their herds of goat and sheep as their ancestors had done in the dim past. Time itself faded into a meaningless word; only the sunrise and the sunset, the passing of the seasons, summer changing into winter and spring heralding the approach of the longest days, marked the fleeting hours. How could a man tell his age? How could he know how many years ago such and such a thing happened? How could he find an answer when the strange Sahibs came asking these troublesome questions?

One more farewell glance, and I half turned to go, when I remembered the lumbardar's son standing silently at the edge of the path.

“Good-bye,” I said, “and good-bye to Pasu!”

“Pasu——” he repeated, in a queer, troubled voice, and although we had no tongue in common, neither Hindustani nor Burishushki, I understood his meaning. Only one word, but uttered with a strange, regretful wistfulness, a faint questioning, a kind of apology, as if he wanted to say: “Yes, Pasu, and not otherwise! Pasu—and not the world beyond, with its schools and cities, fine clothes and riches, learned men and books. . . . Only Pasu.”

With a last salaam he turned to go, a slight figure leaping from stone to stone, hastening towards

the village, while our caravan toiled up the slope facing Gulmit.

It was only a short march, and before tea-time we had once more established our camp on the polo-ground on the outskirts of the village. We could now make use of the telephone, which in this remote region is a quaint reminder of civilisation, and we accordingly rang up the Mir of Hunza to announce our return to his capital.

It grew hotter and hotter as we progressed down the valley, and on the sand and in the rocky ravines the scorching heat was unbearable. As there was much less water in the river than on the way up, we could frequently avoid crossing the spurs by keeping to the river-bed.

There was now fruit to be got everywhere. On the third day after leaving Pasu we stopped for tiffin at Mahammadabad, the last village before reaching the capital of Hunza. In the afternoon we approached the village named Altit lying at the foot of the cliff. From the rocky wilderness, with its dry, sun-baked slopes, we came to shady little lanes winding up and down between high stone walls festooned with blossoming creepers and trailing plants displaying fat, yellow gourds, half concealed by the wealth of their foliage. The approach of winter was not yet perceptible here; on all sides there were trees bent down by the weight of the ripe fruit, and gay flowers glowing in the hot sun.

Near the shady pool in the centre of the village a crowd had assembled to watch us pass. Some men and boys stepped forward with offerings of fruit and the little jemindar with a proud smile pushed his small son forward to make his salaams.

We then commenced our triumphant entry into Baltit. Horses had been procured for all of us, and we formed a proud procession; even the jemindar was astride a prancing steed with the youngster perched behind him. Followed by a throng of interested spectators we dashed along to the foot of the height on which Baltit is built. The rocky path, leading from the bottom of the cliff to its crest, is about as steep as the slanting roof of a house but, without pausing, our ponies, panting and straining their quivering muscles, carried us to the very top, and dismounting before the stone arch we entered the familiar garden and advanced to greet the Mir in a rather dusty and dishevelled condition. The wear and tear our garments had been subjected to during our long sojourn amongst the rocks and the glaciers had sadly depleted our scanty wardrobes, and we all of us looked a wee bit battered and travel-stained, with our faded topees and patched and mended tweeds, except Khan Sahib who, for the festive occasion, had put on a high, stiff, white collar, which so tightly encircled his neck that he had the appearance of being throttled.

It was shady and cool under the trees. We

exchanged polite conversation until we felt rather exhausted, but we revived at the sight of a long row of servants solemnly advancing, each bearing in his extended arms a huge platter of fruit. The first was heaped up with golden glowing apricots, the second with soft blushing peaches, the third with rosy-cheeked apples, the fourth with big green pears, the fifth with enormous slices of juicy melon, the sixth with luscious, purple mulberries and the seventh with bunches of sweet, white grapes. It might have been a procession of high priests of the goddess Pomona, and after our hot and dusty ride we felt quite ready to worship at her shrine and promptly responded to our host's invitation to taste of the fruit which the servants had placed on the table before us.

It was then that the bridge was mentioned. The Mir said that he had heard that we were going on to Nagar the following day. To get to Nagar we had to cross the river between the territories of the Mir of Hunza and his neighbour by one of the so-called *jhula* or rope bridges, which consist of three lengths of ropes made of twisted birch twigs, one serving as the footway and two others as hand-rails. They are extremely unsafe when old and should be renewed at regular intervals, as otherwise the twigs become dry and perish, so that the ropes suddenly, without warning, give way under the weight of the unfortunate person who happens to be crossing at the moment. A spirit of laziness

and the unconquerable fatalism of the East frequently prevent the bridge from being replaced before an accident has actually happened. We had not yet come across any of these *jhulas*, and were curious to see the Hunza-Nagar one.

We turned our wandering attention to the Mir who seemed to have mentioned the bridge.

“Mir Sahib asks whether we cannot remain a few days longer in Hunza before going on to the Hispar glacier?” proclaimed Khan Sahib.

Already during the conversation which had taken place through the telephone the Mir had urged us to postpone our return to Baltit for a few days, explaining that he was expecting a visit from the Resident of Kashmir. Major Loch had also informed us of Sir John Wood’s projected tour to Gilgit, which would be extended to Hunza and Nagar.

We replied that we had already informed the Mir that we were obliged to proceed to Hispar with the greatest possible speed as the climbing season in the high mountains was rapidly drawing to a close and every day we were delayed might be the cause of our failure.

“But, Khan Sahib, why this concern on the part of the Mir to keep us on this side of the river until the Resident’s visit? What can it matter to him if we go to Hispar before or after this event takes place?” we continued innocently.

Khan Sahib seemed to be rather embarrassed.

“You see,” he began, “he,” indicating our host

with a twist of his shoulder, "has just put up a new rope bridge for the Resident Sahib, and if we first pass over it with all our coolies and our heavy luggage it might not be strong enough afterwards."

Such is human nature that this argument instead of immediately bringing us round to the Mir's point of view, had exactly the opposite result, and strengthened us in our determination to go to Nagar as quickly as possible.

However, to show our good faith in the Mir's bridge building, we promised to return to Hunza after our expedition to the Hispar glacier to fetch the bulk of our luggage, which we intended to leave behind in the care of the two jemindars.

Bidding our host farewell we hastened down the rough track to Ganesh, where we found that our guides had established the camp in a shady spot near the village.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE HISPAN GLACIER

“Is this a *jhula*?” I said, staring at the strange construction swaying above the river. It looked a queer affair of rough twigs, the Mir’s brand-new bridge, and did not seem to inspire Franz, whose natural dislike of the water had not diminished since we started on our expedition, with much confidence.

“It’s more like a rotten basket full of holes than a bridge,” he replied, laughing.

We were sitting on the rocks in the blazing sun beside the sandy bank of the Hispan stream. A steep descent had first brought us to the wooden bridge over the Hunza gorge, and we were now facing the last obstacle which lay between us and the shore of Nagar. Our coolies were engaged in carrying the luggage across. It was a lengthy proceeding, as each man had to wait until the coolie before him had nearly reached the opposite bank before he could start. Two persons moving on the bridge at the same moment threw it into a swinging motion, and the structure was too frail to support the weight of more than a couple of heavily laden

coolies at the same time. No wonder that it took our caravan several hours to cross the river.

A messenger from Nagar had come to meet us in order to convey the tidings that everything had been prepared for our journey and that ponies had been sent down for us to Sumaiyar, but we preferred to wait and make sure that all our belongings got safely across. Two sturdy individuals were superintending the arrangements, one of whom Khan Sahib pointed out as being the professional "bridge conductor," whose function it was to escort Mirs and other highly-placed personages across the *jhula*. A terribly responsible position it must have been! I saw him eyeing us with a hopeful expression inspired by the anticipation of much baksheesh.

One by one the coolies mounted the high pile of stones and began to cross the bridge. It was divided into two parts, or it would be a more accurate description perhaps to say that there were two bridges, separated by a great rock in the middle of the river. Each loop was about 150 feet long. The three sets of ropes, of which they were constructed, were fastened on either side to an upright piece of timber, buried in a pile of loose stones. There was a steep slope at either end, as it was impossible to stretch the ropes taut and thus the bridge sagged considerably in the centre. To keep the hand-rails apart horizontal sticks were placed at every few yards. It required a good deal of careful balancing to lift up one's legs high enough to step



over these awkward obstacles, and we watched the coolies, with their unwieldy and heavy loads performing acrobatic feats in order to avoid disturbing their equilibrium.

At last it was Pete's turn; a coolie slung him across his back in the traditional way of carrying sheep, and he quietly submitted to this mode of transport without making any commotion.

Patiala, however, objected strongly to such an undignified position. We tried all kinds of devices, tying him in the hammock, wrapping him in a choga,—one of the men even fetched a large basket, which they used for carrying apricots, from the village on the other side of the river, but it was all useless, as he struggled so violently to get loose that he would have thrown both himself and the man who was carrying him off the *jhula* and I cried to the coolie to come back. It was evident that we should have to find some other way of getting him across. The difficulty was solved by Akbar volunteering to go with him down the valley on the Hunza side until he reached the suspension-bridge which crosses the river near Minapin. Walking fast he would be able to catch us up at Nagar the next day. It would mean two long marches extra however to make this detour.

“Well,” said Franz, when the last coolie had reached the opposite bank, “jetzt gehts los!”

The native mode of going barefoot was more suited to the slippery birch twigs than our heavy-

nailed mountain boots, as I discovered before I had gone far. The first part above the dry sand and the rocks was not so bad, but looking into the rushing water made one terribly dizzy, and it seemed as if the whole bridge was moving down the river with incredible speed. It was a peculiar and disagreeable sensation. I wonder whether the person who invented the expression going "off one's head" had ever been on a rope bridge; I should think it highly probable that he had.

The official conductor of the Mirs escorted me, but he could not be of much assistance as we both had to hold on to the side cables with a hand on either rope. He assiduously implored me not to look down, and kept up a running fire of encouraging "Bahut atsha, Mem-sahib," in staccato tones, as I slowly advanced on the unstable *jhula*. The best method, I found, was to place one's feet crossways. It is possible that after having repeated the passage more frequently one grows accustomed to the sensation of clinging to a swaying strand of frail and slippery birch twigs above an angry, swiftly rushing mass of water, but at first it is a disagreeable experience, and I much prefer the tiniest ledge on good solid rock, although the sheer fall of the precipice may be a hundred times greater than the drop to the river below the bridge. The nastiest places were, when having reached the pieces of wood connecting the side ropes, which were as high as a man's waist, one had to step over them.

The second half of the bridge was shorter, but was above the deepest channel. With a sigh of relief I pulled myself up the last bit, and handed the man of the bridge his baksheesh. Then scrambling up the boulders I reached the path where I mounted one of the ponies we found waiting there.

We were now in Nagar territory, which stretches along the left bank of the river down to Nilt. It is not favourably situated, as it is off the caravan route, and has no outlet, being shut in on two sides by Gilgit and Hunza, while in its rear lies a wild hinterland of impassable peaks and glaciers. Necessities and luxuries which the country does not produce itself, such as salt, tea, sugar, matches, etc., must be imported either from India or Chinese Turkestan through its neighbour's territory.

The capital, where the fort and the Mir's residence are situated, lies about 3 miles up the side valley leading to the Hispar glacier. It was a pleasant ride partly through terraced fields and orchards, well cultivated and irrigated by the admirable system of little canals that enables the dwellers in this dry and desert land to transform a ghastly wilderness into a blossoming garden. The road struck us as being particularly smooth and well-kept. At various points we came upon coolies working with picks and shovels, this being probably in honour of the prospective visit of the Resident of Kashmir. On a great slope of shingle some

men were repairing the damage done by a recent landslide. We observed to our amusement that road-menders are the same the whole world over. The instant they became aware of our approach they began scraping and hacking away as if afraid of losing a minute of their precious time, presenting a pleasing spectacle of extreme diligence. However as soon as we had turned the corner the sounds of their labour ceased, and one could have seen them leaning idly on their spades, or lounging by the wayside indulging in a good rest.

As we intended to halt for tiffin somewhere on the road, we had just reined our ponies in near a shady spot, when we saw a tall man on horseback approaching us. He turned out to be the Wazir of Nagar, who came to make his salaams and bid us welcome. He was a cheery old gentleman and ready to help us in every way. He told us that the Mir was absent, but that he hoped to meet us later on when we returned from Hispar.

We were now quite near Nagar. Turning a corner the fort came into sight, built in the same style as the castle at Hunza. Passing a pretty little lake surrounded by shady trees, near which the dispensary was situated, and crossing the polo-ground we ascended the steep path to the bungalow. There was a garden in front of the house, so we told the Wazir that we preferred to put up our tents, but we had to wait a long time before the coolies arrived.

The servants fetched a table and some chairs and soon a procession of men arrived bearing plates of fruit. All along the grassy bank under the trees a row of spectators was seated. As there was a wall round the garden there was some kind of privacy and only specially privileged persons were admitted. There were little groups of the Mir's children and grandchildren and attendant retainers, as the cheery Wazir explained to us.

Munir Khan created a diversion. He solemnly brought me a basin of hot water, as I had expressed a desire to wash my hands, and then ostentatiously produced a clean towel and a piece of soap. The assembled crowd gazed in awestruck amazement at this marvellous performance, and I wished I could have passed on my piece of soap and towel to the guardians of the young princes, admonishing them to "go and do likewise," for the royal children looked decidedly grimy.

The Wazir chatted amiably, telling us many things about the polo, for which Nagar is famous, and the shikar, the Mir being a great hunter himself. All the arrangements for the coolies had been made, and we were to have a new Nagari jemindar, a man who had formerly accompanied Dr Hunter and Mrs Bullock Workman on their expedition to the Hispar glacier.

The luggage had just arrived when we saw the crowd at the gate make way for a small group of men: they made a picturesque effect as they

advanced in their loose woollen robes, each with a hawk perched on his wrist ; indeed some of the smaller boys might have been pages who had stepped out of some mediæval picture. It was the eldest son of the Mir and his retinue who came to welcome us in the absence of his father. He was a young man, dark and intelligent-looking, and one could see that he felt perfectly at ease, and although all he said had to be translated by Khan Sahib, we kept the conversation going without difficulty.

“ Yes,” he told us, “ the pass to Skardu in Baltistan is still used sometimes, but very seldom.”

The Hispan glacier was good for shikar. His father used to go there often. But now snow had fallen there already. It would be cold.

We were prepared for the cold, but we did not much like the look of our coolies. It seemed that they were the best the Wazir had been able to find for us, but they did not look very promising. They were of small stature and of much less favourable appearance than our Hunza coolies, and some of them were quite old men with white beards. Their chogas were generally dark brown instead of white and mostly half in rags.

We surveyed them rather doubtfully the next morning as, with the Wazir, we watched the dividing of the loads and counted our men. Three of our old Hunza coolies had remained with us : the faithful Kalbi, Akbar and one of Khan Sahib's porters, whom we called the “ Black man ” on

account of his black choga and general swarthy appearance.

Kalbi was exceptionally quick at picking up words he heard of other languages: his own tongue was Burishushki, but he was about the only Hunza coolie who could make himself understood at Shingshal, and besides speaking Hindustani he was proud of his knowledge of a few English words. I was much amused one day to hear him talking Dutch to the dog, repeating a phrase he had often heard us use, meaning, "Come here. Good dog!"

Ours certainly was a polyglot company, as it consisted of people speaking nine different languages and dialects. It was remarkable how well we all got on together and understood each other, considering this Babel-like confusion. I always marvelled at the long conversations Franz used to hold with the jemindars who did not know a word of English, while our guides' vocabulary in Hindustani was limited to the only eatables the country produced, namely: *dud*, milk; *ghee*, butter; *murghi* and *onda*, fowls and eggs.

It was amusing that the coolies seemed to imagine that the word "Pete" was the Dutch for sheep: every sheep we saw since Pete's adoption was called "Pete" by them.

In spite of our good intentions and early rising, we were not able to make a timely start on the morning of September the 20th, and it was about 8 o'clock before the coolies marched out of the

garden with their loads. Just as the last one was disappearing Akbar arrived with Patiala, both looking very dusty and tired. They had been walking all night and had only stopped for some food near the bridge.

We remained for some moments in the empty garden with the Wazir before following our caravan. He had begged me to make use of his own pony for the first few miles, after that the road was too rough for it to be possible to go on horseback. I recognised the horse immediately as being one of the animals his son had brought for the Mir of Nagar from Yarkand in the spring. We had met them at Gulmit on our way up and I had reflected what a long and difficult road the little caravan had come, across the Batura glacier and the precipices of the Hunza valley. Little had I thought that a few months later the same white pony would be carrying me towards the Hispar glacier.

It was a perfect day and the distant snows were gleaming in the brilliant sunshine as we wound up and down the shady lanes between the fields and orchards. In the ravine beneath the Barpu glacier I dismounted and we halted a moment to say good-bye to our friend, the Wazir, who was leaving the same day to rejoin his master. There was to be a great feast in honour of the Resident's visit and it would be a busy time for Nagar. We, however, hoped to be well on our way up the Hispar by that time.



We now had first to cross the Barpu glacier, which was very dirty and covered with gravel. It looked as if it was advancing. On the other side there was a track leading high up the hill-side through meagre pastures, descending at length to the stream which we crossed by a most primitive kind of wooden bridge. We found a cool spot by the water in the shade of an enormous boulder and waited a long time there for the coolies to come. They were terribly slow and the jemindar's threats and entreaties seemed to be of no avail. We had hoped to reach Hispar in one day, but at this rate it seemed more probable that it would take us three. In a country where one depends on coolie transport it is of no use to go quickly oneself and get stranded without one's belongings. One has to possess one's soul in patience and regulate one's speed to that of the coolies. And our men on this occasion were not particularly nimble or cheerful; they toiled along unwillingly, and made use of every occasion to sit down by the roadside and grumble and lament.

Beyond the bridge the Hispar valley was a dreary wilderness of stones and dry crumbling slopes. The path had ceased long ago. In some places where the water was too high to keep to the river bed we had to creep along slippery slabs of rock. Just beyond one of these "mauvais pas" we came upon Abdul Ali who rushed towards us in great agitation, pointing with tears in his eyes to the river, and

repeating a string of words, amongst which we distinguished "Khan Sahib! Khan Sahib!"

He then laid his hand with an expressive gesture on the rock and indicated that something had toppled over into the water. "Khan Sahib! Khan Sahib!" he cried again, bursting into tears, looking helplessly into the foaming Hispar.

"Good heavens," said my husband, "Khan Sahib must have fallen into the water."

We were seriously alarmed and as it was impossible to extract a lucid explanation from the sobbing Abdul Ali we hurried on, anxious to catch up the jemindar, who had gone on in front with our topographer, when on turning the next corner to our great relief we saw the cheerful face and sturdy figure of Afraz Gul.

"But, Khan Sahib, you are not even wet!" we cried. "Abdul Ali tried to explain to us that you had fallen into the water and we thought you had been drowned!"

Khan Sahib burst out laughing. "This foolish Abdul Ali!" he said. "I did not fall into the water; it was the saucepan he was carrying with my tiffin. I gave him a good scolding for being so careless, and now he is terribly upset!"

At one spot there was no room to walk along the bank of the stream and it was necessary to go through the water. It took the coolies a long time to pass this place as it was rather deep and the current was swift. It shows how the conditions

varied, one might almost say from hour to hour, that Harinxma, who had gone on in front, had been able to get through without the slightest difficulty, while on our way back we could hardly recognise the place as the stony bed of the river was partly dry.

It was nearly dark when the coolies came up to the place where we were waiting for them, and by the time the meal was cooked one could not distinguish anything in the black night.

The next day the scenery in the valley remained the same: unchanged also was the slow progress of the coolies. In the late afternoon we halted for a cup of tea on a sandy spot, above which we had espied a grassy ledge which would be a good camping place if it should be impossible to get the coolies to advance any further.

We were reclining lazily in the shade when suddenly Perren, who had been half asleep with his nose on the ground, announced in a solemn voice that the sand was full of rubies. We were all immediately wide-awake and, crouching on our knees, were soon busily scooping up the soil. There were thousands of tiny fragments of a beautiful clear red colour but they were hardly bigger than the head of a pin. Afterwards we found them also in the bed of the river and in some chunks of rock and knew them to be not rubies but garnets, which one finds frequently in the whole region of the Hunza valley. There was also a great deal of gold dust in the sand of the river.

It was past five before the coolies arrived and although Hispan could not be far away we realised that it would not be possible to get them a step further.

Some of the little old men looked exactly like malignant dwarfs out of a fairy-tale of Grimm, with the humps of the loads on their backs, their dark loose chogas and crooked sticks, and red, black and white beards: the colours of their beards being obtained by artificial dyes, according to the custom of the country.

The next morning, about two and a half hours after we had started, we came in sight of the Hispan glacier. As the village is situated on the opposite (left) bank of the stream, on an old moraine high above the valley, we did not go there at all, but found a good site for our camp on a level, sandy spot a little below the snout of the glacier. The lumbardar of the village came down with an old shikari who had been with Sir Martin Conway in 1892, and Harinxma engaged the shikari to accompany him as he intended to go off on his own for some shooting.

The following morning we continued our way along the right bank of the glacier. The scenery lacked the terrifying grandeur of the Shingshal glaciers, but was very beautiful in the bright autumn sunshine. There were extensive though meagre pastures on the flat plateaux between the ice and the slopes of the mountain, and we found a track all

the way along. In spite of this the coolies lagged behind in a hopeless way.

We passed a sort of marsh where Harinxma shot a duck, and a short distance beyond, established our camp about half an hour before the Lak glacier. The Workmans have given it this name, but to the inhabitants of Hispar it is known as the Kunyang glacier: Lak being the name of the mountain and alp directly above it on the western side.

The Kunyang glacier flows directly to the north and we hoped to be able to reach a pass at its upper end which would enable us to solve the problem of the Malangi Dias or Dasto Ghil range.

The next morning the weather looked so bad that we decided that it would be better to wait for a day to see whether it would improve or not. Harinxma with the old shikari went on to Bittermal, the alp on the left bank of the Kunyang glacier.

Now and then through a rift in the veil of clouds we caught a glimpse of the mountains opposite. As far as we could judge from our own observations we came to the conclusion that as a rule the glacier valleys on the northern side of the Kara-Korum watershed are much narrower than those on the southern side, the mountain walls accordingly being much steeper and producing more the effect of ghastly precipices than the gentler slopes of the Batura and the Hispar.

Along the Hispar there were more individual peaks than on the northern side where the structure of the mountains presents the aspect of tremendous arêtes with peaks rising from the main ridge.

It was very quiet in the camp: there was not even the sound of running water to be heard. We had become so accustomed to it that now we missed it. The coolies had to go down to the glacier to fetch the water we needed, which added another complaint to their long list of lamentations.

In the afternoon the sun came out for a moment but soon the sky once more became overcast. The next morning, however, we decided to make a move, and after a charming walk along the hill-side glowing with the gold and scarlet tints of autumn we turned to the right bank of the Kunyang glacier. As the weather looked less and less promising I remained at the place where we halted for tiffin, while my husband and the guides went on with the lagging coolies, some of them now carrying wood, as beyond this spot there were no more trees.

Very soon a cold wind began to blow from the glacier and I moved lower down in search of a more sheltered corner among the low shrubs and stunted trees below the slope of the moraine. As, however, all the coolies had gone on, having dumped our tents and other baggage at the place where we had halted for tiffin, there were no porters left

and Munir Khan and the cook had to shoulder the loads themselves, which they did most cheerfully. They came staggering along with burdens as big as themselves, certainly about two coolie loads and weighing about a hundred pounds. But as there was no one but myself to notice this loss of dignity, while on the contrary I applauded their zeal, I suppose they did not mind.

In the evening it grew colder and colder and the prospect did not look very hopeful.

The next morning, on September the 27th, I did not need to look outside my tent to know that there had been a heavy snowfall. It was darker than usual and bitterly cold, and all around there was the dead silence that the snow brings. Everything was buried beneath the white shroud: all life, it seemed, had been extinguished, nothing stirred: I and my dog might have been the only living things on the hillside. I wondered what had become of the servants. It was long past the usual hour when Munir Khan ordinarily appeared with the morning cup of tea.

A blinding whirl of wet snow swept into the tent as I opened the flap and peered outside. It was already more than a foot high. In the distance the kitchen tent stuck out forlornly above the dead white surface, but all was silent. Probably the servants had rolled themselves up in their blankets and were sleeping like marmots.

It certainly was the wisest thing to do, and piling

up all the rugs and garments I could find on my bed, I tried to get warm.

Towards noon Munir Khan appeared with a cup of tea. He looked the picture of misery, a shivering mummy with his head tied up in his woollen scarf. With great difficulty, he said, they had been able to make a small fire: the wood was wet and would not burn and the others had taken the "meta," the artificial fuel we used, with them. The tea, although tasting horribly of smoke, was comforting; at least it was hot. It was impossible, however, to prepare any food as long as the snow lasted.

The hours crept by; slowly the day turned into night and night again into day.

My husband had sent down a coolie with a note saying that they were encamped a few hours higher up. It seemed a pity to turn back and they intended to wait and see if the weather cleared up.

The next morning, however, it was still snowing.

I lost all count of time and hardly knew whether it was day or night. Slowly the snow grew higher all round the tent. There were compact walls of snow packed tightly against the thin sheet of canvas which separated me from the arctic world outside.

The only sound to be heard was Pete, snuffing and scraping desperately in his persistent search for food. His mournful voice proclaimed his state of mind: I never heard a more doleful and expressive "Baa." He nearly poked my tent to pieces with



his horns and consumed with amazing rapidity the pieces of bread and biscuit which I offered him.

In endless monotony the hours dragged by.

On the fourth day, September the 28th, my husband and the guides returned from the upper camp.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE SECRET OF THE DASTO GHIL

MY husband's experiences in the upper camp on the Kunyang glacier had been disappointing, as may well be imagined. They are recorded in the following extracts from his diary :

*Friday, September 25th.* We continue along the right moraine valley of the Hispar, and at the junction turn round the bend of the Kunyang glacier. Weather getting worse and worse. Now and then we catch sight of gigantic mountains. In the evening high against the sky like a "fata morgana" we see the summit of a high peak at the upper end of the Kunyang valley. Perren thinks it must be the Dasto Ghil.

*Saturday, September 26th.* The wind howls and whistles and the snow is swept against the tent. It is bitterly cold. In the morning we find that the snow lies eight inches high. The roof of my tent breaks down beneath the heavy weight. Impossible to go out without getting wet through. Keep to our sleeping-bags almost the whole day.

*Sunday, September 27th.* No view at all. Thick clouds hanging low. Impossible to do anything.

*Monday, September 28th.* Weather improving slightly. We can see the upper end of the valley. I also think I see a peak resembling the Dasto Ghil, but Afraz Gul shows us on the map that this is impossible. It is curious that Cockerill should have also fancied that it was the Dasto Ghil, or the Malangi Dias, as he called it. But I must own that I am beaten and that it is topographically impossible. There is too much snow to wait here for a chance of going to the pass which is supposed to exist at the end of the glacier. Franz, who, between two snow-storms, went further up the valley yesterday, tells me that the pass is probably not very high. If this supposition is correct the col cannot lead into the basin of the Yazghil, as the latter is certainly situated at a considerable height. There must be a second pass behind this one. In the late afternoon the weather looks decidedly better. The beauty of the snowy landscape is overwhelming. The black and dirty glacier is pure white. The mountains are radiantly beautiful. What a series of gigantic peaks! We descend to lower camp.

Thus once more the baffling Dasto Ghil had defeated us, and we reflected moodily that all our toils had been in vain.

The grumbling coolies seemed in none too happy a mood. Abdul Ali, however, looked radiant. He knew that this was the last expedition to the glaciers we intended to make, and that now each step would bring him nearer to the warmth and the safety of the Hunza valley. He looked even more delighted

when Khan Sahib asked for permission to round the corner of the junction and to go down the Hispar until he had reached the limit of the snow, as the clouds still obstructed the view and there was nothing further to be done.

However, the next day, September the 29th, dawn broke with the promise of a cloudless day, and we hastily dispatched a coolie to fetch Khan Sahib back again. Although there was too much snow on the glacier to venture further in that direction, there was a small peak about 1500 feet above our camp which tempted my husband and Perren to make a last attempt to solve the problem of the Dasto Ghil. It was situated in a good position to command a satisfactory view of the upper end of the Kunyang ice-stream.

Three and a half hours after the messenger had departed, Afraz Gul arrived and started at once to ascend the peak with my husband and Perren.

Another extract from my husband's diary tells the story of their climb :

“The little peak did not appear to be more than 1500 feet above our camp and Franz calculated that we should be on the top in about three quarters of an hour. The large boulders were covered with a thick layer of snow. Although we went quickly we took one hour and forty minutes to reach the summit. Our excitement grew greater at every step as we drew nearer to the top and the whole panorama of the surrounding mountains

was gradually revealed to us. Khan Sahib pulled off his snow-cap and waving it excitedly in the air gave a great shout. We breathlessly rushed up the few last yards and gazed towards the north. The problem was solved! There before us lay the Dasto Ghil, rising high above the upper basin of the Kunyang glacier. We could also see now that the latter ice-stream did not find its origin where former explorers and we ourselves, seeing it from below, had conceived it to be. It issued from the narrow passage leading to the mysterious region between the high mountain and the range that according to all appearance shut off the Kunyang glacier. What the Workmans had imagined to be a pass was in reality a terrace down which the glacier fell to a lower point, thus draining into the Lak glacier. This also solved another topographical problem as we now saw that the Dasto Ghil belonged to the main range which formed the watershed, while the chain that was formerly supposed to be the watershed was only a secondary ridge.

“This discovery is an ample reward for all our trouble, and although it cannot make good our disappointment at not having been able to penetrate into the region beyond, we are extremely glad that at last we have solved the problem of the Dasto Ghil. The working out of the details must remain to be done by future travellers, or maybe we ourselves will one day return to accomplish it?”

We spent our last evening on the Hispar glacier with our whole party happily reunited round a

blazing camp-fire. The hot sun had already melted a good deal of the snow and the last clouds reminding us of the bad weather had been chased away by the wind. Franz had been on a hunting expedition to the other side of the glacier and had returned with two ibex. We had had a most satisfactory meal and the coolies to their great joy had been allowed to divide the rest of the meat among themselves so that there had been a great feasting.

It was a wonderful moonlight night. All around us lay the silent mountain world, an endless expanse of white snow gleaming mysteriously in the pale pure light. The stars shed their soft radiance overhead; it was a night of indescribable beauty, of blessed calm.

Franz stirred a charred log with his boot and a hundred glowing sparks sprang upwards.

“Our last night on the glaciers,” he remarked. “It is just as well. It will soon be winter in the mountains.”

Soon, we reflected, the wild Kara-Korum land would lie behind us and we should be wending our way towards the hot plains of India. The task we had set ourselves was completed: the blank spaces on the map had been filled in, and we could set out on our homeward journey with deep and sincere satisfaction and gratitude. But all the same two contrasting sets of thoughts were at war with each other as we gazed at the dark silhouettes of the mighty peaks: while we felt the joy of returning

with the knowledge that we had been successful and that we had won through in spite of all difficulties, we were at the same time oppressed with the sadness of bidding farewell to the mountain solitude where we had lived so intensely.

We halted once more below the Hispar village to pay the lumbardar and the coolies. The mountains all around were white with the fresh snow and the glacier looked beautiful in its wintry shroud. On the grass, however, the snow had soon melted away, and on our way down we had met a herd of yaks conducted by a few ragged shepherd boys, going towards Bittermal.

On October the 2nd we camped once more in the dreary, stony Hispar valley. There was much less water in the stream than on our way up. The coolies, according to the custom of their kind, went much better now than on the upward march. At about five o'clock in the afternoon we had reached the usual half-way bivouac. It was a good camping place, but we were not long left in peace, the spirits of the Hispar valley apparently having decided to hold a grand cannonade for our delectation. Fortunately, it was on the other side of the gorge, but although we ran no risk, we did not spend a pleasant evening. It was one of the most remarkable phenomena of Nature we had ever witnessed. Down a deep couloir on the mountain slope opposite our camp the stones poured incessantly. Clouds like puffs of smoke rose out of the ravine as if it were the mouth of a volcano,

and in a short time the air was full of a horrible thick yellow dust. Behind the dense, opaque fog we heard the dull rumbling sound of the stone avalanche. Great rocks crashed down. Whole cliffs must have been crumbling away, for the stones kept on falling all night long and the avalanche was still continuing when in the morning we fled from the spot. We could never have believed that such a thing was possible if we had not seen it with our own eyes. When the stones first started falling it had been a beautifully clear, sunny afternoon. As the clouds of dust began to fill the valley I had taken refuge in my tent. In a few minutes' time it became pitch-dark. I called out to my husband, but the dull rumbling sound drowned my voice. Looking outside I could not even distinguish the other tent which was at a few yards' distance. It was so unnatural and so terrifying that I wondered if the world had come to an end.

It was impossible to remain outside, and even though we shut the tents as best we could, the horrible yellow dust penetrated everywhere. Our whole camp was buried beneath a layer of grime. When we woke up in the night we still heard the thunder of the stones. The servants called us at six o'clock in the morning and the avalanche still thundered on. It was uncanny and we felt that we had heard and seen enough of it.

"We must move on as quickly as possible," declared Franz; "we cannot stop here for breakfast."



It was so dark that we could hardly distinguish anything inside the tent, and outside we seemed to be in a London fog. We stared at each other in amazement. We were all covered with yellow dust: the tents were yellow, the rocks and the grass, everything was of a dull ochre colour. Pete had changed into a yellow sheep and Patiala into a yellow dog. The strange procession of yellow men and beasts wound along through the yellow landscape and it was an hour later before we saw the natural colours emerging from beneath the layer of dust. A little further on we felt that we had really escaped the Hispar devils and with a sigh of relief we resumed our normal complexions and sat down to a hearty breakfast. It had been a most interesting but unpleasant experience.

As soon as we arrived in Nagar the son of the Mir came to pay us a visit. He told us that the Resident had first been to Hunza, but that on the day after his arrival in Nagar, news had come of the death of the Maharajah of Kashmir, so that he had been obliged to hurry back to Srinagar. This had put a sudden ending to all the festivities that had been organised in honour of the Resident's visit. The Mir had gone on a hunting expedition but a messenger had been dispatched to tell him that we had returned.

The next day he arrived. A group of horsemen came galloping along past the wall of our garden, the old chief at their head, and dismounting at the

gate, he advanced to greet us. He made a most agreeable impression and had a touch of the "grand seigneur." He must have been about the same age as the Mir of Hunza. He was not a very tall man, but lean and active. He wore an embroidered choga and the usual Dard cap, with a Kashmiri scarf wound round his neck. The groups of retainers remained standing at a respectful distance: some of them carried hawks on their wrists, a few had guns and one or two had a bow and arrows.

The Mir inquired courteously whether all the arrangements for our expedition had been satisfactory, and expressed the hope that we had had no trouble during the time that we had been in his country. He was greatly interested to know where we had been, and whether we had found the pass we were looking for. Before he left us he invited us to dine with him on the following day.

Shortly afterwards a procession of men arrived, bearing gifts of flour, ghee, eggs, fruit and fowls, and even a live sheep, for the guides and for our servants.

On the following evening the Mir's son came to escort us to his father's house. We had not far to go, as the guest-room is at the end of the garden where we were camping. We entered by a little verandah which was decorated with heads of ibex, bara singh, markhor and ovis poli, spoils of the chase which had fallen to the Mir's gun.

The old man was a great shikari, and still spent most of his time out hunting.

The soft light in the inner room made a pleasing effect. There were rugs on the ground, and Kashmiri and Indian embroideries hanging against the walls and covering the chairs on which we were seated. The ceiling was carved and brilliantly coloured, and was supported by four pillars. We vaguely wondered how it had been possible to bring up the crystal chandelier, hanging from the ceiling, undamaged along the terrible track of the Hunza gorge. The big curving horns of the trophies on the walls were an effective and appropriate decoration of this banqueting-hall of the Nagar prince, who was never happier than when he held a gun in his hand. The only thing that rather spoiled the general effect and looked strangely out of place was a modern English brass bedstead. However, at the time I supposed that the establishment did not run to a state bedroom and a dining-hall as well, and that this chamber had been reserved for the private use of the Resident of Kashmir during his recent visit to Nagar.

Later on, speaking to Sir John Wood, I told him that I had seen the room, and that the beautiful brass bedstead on which he had slept was still there.

“I know,” he replied, “but I never slept on that bed! It is always there, but not for use, only as an ornament. The Mir having seen one some-

where and greatly admiring it, ordered another one as a decorative piece of furniture for his dining-room !”

However, as during the repast at Nagar I was seated with my back to this reminder of modern Europe, I could fully enjoy the picturesque and barbaric dining-hall of the Mir.

Our host, like his neighbour of Hunza, spoke Hindustani, and Khan Sahib cheerfully undertook the function of interpreter. The food was well cooked and well served, and included the following courses: soup, meat, with eggs and a sauce, chicken curry, a pudding and stewed fruit, dessert and coffee.

When we had finished the Mir, with a charming little speech, presented me with a tiny bag which, he said, contained a souvenir of Nagar. The bag itself was embroidered all over with very fine cross-stitch in bright colours, and was the work of one of the ladies of the Zenana: inside it I found two little silver doves, decorated with a fringe of red and silver beads. The Mir told me these were ornaments worn by the women of the country. He then most tactfully asked Khan Sahib whether we would not like to withdraw, as probably we were tired after the strenuous expedition from which we had just returned!

We bade our host farewell and our assurance that we should take with us many pleasant memories of Nagar was most sincere. We had found the

people exceedingly pleasant to deal with, from its ruler down to the jemindar, notwithstanding our grumbling coolies.

The next morning we started at about 10 o'clock, as we had promised the Mir of Hunza to be there for lunch, and we knew by experience that it would take a long time to cross the *jhula*, even though we were sending down our luggage along the road on the left bank to Minapin.

I was riding down the path when a man came running after me with a pair of woollen gloves in his hand.

"No," I said, shaking my head, "they are not mine. You must take them back." The man, however, pressed me to keep them, and was most distressed when I tried to make him understand that they did not belong to me.

Khan Sahib, who came up behind at the same moment, stopped to listen. The Nagari turned to him in despair.

"He says," explained our topographer gravely, "that this is a present for the Mem-sahib from the Mir's son!" Whereupon the man, looking much relieved, departed without the gloves.

## CHAPTER XXI

### BACK TO GILGIT AND SRINAGAR

AT the bridge at Sumaiyar we found a little group of Hunza men waiting for us, their caps adorned with gay flowers, and with big baskets of fruit in their hands. There was the mail runner too, with a packet of newspapers and letters. Akbar had come across to greet us, resplendent in a new coat and pink-striped trousers.

We eyed the *jhula* doubtfully. However, the Resident's party had passed safely over it in spite of the Mir's gloomy forebodings, and we trusted that the latter had taken a too pessimistic view altogether, and that it would hold out for another hour. After that—"le déluge!" as the French saying has it. There was now so little water in the river that it was not necessary to use the second part of the *jhula*, a little wooden bridge having been constructed to cross the second narrow channel.

The Hunza men escorted us across the river, and we had soon all safely reached the opposite bank. I found a pony waiting for me, which carried me up the steep height one has to ascend before coming to the gorge of the Hunza. It seemed in-

credible that a few days ago we had waded through the snow, shivering with cold, a few miles above the village of Hispar. In Nagar it had been much cooler than on the Hunza side of the valley, and most of the time a chilly wind had been blowing. Here we seemed to have descended into an oven, and after our sojourn on the snowy Hispar we felt the heat all the more.

We crossed the suspension-bridge over the Hunza river. At the foot of the cliff, instead of a prancing steed, stood the Mir's own riding-yak, which he had sent down for me. It was beautifully groomed; its coarse black hair shone like silk, and it had a natty little leather saddle on its back. But, although its shaggy coat had been smoothed and its independent spirit had been tamed—at least I hoped so—it had the same roving eye as its uncouth Gujirab brother.

Thus once more we climbed the steep, rocky path to Hunza. High above us, on its fearful crag, the castle towered, a real mediæval robbers' nest. All along the road the people came out to greet us with offerings of fruit and flowers. One old man, whose grey beard was dyed a fiery red, presented us with some apples, saying that he was Kalbi's father. The groups of girls and women, working in the fields, ceased their labours for a moment to watch us pass; some of them were extraordinarily handsome, with rosy cheeks and beautiful dark eyes. The children scampered on in front of the lumbering

yak, twittering like sparrows. Up the steep path my strange beast lurched, grunting and groaning a cavernous protest, until we reached the open space and the cool shade of the upper terrace. The Union Jack, which had been hoisted for the Resident's visit, was still flying and we observed that the final touch had at last been put to the stone doorway in front of the garden. Between two grim and fierce-looking wooden lions the word "Welcome" reassured the timid traveller who entered the Mir's portals.

Lunch was served in the little room where we had dined on the occasion of our first visit and we afterwards repaired to the garden. We found all our old Hunza coolies assembled outside, and the following hour was devoted to the distribution of the wages that still had to be paid, with many farewell salaams and baksheesh. The subdued murmur of men's voices and the chinking of coins filled the quiet garden. One by one the coolies passed before us. We had got to know many of them by their names and, in spite of occasional lapses, they had served us faithfully under the most trying circumstances. They had gone through hardships such as they had never known before, and had faced dangers with cheerful courage. There were all the familiar faces: old Zadig, the Shingshali; Khan Sahib's "Black Man"; the eloquent barber; young Akbar, the sword-dancer,—one by one we saw them go. Only Kalbi remained.



He would be the last Hunza man to leave us, as he was accompanying us to Gilgit.

It was getting on towards evening when at length we bade the Mir farewell and, mounting the ponies waiting for us at the gate, rode on to Aliabad. The servants had everything ready. They had prepared our quarters for the night in the bungalow. It was strange to sleep once more under a roof after so many months of camp life. The nights, however, were already getting chilly and it was pleasant to have a fire in the evening.

Our servants were now mounted on ponies instead of walking and Khan Sahib had promised Abdul Ali, to his intense joy, that he might enter Gilgit on horseback. Alexander the Great returning in triumph from the wars on his prancing steed could not have been prouder.

The marches in the early morning when it was still cool were delightful. The autumn colours on the hill-side were a joy to the eye and the glorious views of Rakaposhi all the way down, from Minapin to Chalt, came as a surprise, for on our way up to Hunza the clouds had hidden the great mountain from our sight. Franz thought that it could be climbed, but it lured us in vain, as we hurried past. Soon the passes would be closed and we had to get back to Srinagar before the winter snow fell on the Burzil. As we marched along we noticed that our caravan grew larger and larger. At each stage we changed our ponies and thus there were constantly

new pony-men. There was also the small Hunza jemindar with his little son perched on his horse behind him. And one day I noticed Kalbi's father, with his fiery beard, trudging along in the row of men and horses. It appeared that he was going to Gilgit with his son to help him spend his money and carry home their purchases.

The final sandy stretch before we turned the corner, where the Hunza merges into the Gilgit river, seemed endless, but at last we were well round the bend and the green oasis of the "furthest outpost of the great Indian Empire" lay before us. We had reached the last halting-place on our journey to Srinagar. The 230 miles that still separated us from the capital of Kashmir and civilised life hardly seemed to count.

In Gilgit there were only two European families, one of them being Dr and Mrs Stevenson, whom we had already met in the spring, the other, an officer, Major Strahan, and his wife who had just arrived with their two little girls. Both received us most kindly. The clear, sunny weather and the green fields and trees gave the illusion of summer, but soon the passes would be closed and the little colony of Englishmen and their wives and children would settle down to the wintry solitude of this lonely spot, with the snow-bound Himalaya cutting them off from the rest of the world.

In the garden of the rest-house we once more—now for the last time—repacked the yakdams, dis-

carding all unnecessary luggage. We rejected a queer assortment of rubbish of which Kalbi became the delighted possessor.

On October the 15th we started for Srinagar. For the last time Kalbi walked at my pony's head until beyond the last green field he turned to go back. He and his father must have returned to Hunza laden with treasures. His joy at receiving an old *numdah*<sup>1</sup> or yakdam was pathetic, and having seen the interior of a Hunza house, I imagine that his dwelling must now be fitted out in a regal way with the remnants of our camp furniture. Kalbi himself will be a resplendent figure in his village, adorned in an old tweed coat of my husband's, his new boots, fur cap, woollen gloves, socks and scarf.

Our return journey was in no way eventful. Our short stay at Bunji was made most pleasant by the kind hospitality of the two officers there, Captain Eliot and Captain Green. We spent one evening with Major Loch, the Political Agent, who had been absent from Gilgit and was now on his way to Chilas.

On the day we passed the Hattu Pir it was cloudy weather. This time we followed the lower road to Astor, which although it is shorter has certain disadvantages. It seems that in bad weather after heavy rains there is some danger from falling stones. The bungalows at Doyan and Dashkin are much better, and on the upper route one passes through

<sup>1</sup> Kashmiri rug.

the beautiful Dashkin forest, which is well worth a visit.

The weather changed as we approached the Burzil pass, just as it had done in the spring. We again found it covered with deep snow. On the second pass above Tragbal a storm was raging and we were blinded by the whirling snowflakes as we fought our way across. In the comfortable bungalow at Tragbal we dried our soaking clothes before a huge fire. In the evening, when we looked outside, the silent forest in the deep snow was like a scene on a Christmas card. Only the robin was wanting. The next day we set forth on our last march. The sun glanced through the thick pine forest, changing the dead white surface beneath the trees into a diamond-sprinkled carpet. Suddenly we saw the plain of Srinagar, and the Wular lake, half concealed by the low-hanging clouds, lying far below us. It was like a vision in a dream. Accustomed as we were to narrow gorges and steep mountain walls, it gave us a sense of freedom, of immeasurable space.

In Bandipur we found the four doongas which were to convey us to Srinagar. The journey by water would last about forty-eight hours. Slowly our caravan approached. The loads were taken from the ponies' backs and one by one each piece of luggage was carried on to the doongas. The coolies shouted and squabbled, and came begging for baksheesh. Khan Sahib's thundering voice was heard above the clamour. At last we ourselves went

on board followed by our servants. This time, however, one of the best among them stayed behind. Aziza, our cook,—and Pete!

He had already jumped on to the boat, and when two of the coolies seized him, he struggled violently. He greatly disliked being left behind, and though we were sad at parting from our mascot sheep, we could not take him with us. We had presented him to our cook, who has faithfully promised to look after him, and for whom he had always shown a special fondness. Perren had carved our initials on his horns.

Poor Aziza—the only honest Kashmiri—as our guides used to call him, stood forlornly at the water's edge, watching the doongas slowly moving away. He had served us faithfully; we had never heard him utter a single complaint; he had toiled and laboured and done his utmost without ever asking for help. With tears in his eyes he murmured a last salaam. Pete stood beside him, looking round with an air of surprise. Probably he was wondering what had suddenly become of the caravan. Where were the coolies, the horses, the noise of the camp? The crowd had dispersed, and only the two lonely figures of the man and the sheep were still on the shore.

“Good-bye, Pete!” we called out from the doonga, and as he always did when he heard his name, Pete answered with a sonorous “Baa!”

For a long time Aziza stood gazing out over the

water. We watched his motionless figure through our Zeiss glasses. Then we saw how he slung his bundle over his shoulder and turning round, tramped away towards his village with Pete at his heels.

The expedition was over! One by one the companions with whom we had shared so many hopes and joys, difficulties and dangers, left us, until only the memory remained of our wonderful and adventurous journey. Harinxma and the guides went on to Rawal Pindi three days after our arrival at Srinagar, Khan Sahib following a few days later.

Our nomadic existence had ceased. In the garb of civilisation we again strolled on the Bund under the great chenar trees now displaying their full autumn glory. Once more we sat down regularly to meals at a table spread with a clean table-cloth and stirred our tea with real spoons. And we were no longer surprised to see English people—white men!—around us. How quickly one adapts oneself to one's environment. I now remembered with amusement that on our journey up the Jhelum on catching sight of an English lady who sat sketching on the bank, we all cried out in amazement, "Look! an Englishwoman!"

Just as on returning to Holland after a long sojourn in a foreign country one involuntarily remarks: "Why, how extraordinary! There is someone speaking Dutch!"

After the others had left, we remained in Srinagar to wind up the affairs of the expedition. We spent

busy days among the chaos of yakdams and packing-cases on the verandah of Nedou's Hotel. At last, on November the 19th we watched the last piece of luggage being packed into the motor-car which was to convey us to Rawal Pindi. Patiala had jumped on to the seat and sat there looking as dignified as usual. He had also adapted himself to the ways of civilisation and would soon become a well-travelled dog, as we were taking him with us, far from his native land, Tibet, to Holland and Sweden.

As the car leapt forward the crowd of jabbering Kashmiri dispersed, and soon, rushing down the broad avenue of poplars, we had left Nedou's Hotel, with the Takht rising in the background, far behind.

## CHAPTER XXII

### CONCLUSION

AT the conclusion of my narrative I add a brief report of the scientific results of our expedition. A detailed account is not yet available as the various collections of specimens and the reports of the observations made during the expedition, are still in the hands of the experts who have undertaken the task of determining them.

*Topography.*—The total turn-out of our topographer's survey on the half-inch scale was 2580 square miles. With our caravan we traversed about 1250 miles, a great part of which was through unknown country and uninhabited glacier regions. It is due to the fine weather in the beginning of the summer that we were able to explore such an extensive area. We were also most fortunate in having such an excellent surveyor with us as Khan Sahib Afraz Gul of the Survey of India, who spared no trouble to fulfil his arduous and difficult task. We highly appreciated his energy and courage.

A considerable portion of the unknown Central Asian watershed was mapped and several tributaries



of the Hunza river were traced to their sources. Practicable passes were discovered in the Khunjirab and Gujirab valleys. A great number of totally unknown glaciers were discovered and explored, three of which, the Verjirab, the Khurdopin and the Yazghil glaciers range among the great ice-streams of Central Asia. The first two appear to take their rise in the great glacier basin of the Biafo, lying athwart the Kara-Korum axis, first discovered by Godwin Austen in 1861.

The whole of the Batura glacier was surveyed for the first time with all its lateral branches. Practicable passes were noted into the Lupghar tributary of the Chapursan to the north and into the Tutu Uns glacier on the west.

The topographical connection effected from the Lak or Kunyang glacier on the southern side of the Malangi Dias or Dasto Ghil range enables the earlier surveys of Sir Martin Conway (1892) and of the Workmans (1908) to be co-ordinated.

*Glaciology.*—The snouts of the principal glaciers were examined with regard to the problem of their advance or retreat. In the case of the Minapin, Hassanabad and Hispar glaciers we could compare our measurements with those of the late Sir Henry Hayden of the Geological Survey of India. We found that the Minapin glacier had retreated to a considerable extent, the Hassanabad glacier also showed evidence of having retired but not in such

a marked degree. The latter are both transverse glaciers, while the Hispar, which is a longitudinal glacier, had remained nearly stationary. We took photographs and measurements of the snouts of the other great glaciers we visited: the Batura, Pasu, Khurdopin, Verjirab, Yazghil, Malangutti, Parpik (Bara Khun) glaciers, which will serve as indications to future travellers wishing to examine them.

The snowline on the northern slopes was 600 to 700 feet lower than on the southern side of the mountains. We also observed that the snowline was lower above the great glaciers than above the valleys which were not filled with ice. The average height of the snowline was about 18,000 feet.

*Flora.*—The highest trees—conifers—were found growing at an altitude of 13,000 to 13,500 feet in the southern part of the region we traversed (Shingshal, Batura); in the northern area (Khunjirab) the limit was lower, at about 1000 to 10,000 feet. We observed that we frequently found the remains of dead trees above the actual zone where they were now growing which might be an indication of a variation in the climate.

In the small moraine valleys we found a wealth of flowers. We found edelweiss only in one place. Rhubarb grew almost everywhere where there was water, up to a height of 13,500 feet. At a distance of 25 miles from the snout of the Batura glacier we found flowers growing.

The collection of botanical specimens has been forwarded to the University of Utrecht to Professor Pulle.

*Zoology.*—The collection of butterflies has been determined by Colonel W. H. Evans of Peshawar. A solitary butterfly was seen at a height of 15,500 feet.

*Geology.*—Seventy-nine rock samples were collected, and have been entrusted to the care of the University of Leiden to be determined.

*Meteorology.*—Observations were regularly made concerning the directions and pace of upper air currents as indicated by the movement of cirrus clouds, and three times a day the temperature, air pressure, and direction of the wind were noted. We observed more than once that we were on a meteorological frontier line. We noticed several times that on one side of the main Kara-Korum range the weather was brilliant, while on the other side the sky was overcast.

*Physiology.*—Physiological tests were made at various altitudes so as to be compared with the same tests which were made in Holland in an aeroplane, and in the pneumatic chamber.

The heights were determined, if it was not possible in any other way, by the use of an aneroid barometer and boiling thermometer. About 450 photographs were taken of the regions we explored.

Goerz cameras were used with roll and pack films, all the photographs being developed and printed on the spot.

We brought all the supplies excepting flour, sugar and rice, and our entire equipment, excepting tents, from Holland, a number of Dutch firms had most generously presented us with their wares. Oatmeal, condensed milk, chocolate and biscuits were amongst the most valuable foodstuffs; jam, tinned fruit and vegetables being too heavy and counting more as luxuries. Tea and Maggi soup tablets are of course indispensable. We had no alcohol with us, excepting some wine and two half bottles of cognac for use only in case of sickness. Fortunately none of us were ever ill, so that we brought them back unopened and drank each other's health on the road down to Srinagar.

Great care had to be taken to reduce our luggage to a minimum, as the most difficult problem to solve was that of transport. Fortunately, in most of the Hunza valleys wood can be found which is a great advantage compared with travelling in the Ladakh country. In high camps "meta" was used for fuel.

It was difficult to find an outfit which was adapted to be worn in extreme heat while providing enough warmth in a certain degree of cold. As someone remarked: in these regions one side of one's person may be in danger of frost-bite while on the other side one might easily get a sunstroke. I

found an ordinary ski-ing costume of the "Windtyg" wind-proof material—such as one buys in any sports shop in Stockholm or Oslo for about forty to fifty shillings—the most practical attire. Besides being very thin—it is a cotton material—it is exceedingly strong; it keeps the wind out and with a woollen garment underneath is very warm.

For climbs at a really great elevation, or for wear in really cold weather, of course thicker clothing must be worn, but as a rule we suffered more from the heat than from the cold. The heat was so intense that on one occasion on opening a yakdam we found that nothing remained of a packet of candles excepting the threads! At night, and also when one is imprisoned in the tent during a spell of cold, damp weather I found my rubber hot-water bottle an indispensable comfort. In case of need, a stone, heated in the fire, may be substituted, but one runs the risk of burning oneself if one does not take care.

We always wore topees, which, as we had occasion to observe, are not only useful as a protection against sunstroke but can also serve at times as a helmet when exposed to falling stones.

Ramzana in Srinagar made all our tents, and they stood the rough usage of six months of hard camp life very well. My own tent was a perfect model as regards size and shape. It was just high enough to enable one to stand upright in the middle. It had a double fly; it was lined and had the bottoms

sewn on to the sides so that the interior kept perfectly dry. I do not recall its exact weight, but one man could easily carry it.

On the ground I had a purple *numdah* and a light Yarkandi rug in bright colours; the rest of my furniture consisted of a camp bed, a few cushions covered with gay Bokhara silk, and a yakdam which, covered with a rug, made a useful table for my writing materials, a few books, my little travelling clock, a Kashmiri candle-stick, and a vase of flowers, and also served as a support for one's back instead of a chair. Even on a Kara-Korum glacier it is possible to have a pretty and cosy interior. Above my tent a little red, white and blue flag fluttered which the Prince of the Netherlands had given to me on the eve of my departure from Holland.

The Hunza region has well earned its reputation of being one of the most difficult regions to penetrate, not only owing to its natural defences of precipitous mountains and wild glaciers but also because of the fact that permission to go to Gilgit is refused to all except the officers who are called there on duty. This measure is due to the appalling scarcity of food and transport in the country. Military reasons also restrict the use of the Gilgit road. We were therefore extremely grateful that permission to travel there was granted to us and our thanks are due to all those who assisted us with such kindness. In the first place we express our most sincere gratitude to His Excellency Lord Reading, who at the time was

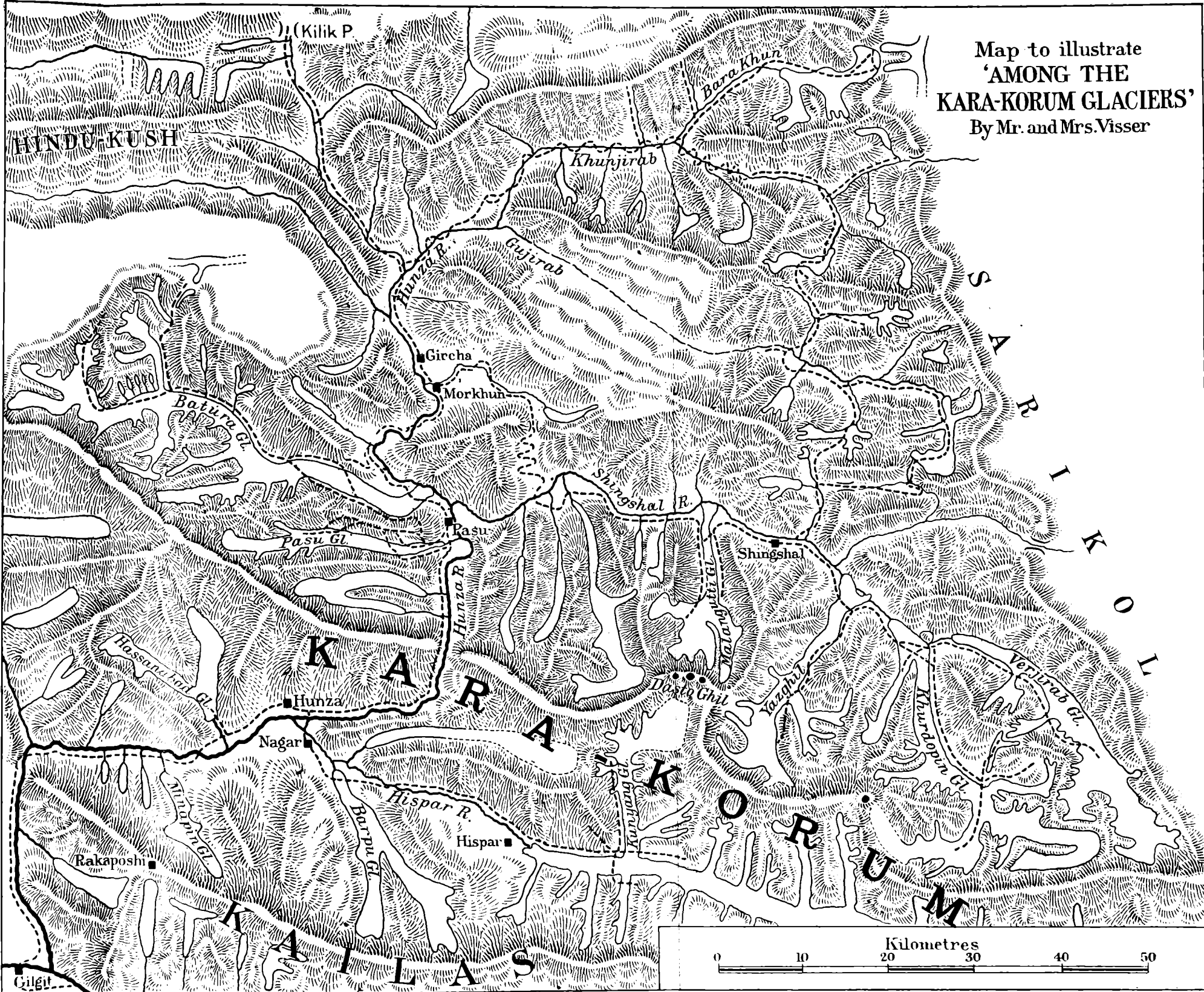
Viceroy of India, to the British Indian Government, and the Government of Kashmir, the Survey of India, and specially Colonel-Commandant E. A. Tandy, the Surveyor General of India, and Major Kenneth Mason. The latter, who, in 1911, performed valuable work in the Hunza region, spared no trouble to help us and most generously placed his time and knowledge at our disposal. Our thanks further are due to Sir John Wood, Resident of Kashmir, and Major Loch, the Political Agent at Gilgit, who through their kind assistance rendered our journey possible.

On the outward voyage my husband and I, Baron Harinxma and our guides enjoyed the hospitality of the Holland British India line from Rotterdam to Bombay, and on arriving in Italy on our return to Europe we received a most courteous and charming invitation from the Nederland Steamship Company to be their guests on board of the mail steamer "Princess Juliana" leaving Genoa for Amsterdam.

Thus after more than a year's absence, a year rich in strange adventures, in manifold experiences and happenings, we came home again with a corner of the Great Central Asian wilderness not only fixed on the map, but fixed for ever in our memory.

Map to illustrate  
'AMONG THE  
KARA-KORUM GLACIERS'

By Mr. and Mrs. Visser







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