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A Visit to Kafiristan. By W. W. McNAIR.

(Read at the Evening Meeting, December 10th, 1883.)

Map, p. 56.*

IN introducing Mr. McNair to the meeting, the President (Lord ABERDARE) said that the paper he was about to read was an account of a visit he had recently made to Kafiristan. Mr. McNair had resided in India for a long time previous to his adventurous journey, and whilst in the service of the Topographical Department in the North-west of India, had been employed in surveys beyond the frontier in Afghanistan. His attention was thus directed to the interesting country which the paper would describe. Kafiristan was a country of very peculiar interest. The name Kafiristan, or the "country of infidels," was a nick-name given by the surrounding Mahommedans, and was not that by which it was called by the natives. It had long been a reproach to English geographers that the only accounts of Kafiristan had been obtained through Orientals themselves, whose statements had never been tested by the actual visit of Europeans to the country. The consequence was that a sort of mystery surrounded Kafiristan,—so much so that Colonel Yule, when discussing an interesting paper by Colonel Tanner, on a visit he made to the borders of the Kafir country three years ago, said that when Kafiristan was visited and explored the Royal Geographical Society might close the doors, because there would be no more new work to be done. The veil had at last been drawn aside. It might be asked why the country had been so long held inaccessible. The explanation was that the inhabitants were always at war with their Mahommedan neighbours, by whom they were surrounded on all sides, and who had been extremely jealous of their communication with European travellers. Mr. McNair had penetrated Kafiristan in disguise. He (the President) had had an opportunity of seeing the paper, and he found that Mr. McNair had not dwelt upon the historical geography of Kafiristan, and therefore he would say a few words on that subject. As long ago as 1809 Kafiristan attracted the attention of one of the ablest public servants that England ever sent out to India—Mountstuart Elphinstone, who was anxious to add to his 'History of Kabul' something about the people of Kafiristan and knowing that it was inaccessible to Europeans, he employed an Indian, a

* The map not being finished, its issue is deferred to our next number.

man of learning and intelligence, to travel there and obtain all the information he could. It was curious to notice how faithful the report of his emissary was. The people of the country were described in the following words: "The Kafirs were celebrated for their beauty and their European complexions. They worshipped idols, drank wine in silver cups or vases, used chairs and tables, and spoke a language unknown to their neighbours." Their religion seems to have been a sort of debased Deism: they believed in a God; at the same time they worshipped a great number of idols, which they said represented the great men that had passed from among them; and he described a scene at which he had been present, when a goat or a cow was sacrificed and the following prayer, pithy and comprehensive, although not remarkable for charity, was offered up: "Ward off fever from us. Increase our stores. Kill the Mussulmans. After death admit us to Paradise." Killing the Mussulman was a religious duty which the Kafirs performed with the greatest fidelity and diligence. In fact, no young man was allowed to marry until he had killed a Mussulman. They attached the same importance to the killing of a Mussulman as the Red Indians did to taking the scalp of an enemy. Their number did not appear to exceed 250,000. They inhabited three valleys, and small as their number was they were constantly at war with each other, and seized upon the members of kindred tribes in order to sell them as slaves. The women were remarkable for their beauty; and Sir Henry Rawlinson once said at one of their meetings that the most beautiful Oriental woman he ever saw was a Kafir, and that she had, besides other charms, a great mass of golden hair, which, let loose and shaken, covered her completely from head to foot like a veil. In order to show what was the state of our knowledge of the country down to 1879, he would read part of a paper by Mr. Markham on "The Upper Basin of the Kabul River." "This unknown portion of the southern watershed of the Hindu Kush is inhabited by an indomitable race of unconquered hill-men, called by their Muslim neighbours the Siah-posh (black-clothed) Kafirs. Their country consists of the long valleys extending from the Hindu Kush to the Kunar river, with many secluded glens descending to them, and intervening hills affording pasturage for their sheep and cattle. The peaks in Kafiristan reach to heights of from 11,000 to 16,000 feet. The valleys yield crops of wheat and barley, and the Emperor Baber mentions the strong and heady wine made by the Kafirs which he got when he extended his dominion to Chigar-serai in 1514. The Kafirs are described as strong athletic men, with a language of their own, the features and complexions of Europeans, and fond of dancing, hunting, and drinking. They also play at leap-frog, shake hands as Englishmen, and cannot sit cross-legged on the ground. When a deputation of Kafirs came to Sir William Macnaghten at Jalalabad the Afghans exclaimed: 'Here are your relations coming!' From the days of Alexander the Great the Siah-posh Kafirs have never been conquered, and they have never embraced Islam. They successfully resisted the attacks of Mahmud of Ghazni, and the campaign which Timur undertook against them in 1398 was equally unsuccessful. But the Muslim rulers of Kabul continued to make inroads into the Siah-posh country down to the time of Baber and afterwards. Our only knowledge of this interesting people is from the reports of Mahommedans, and from an account of two native missionaries who penetrated into Kafiristan in 1865. Elphinstone obtained much information respecting the Kafirs from one Mullah Najib in 1809; and Lumsden from a Kafir slave named Feramory, who was a general in the Afghan service in 1857. Further particulars will be found in the writings of Burnes, Wood, Masson, Raverty, Griffith, and Mohun Lal." In recent years, Major Biddulph entered from Kashmir through Gilgit and made his way to Chitral, and Colonel Tanner advanced from Jalalabad a short distance into Kafiristan, among a portion of the people who had been

converted to Mahomedanism, but who still retained many of the peculiarities of the Kafir race. Dr. Leitner had also taken great pains to obtain information about this ancient and unconquered people, but Mr. McNair was the first European who had ever penetrated into Kafiristan.

Mr. McNair then read as follows:—

In the September number of this Society's 'Proceedings,' p. 553, under the heading "An Expedition to Chitral," allusion is made to my being accompanied by a native explorer known "in the profession" as the Saiad; it is to this gentleman that I am indebted for the partial success that attended our undertaking. I say partial advisedly, inasmuch as the original programme we had marked out, of penetrating into the heart of Kafiristan, fell through, for reasons that will appear as I proceed with the narrative.

The Saiad, whose name I need not mention, had been made over to me more than a year ago by Major Holdich to instruct. This led to a mutual friendship, and on his explaining to me that he had a plan of getting into the Kafir country, which was by accompanying Meahs Hosein Shah and Sahib Gul (who yearly go to Chitral either through Dir or via the Kunar Valley) as far as Birkot and then following up the Arnawai stream, crossing the hills to the westward and returning to Jalalabad either by the Alingar or Alishang rivers, I suggested accompanying him in the guise of a Hakim or Tabib, i. e. native doctor. He was to be accompanied by Meah Gul, a Kafir convert. The two Meahs of course had to be consulted, and after some difficulty I succeeded in getting their consent, having convinced them that the undertaking was entirely at my own risk, and that in the event of my detection they would be freed from all responsibility. I next sent in my papers for a year's furlough with permission to spend the first half in India. This was granted, and my leave commenced from March 27th. By April 9th I was at Nowshera, and by 3 o'clock on the following morning, with head shaved, a weak solution of caustic and walnut-juice applied to hands and face, and wearing the dress peculiar to the Meahs or Kaka Khels, and in company with Hosein Shah, I sallied out as Mir Mahomed or Hakim Sahib.

It may not be out of place if I here mention that the Kaka Khel section of Pathans, to which the two Meahs belong, are not only very influential, but are respected throughout both Afghanistan and Badakshan. The Kafirs also pay them a certain amount of respect, and will not knowingly attack them, owing to an epidemic of cholera which once broke out amongst them immediately after they had returned from murdering a party of Kaka Khels, and which they superstitiously attributed to their influence. They number in all a few short of 3500; this includes menials and followers. Though really considered spiritual advisers they are virtually traders, and I do not think I am far wrong in saying that they have the monopoly of the trade from Kabul east-

ward to the borders of Kashmir territory. If you say that you are a Meahgan or Kaka Khel, words signifying one and the same thing, you have not only access where others are questioned, and a sort of black mail levied on them, but you are treated hospitably, and your daily wants supplied free of cost—as was often the case with us. Of course the Meahgans have to make some return. It is done in this wise: a fair lasting from five to seven days is yearly held at Ziarat, a village five miles south-west of Nowshera, the resting-place of the saint Kaka Sahib; it is resorted to by thousands from across our north and east frontiers, and all comers are housed and fed by the Meahs collectively. Offerings, it is true, are made to the shrine, but I am told the amount collected is utilised solely for the keeping up of the shrine.

What follows is taken from my diary, which I stealthily managed to keep up during my journey. It was not till April 13th that we were fairly across the British frontier. The interval of four days was spent in getting together all necessaries. The rendezvous was for the 13th at Ganderi, and true to appointment all were present, our party then consisting of forty, including muleteers, and fifteen baggage animals. In the shape of provisions, we had nothing but sugar and tea. The contents of our loads (I should say goods, only that we got very little in return) were cloths of English manufacture, musical boxes, binoculars, time-pieces, a spare revolver or two with a few rounds of ammunition, salt, glass beads, shells, needles, country-made looking-glasses, shoes, and lungis, as well as several phials and galipots of medicines. In addition to these I had secreted a prismatic and magnetic compass, a boiling-point and aneroid thermometer, and a plane-table which I had constructed for the occasion. The last-mentioned instrument answered famously the purpose for which it was intended, and was in use from the beginning to almost the end of my journey. It answered, in case of a surprise, to pass off for a tabib book of prescriptions; all that was necessary was to slip off the paper that was in use inside one of the folds and expose to the gaze of the inquisitive individual merely a book or rather the outer case of one, in which I had written several recipes in Urdu. The instruments were either carried by the Saiad or myself in a *gooda*, i.e. untanned skin of goat or sheep invariably used by travellers in this region.

The Malakand Pass (elevation 3575 feet) is well wooded with brush-wood and stunted oak; grass and a goodly supply of water from springs are procurable all through the year. The ascent is easy, and practicable for heavy baggage. The descent into the Swat Valley is not nearly so easy; beasts of burden as well as foot-passengers have to pick out their way, but a company of Bengal or Madras sappers would in a few hours clear all difficulties sufficiently well to allow a mule battery to keep up with infantry. When once in the plains this state of things changes; where previously one had to avoid loose rocks and boulders,

we had now to search for a dry spot on which to alight. Both banks of the river are irrigated; the soil is very rich, and well adapted for rice cultivation. The valley has the reputation of being very unhealthy, owing, I have no doubt, to the effluvia arising from the damp soil. A Swatie is easily recognised by the sallow appearance he presents—a striking contrast to his nearest neighbours.

The Swat river is about 50 feet wide, from three to four deep, and flush with its banks. We crossed over in *jalas* (i. e. inflated skins) opposite the large village of Chakdara; the loads were taken off, and our animals forded the stream with little or no difficulty. Almost due north of our crossing, and distant eight miles, lay the village of Kotigram. The valley, known as the Unch Plain, is somewhat open, narrowing as we neared the village. Midway, about Uncha, we passed several topes or Buddhist remains. These topes are very numerous, at least twenty were visible at one time, and some of great size and in a very good state of preservation—more than one quite as large as the famous tope of Mani Kiyala. A little further up the valley towards the Katgola Pass, to the left of our route, there were numerous excavated caves, in the side of the hill, in one of which the traveller could take shelter during a passing shower. The ascent to the Laram Kotal is easy, and though the south face of this range is somewhat denuded of both fir and pine, yet the soil is sufficiently rich to allow of cultivation on its slopes. On this pass, whilst taking some plane-table observations, I was within an ace of being detected from an unexpected quarter. Four men armed with matchlocks showed themselves. Much quicker than it takes me to record it, the ruler or sight-vane was run up my long and open sleeve, and I began to pretend to be looking about for stray roots; the intruders were thrown off the scent, and after a while assisted the Saiad in looking for odd roots for the supposed native doctor.

The descent from the pass, which registered 7310 feet, to Killa Rabat (3900 feet) in the Panjkhora Valley, was for the first half of the distance by a long and densely wooded spur, with an easy slope, but on nearing the foot we found it very stony. Our party was met at the entrance by the khan, and later on we were invited to dinner by him. Long before this I had got quite used to eating with my fingers, but on this occasion I must admit I found it unpleasant diving the fingers into a richly made curry floating in grease, and having at the next mouthful to partake of honey and omelet. The banquet lasted for an hour or more, and I was beginning to feel uncomfortable sitting on the ground in the one position so peculiar to Eastern nations, when the hookah came to my rescue, and allowed of a change in position.

We forded the Panjkhora a little above the fort, and by 5 P.M. reached Shahzadgai.

We found the chief busy with a durbar he was holding under a large chinara tree, and discussing the plan of attack on Kunater Fort. Our

introduction was somewhat formal, except in the case of Hosein Shah, who was very cordially received and publicly thanked for having responded to the chief's request to bring a doctor from India for him.

Rahmatullah Khan, chief of Dir, is an Eusafzai, ruler of a population exceeding 600,000. In appearance he is anything but prepossessing—small of stature and very dark in complexion for a Pathan; with not a tooth in his head, and the skin on his face loose and wrinkled, he presents the appearance of an aged man, though really not more than fifty-five.

I was at Shahzadgai seven days, and during that time succeeded in bringing round the chief, who was suffering from an ordinary cold and cough. I cannot say my stay was a pleasant one, for from early morn to dusk our hut was surrounded by patients, and inasmuch as the chief had recovered, it was considered a sufficient guarantee that, no matter what the ailment or disease might be, if only the tabib would prescribe, all would come right. Men with withered arms and legs, others totally blind, were expected to be cured, and no amount of persuasion would convince those who had brought such unfortunates that the case was a hopeless one. It was here that I got as a fee the antique seal which I have brought for exhibition to the meeting. The man who brought it had found it across the Panjkhora, opposite Shahzadgai, whilst throwing up some earthworks; it was then encased in a copper vessel. General Cunningham, to whom I showed the seal at Simla about three months ago, writes as follows:—"I am sorry to say that I cannot make out anything about your seal. At first I thought that the man standing before a burning lamp might be a fire-worshipper, in which case the seal would be Persian. I *incline*, however, to think that it may be an Egyptian seal. I believe that each symbol is one of the common forms on Egyptian monuments; this can be determined by one versed in Egyptian hieroglyphics." Since my arrival here I have submitted the seal to Sir Henry Rawlinson. The fact of its having been dug up in the Panjkhora Valley adds great interest to the relic.

On the 24th we left for Kumbar. Whilst here it got abroad that my friend Hosein Shah was accompanied by two Europeans in disguise. The originator of this report was no other than Rahat Shah Meah, a native in the confidence of our Indian Government, and enjoying the benefits of a *jagir* or grant of land in the district of Nowshera, given him for loyal services, but a sworn enemy of my two friends. He had sent letters to Asmar, Chitral, Swat, and Bijour, urging on the people to track out the Kafirs who were in company with the Meagans, and destroy them, as they could have gone with no other purpose than to spy out the land. Shao Baba took up the matter, and not until the Dir chief had written contradicting the statement and certifying that he had asked my companions to bring from India a hakim, were suspicions allayed. Unfortunately, in a country like Afghanistan, where fanaticism

is so rampant, once let it be even surmised that outsiders, and these the detested Kafirs, are about, the bare contradiction does not suffice, and the original idea only lies dormant, as our future progress showed.

Two marches took us from Kumbar (elevation 4420 feet) to Dir (5650 feet). Crossed *en route* the Barawal range; height of the pass is 8340 feet, by a very fair road, which can be ridden up. Here our party was joined by the Dir chief, who having settled his disputes, was proceeding to his capital.

The fort of Dir is of stone, but in decay; it has an ancient aspect, but this applies still more to the village of Ariankot, which occupies the flat top of a low spur detached from the fort by a small stream. The spurs fall in perpendicular cliffs of some 20 feet in height, and in these are traces of numerous caves similar to those already spoken of, and some of which are still used as dwellings by the Balti people, who come to take service as porters between Dir and Chitral. The population of the fort and valley exceeds 6000 souls.

Four more days were wasted by our party at Dir procuring carriers, as the Lowarai Pass (called Lohari by some) was not sufficiently clear of snow to admit of our baggage animals crossing it, and from all accounts brought in would not be so for another month. This decided us on procuring the services of Baltis, who had come from Daroshp and Chitral, and who preferred their wages being paid in cloths or salt to sums of money. I should here add that my companions had in the meanwhile received letters from the neighbourhood of Asmar, advising them not to pay a visit to Arnawai just then, as the rumours concerning us were not very favourable; so rather than remain where we were, I suggested visiting Chitral. The idea was adopted, the loads were made over to the men we had engaged, and the following morning we bade adieu to Rahmatullah Khan, and started for Mirga, elevation 8400 feet. Though the distance from Mirga to Ashreth is not more than ten miles, yet it took us almost as many hours to accomplish it. From Mirga to the Lowarai Kotal (elevation 10,450 feet) the route lay over snow. It is quite true what has formerly been related of the number of cairns on this pass, marking the burial of Mahomedan travellers who have been killed by the Kafir banditti, who cross the Kunar river and attack travellers on the road. Travellers as they pass throw stones upon those cairns, a method universal among the Pathans in such cases. But many bodies were still visible in various stages of decay and imperfectly covered. There is no habitation for about six miles on either side of the pass, and it is only when information reaches a village that they send out to cover the remains of the true believer. The only village between the pass and the Kunar river is Ashreth. The people of this village pay tribute to Dir as well as Chitral, and this tribute is rendered in the form of escort to travellers ascending the pass. But the people themselves are Shias and recently converted Kafirs, and are

known to be in league with the Kafir banditti, giving notice to the latter of the approach of travellers rather than rendering effective aid against them. Fortunately the ascent was easy and gradual. The descent is steeper, and in parts very trying. We had to cross and recross the frozen stream several times, owing to the sides of the hill rising almost perpendicularly from its base. To add to our difficulties, we had to pick our way over deep snow (even in May), not only over branches but tolerably large sized trunks of trees that had been uprooted. I was told that during the winter months a regular hurricane blows up this valley, carrying everything before it. The Pass (Kotal) forms the northern boundary of Dir territory.

Ashreth to Chitral (5151 feet) was done by us in three marches. It is at the head of the Shushai Valley that the village of Madalash lies, the inhabitants of which are alluded to by Major Biddulph, in his 'Tribes of the Hindu Kush,' as being a clan speaking amongst themselves the Persian tongue. They keep entirely to themselves, and enjoy certain privileges denied to their surrounding neighbours, and from what I learnt are credited as having come, over a couple of hundred years ago, from across the Hindu Kush, via the Dura Pass.

Between Daroshp and Chitral the passage by the river contracts to a narrow gorge, over which a wall was built more than two centuries ago to resist an attempted invasion by the troops of Jehangir. Up to this point the Mogul force are said to have brought their elephants, but finding it here impracticable to pass they turned back: this force came over the Lowarai Pass. The ascent from Jalalabad is impracticable, because the river runs in various places between Asmar and Chigar Serai in almost impassable gorges.

It was late in the evening when we arrived at Chitral, but as the Badshah was not feeling very well, beyond the usual salutations exchanged with Hosein Shah and Sahib Gul, all introductions were deferred till the following morning.

The following morning, before presenting ourselves to Aman ul Mulk, we sent him the following presents, viz. a Waziri horse, two revolvers, a pair of binoculars, several pieces of chintz and linen, twenty pounds of tea, sugar, salt, and several pairs of shoes of Peshawar manufacture, as well as trinkets for his zenana. After the preliminary and formal inquiries as to our health, the Mehter Sahib or Badshah alluded to the rumours regarding me, and wound up by saying that as he was a friend to the British, and his country at their disposal, I was at liberty to go about and do as I pleased, provided none of my followers accompanied me. Fortunately, our Indian Government think differently, and judge his character more correctly. This was not exactly what we had expected, but rather than be thwarted in the one object I had come for, a consent was given to his proposal; but before we had fairly got back to our quarters, a message was sent us, saying

that the passes into Kafiristan were not open just then; our reply was that in that case we should return immediately to India. He then sent for Sahib Gul, and eventually it was decided that I should defer my visit to the Kafirs till some of their leading men should arrive, and *ad interim* I might pay a visit to the Dura Pass. No European had hitherto been along this route, and thinking some information might be collected, and notes on the geography of the route taken, I agreed, though affecting disgust, and started on the 13th of May for Shali.

Andarhi was our next halting-place; the fort commands the entrance into the Arkari Valley; at the head of the valley are the three passes, Agzam, Khartiza, and Nuksan, over the Hindu Kush, leading into Badakshan, and a little below the Ozur Valley, which takes its rise from the Tirach Mir Mountain, whose elevation is deduced trigonometrically by Colonel Tanner to be 25,426 feet, presenting a magnificent view.

The dorsal ridge of the Hindu Kush has here a mean elevation of some 16,000 feet, and this great mountain of Tirach Mir stands on a southward spur from the main range from which it towers up thus 9000 feet above the latter. The head of the Dura Pass, which leads to Zebak and Ishkashim, is a little over 14,000 feet, the ascent being very gradual and quite feasible for laden animals; but owing to the people of Munjan and the Kafirs in the Bogosta Valley, traders prefer the route *viâ* the Nuksan Pass, which, as its name denotes, is much more difficult. Neither pass is open for more than three months in the year.

In this valley between Daroshp and Gobor, I noticed several detached oval ponds, evidently artificial, which I was told were constructed for catching wild geese and ducks during their annual flight to India just before the winter sets in, i. e. about the middle of October. The plan adopted, though rude, is unique in its way and is this:—By the aid of narrow dug trenches, water from the running stream is let into the ponds and turned off when full; the pond is surrounded by a stone wall high enough to allow a man, when crouching, to be unobserved; over and across one-half or less of this pond a rough trellis-work of thin willow branches is put up; the birds on alighting are gradually driven under this canopy and a sudden rush is made by those on the watch. Hundreds in this manner are daily caught during the season. The flesh is eaten, and from the down on their breasts coarse overcoats and gloves are made, known as *margaloon*. This method of trapping is borrowed from the Kafirs.

A short distance beyond the village of Daroshp are some mineral springs that are visited by invalids from Badakshan.

Having satisfied myself on my return from the Kotal by a visit up the Bogosta Valley that the descent into the Arnawai was not practicable for some weeks to come, I returned to Chitral on the 22nd of May. Some Kafirs had come in, and amongst them one who had just a year ago taken in to Kamdesh a Pathan Christian evangelist, who had unfor-

tunately given out that he was sent by the Indian Government, and that his masters would, if he gave a favourable report of them, come to terms with the Kafirs, so as to secure them in future against Mahomedan inroads. My visit occurred inopportunately with regard to this statement of the evangelist, and although I stated that his utterances were false, the Kafir would have it that I had come on behalf of the Government; and that the Chief of Chitral had persuaded me into giving him the arms and sums of money I had brought for them. This Kafir next wanted me to pledge myself to aid their sect against Asmar, and on my refusing left my quarters in a pet, but returned after a couple of hours, saying that I might accompany him as doctor, and attend an aged relative of his.

Kafiristan embraces an area of 5000 square miles, bounded on the north by the Hindu Kush Mountains, on the south by the Kunar range; for its western limit it has the Alishang with its tributary the Alingar; its eastern boundary is not nearly so well defined, but taken roughly, may be expressed as the Kunar river from its junction with the Kabul to where the former receives the waters of the Kalashgum at the village of Ain; thence following up this last tributary to its source, a line drawn from that point to the Dura Pass is well within the mark. I may also include a small section occupying a tract north-west of the above-named pass, and subject to Munjan. There are three main tribes, viz. Ramgals, Vaigals, and Bashgals, corresponding with the three principal valleys in their tract of country; the last-named occupy the Arnawai Darra, and are divided into five clans, Kamdesh, Keshtoz, Mungals, Weranis, and Ludhechis. The Keshtoz, Mungals, and Weranis pay a nominal tribute in kind to the ruler of Chitral, but not so the other two clans. The Vaigal tribe are reckoned the most powerful; this probably is due to their occupying the largest valley. Each of the three principal tribes has a dialect different from the other two, but have several words in common, and as a rule have very little to do with those inhabiting the other valleys. The entire population is estimated at over 200,000 souls. Their country is picturesque, densely wooded, and wild in the extreme; the men of fine appearance, with sharp Aryan features and keen penetrating eyes; blue eyes are not common but do occur, but brown eyes and light hair even to a golden hue in combination are not at all uncommon. The general complexion varies to two extremes, that of extreme fairness—pink rather than blonde, and the other of bronze, quite as dark as the ordinary Panjabi. The cast of features seems common to both these complexions, but the fairer men if asked will indicate the dark men as having come from the south and that they themselves have come from the north and east. They are, as is always the case with hill tribes, short of stature; daring to a fault, but lazy, leaving all the agricultural work to their womenkind, and spending their days, when not at war, principally in hunting. They are passionately fond of dancing, in which both sexes

join, scarcely letting an evening pass without indulging in it around a blazing fire.

The dancing, which I on several occasions witnessed, was invariably begun by a single female performer appearing on the scene, and after going through a few graceful movements, a shrill whistle (caused by inserting two fingers into the mouth) given by one of the men is the signal for a change. Several performers then come forward, advancing and retiring on either side of a huge bonfire, at one end of which were the musicians—their instruments, a large drum, two kettle-drums, and a couple of flutes. To this music, more particularly to the beating of the drums, good time is kept. The whistle sounds again, when immediately the performers set to partners, if I may use the expression; after a while they disengage, and begin circling round the fire singly—men and women alternately. The tamasha ended by again setting to partners; each couple, holding a stick between them, their feet firmly planted on the ground and close together, spin round at a great pace, first from right to left and then from left to right. None objected to my taking part in this performance, but, for the indulgence, I had to pay as forfeit several strings of beads and shells, a few looking-glasses, and some needles, which I presented to those of the fairer sex only.

The houses are generally built on the slopes of the hills; the lower story is of stone, from 12 to 15 feet high, but is not used for cattle even, which are kept apart in stone byres. Timber is stored in these lower stories, as also the ordure of cattle, which is used as fuel, especially for smoking their cheeses. This cheese is made daily, and is of the nature of cream cheese, and when fresh is not bad. On the roof of this lower story, leaving a space all round to walk, rises the actual habitation, which is of wood entirely, and contains only one or two rooms; these are neat enough, but very dark. The door and door-frames are roughly carved with figures and scrolls. There is little furniture, but all use low wooden chairs or wicker stools to sit upon. The food, either bread, which is ordinarily of very thick cakes, but when guests are entertained of very thin broad cakes, like Indian chapatties, or meat boiled in a large iron caldron, is served in large deep circular wooden vessels, hollowed from a trunk or thick branch of a tree, without any table, though tables were seen occasionally on which drinking vessels were set. The bread cakes were served to guests, with slices of cheese between two such cakes, imbedded in hot butter. Their beds are very rude fixtures, consisting of poles, one end of which rests in the walls and the other on two legs: it is remarkable that they call them *kat*. The object of the lower story seems chiefly to raise the house above the snow in winter; it is ascended by a ladder outside, which can be drawn up. Sometimes there is a third story, which is, of course, like the second, of timber, but is also surrounded by a platform. The roof of flat stones, laid on beams and covered with mud.

The temples are square chambers of timber, with doorways carved and coloured; inside there are set several stones, apparently boulders from the river bed, but no images were seen, except those connected with funeral rites, which were temporarily set up in the temples. The use of these temples seemed to be chiefly in connection with funeral rites. The coffins were carried there and sacrifice performed before the bodies were carried off to the place of eventual deposit.

The men shave the whole of the head, except a circular patch on the crown, where the hair is allowed to grow, seldom, if ever, cutting it—never wearing a covering. Almost all the men I saw wore the Indian manufactured cotton clothes, similar to the Afghans, and on their feet had strips of hide tied with strings of hide. The dress of the women is merely a single garment, not unlike a very loose dressing or morning gown, gathered up at the waist. The hair, which as a rule is very long, is worn plaited and covered over with a broad cap with lappets, and just over the crown stick up two tufts (some have one only) which from a distance appear like horns. A sample of this head-dress as well as of three or four other articles of interest I have brought for exhibition to the meeting.

It is purely due to no blood-fends existing amongst themselves that they have succeeded in holding their own against the Mahommedans by whom they are hemmed in on all sides. They have nothing in common with them, and in fact are incessantly engaged in petty warfare with the Mahommedans. They are exceedingly well disposed towards the British: I may venture further and state that they would not hesitate to place their services, should occasion require, at our disposal, and steps might be taken to secure this. Slavery exists to a certain extent amongst them; this nefarious trade, however, would fall through if slaves did not command so ready a sale at Jalalabad, Kunar, Asmar, and Chitral. Polygamy is the exception and not the rule; for infidelity on the part of a wife, mild corporal punishment is inflicted, and a fine of half-a-dozen or more heads of cattle imposed, according to the wealth of the male offender. The dead are not buried, but put into coffins and deposited either in an unfrequented spot on a hill-side, or carried to a sort of cemetery and there left, the coffins being in neither case interred. I visited one of these cemeteries, and saw over a hundred coffins in different stages of decay; resting against the heads of some of these I noticed carved wooden figures of both sexes, and was told that this was an honour conferred only on persons of rank and note. As regards their religion, one Supreme Being (Imbra) is universally acknowledged. Priests preside at their temples, in which stones are set up, but to neither priests nor idols is undue reverence paid. Unforeseen occurrences are attributed to evil spirits, in whose existence they firmly believe, giving no credit to a spirit for good.

I have noticed that several mention the Kafirs as being great wine-bibbers. The beverage brought to me on several occasions was nothing more nor less than the pure grape-juice, neither fermented nor distilled, but in its simple form. During the season, the fruit, which grows in great abundance, is gathered, the juice pressed out, and put into jars either of wood or earthenware, and placed underground for future use. I obtained some, which I put into a bottle for the purpose of bringing away, but after it had been exposed to the air a short time it turned into a sort of vinegar. To the Kafir chief who took me in I offered some whisky, and poured out about half a wine-glass into a small Peshawar cup, but before I had time to add water to it, the chief had swallowed the pure spirit. I shall never forget the expression depicted on his countenance. After a while all he could give utterance to was, "We have nothing so strong."

Their arms consist merely of bows and arrows and daggers; a few matchlocks of Kabul manufacture have found their way into the country, but no attempts have been made to imitate them. At a distance of about 50 yards, with their bows and arrows they seldom fail to hit an object smaller than a man. The string of the bow is made of gut. Their wealth is reckoned by the number of heads of cattle (goats, sheep, and cows) they possess. There are eighteen chiefs in all; selection is made for deeds of bravery, some allowance also being made for hereditary descent. Wheat is their staple food, and from the juice of the grape they make a kind of bread, which is eaten toasted, and is not then unlike a Christmas plum-pudding.

To resume the narrative: once again, unaccompanied by my two friends, I left Chitral on the morning of May 23rd, and struck off from Urguch, spending the first night at Balankaru, in the Rumbur Valley. The people are the Kalash section of the Kafirs, inferior in appearance, manner, and disposition to their neighbours situated westwards; they pay a small tribute in kind to Chitral, and are allowed to retain their own manners and customs. To Daras Karu, in the Bamburath Vale, famed for its pears, I next proceeded; here also are Kalash Kafirs, and some Bashgali settlers. The valley is very narrow, and the cultivation restricted principally to terraced fields on the hill-slopes. Kakar was the next march; beyond it no trace of habitation. After a short stay we proceeded up the valley till dusk, and spent the first part of the night under some rocks. All beyond was snow, interminable snow. Starting at midnight for the head of the pass (the difference in elevation between our night's encampment and the crest was 7000 feet) it took us an hour to do every thousand perpendicular feet. The view on the Kotal as the sun was rising was a sight never to be forgotten; near and around us the hills clad in white with different tinges of red showing, and clouds rising in fantastic shapes, and disclosing to view the blue and purple of the distant and lower ranges. I was very fortunate in having a clear morning, as it enabled me

to bring my plane-table into great use. As the descent was very tedious, owing to the upper crust of the snow having melted under the rays of the morning sun, we decided on adopting a sort of "tobogganing" system by seating ourselves on the snow, raising the feet, at the same time giving the body a reclining position; a jerk, and then we were off, following in each other's wake, bringing ourselves up every now and again by imbedding our feet in the snow. By this means we got down almost to the base of the hill in a very short time, and on arriving at the Ludhe villages were well received.

The next few days, owing to the unfavourableness of the weather, going out was abandoned, but whilst thus inactive so far as going about went, my time was spent in examining closely into their manners and customs, when an urgent message was brought from the Aman ul Mulk, desiring me to return immediately, owing to some unfavourable news that was abroad. Thinking of my two friends, whom I had left at Chitral, being involved in some difficulties, I hurried back, only to learn that the chief had sent for me on the paltry excuse of having heard that the chief of Asmar and the Kafirs had begun their annual quarrels. So once again was another opportunity of penetrating further frustrated. During my absence on this trip that arch-fiend Rahat Shah had arrived at Chitral from India. As he has quite the ear of the ruler, all further chances of our getting on in the way of exploring were at an end, and so we decided on returning to India via Kashmir. In return for the presents we had given Aman ul Mulk when we first arrived at Chitral, he gave us others, and immediately after threw every obstacle in his power to prevent our getting away, and it was only on refusing to accept his presents that we were supplied with carriers.

Starting on the 5th of June, on the fourth day we arrived at Drasan (6637 feet). The fort of Drasan commands the entrance to the Turikho and Tirach valleys, whose waters meet a few miles north-west of the fort. Both these valleys are very fertile; in the latter one, and just before its junction with the former, are several yellow arsenic mines, but the working of these is not encouraged by the present ruler. Gold also, I was told, is to be found in the streams about Chitral; this statement proved correct, as I was able to work up some with the aid of mercury, and on having the ore tested by a goldsmith's firm in India, it was pronounced by them to be 21 carat; but this washing is seldom permitted, the reason assigned by the chief being that if once it were known that Chitral produced gold, his country would be lost to him.

Mastuj (elevation 7289 feet) is on the main or Chitral stream, and commands the entrance to the Laspur Valley, which leads more directly to Gilgit via Gupis and Gakuch, and was the route traversed by Major Biddulph. On reaching Gazan, we left the main route and followed up the smaller one along a stream taking its rise at the Tui Pass (14,812

feet). The ascent to it is easy, but the descent exceedingly difficult, a nasty piece of glacier having to be traversed, over which we were unfortunate enough to lose two horses, and had several of our followers severely frost-bitten about the feet. Two marches further and Gilgit was reached, and from there in eleven double marches we arrived at Srinagar, where my disguise was thrown off. To dwell on these last stages of our journey would be merely repeating what has been so ably handled by such authorities as Drew, Tanner, and Biddulph.

In conclusion, I would here record that whatever success has attended this undertaking is due in a great measure to my faithful companions and allies, Hosein Shah, Sahib Gul, and the Saiad.

The following discussion ensued on the reading of the above paper :—

Colonel YULE said he had for thirty or forty years looked with intense interest at the dark spot of Kafiristan on the map of Asia, and had therefore listened with great pleasure to Mr. McNair's modest account of one of the most adventurous journeys that had ever been described before the Society. Twenty or twenty-four years ago we had nothing but the vaguest knowledge of Kafiristan, but the country had been gradually opened out by General Walker and Colonel Montgomery's pundits in disguise. Foreign geographers had sometimes cast it in the teeth of Englishmen that their discoveries beyond the frontiers of India had been made vicariously, but in this case it was an Englishman who had performed the journey. He believed he was right in saying that no Englishman before Mr. McNair had ever visited the Swat Valley. It was now inhabited by a most inhospitable race, who had become Afghanised, but rumours had often been heard about the Buddhist remains there. Eighteen or twenty centuries ago it was one of the most sacred spots of Buddhism, filled with Buddhist monasteries and temples, but, as far as he knew, no European except Mr. McNair had ever seen those remains. If further explorations were carried out there probably most interesting discoveries would result. Passing on to the Panjkhora river and to Dir, there was very little doubt that those valleys were the scene of some of Alexander's exploits on his way to India. Many scholars supposed that Dir was one of the fortresses which Alexander took, and incidentally the place was mentioned by Marco Polo as the route of a Mongol horde from Badakshan into Kashmir. He believed that the earliest distinct notice of the Kafirs was the account of the country being invaded by Timour on his march to India. When he arrived at Andaráb he received complaints by the Mussulman villagers of the manner in which they were harassed by the infidels, and a description was given of how the great Ameer himself was slid down snow slopes in a sort of toboggan of wicker-work. He captured some of the Kafir forts, but could not penetrate into the country. After that very little mention was made of them in history, till Major Rennell referred to them in his great memoir on the map of Hindostan, and Mountstuart Elphinstone, who, the Afghans used to say, could see on the other side of a hill. He always seemed able to collect items of knowledge which further research proved to be correct. He (Colonel Yule) rejoiced that he had lived to see Kafiristan partially revealed by an Englishman and not by a Russian.

Dr. LEITNER said it was well that travellers, however naturally accurate in their observations, should submit their results to the criticism of learned societies, for, after all, it was in such centres that information from various quarters could be best collected, sifted, and compared. The task of a pioneer is proverbially ungrateful, but he is sufficiently rewarded if he collects facts for the examination of scholars, and if some

of these facts stand that test. On the other hand, it was essential that, as a rule, no one should be sent out on a geographical, anthropological, or ethnographical mission who was not something of a linguist or who was not accompanied by a linguist, and who had not given proof of sympathy with alien races. Hayward fell a victim as much to his temper as to the greed and treachery of Mir Wali, whom he had insulted. An Arabic proverb says that "the traveller even where he sees is blind," and if, in addition to this artificial blindness, he is practically both deaf and dumb owing to his ignorance of the language of the people among whom he moves, it is almost certain that he will make many mistakes, if not insure failure. Now few results are apt to be more delusive than a mere collection of words, or even of short sentences. The instances of "a dead policeman" as a Non-aryan equivalent for the abstract term "death" which the inquirer wanted; of the rejoinder of "what do you want?" for the repeated outstretching of the "middle finger," a special term for which was sought, and numerous other mistakes, are often perfectly avoidable, and it was therefore desirable that the traveller, armed with an inexhaustible patience, should not content himself with a collection of words, but also add the sentences in which they occur, and, if possible, also collect fables, songs, and legends. The process in dealing with a race whose language one does not know at all is more difficult, but, even in initial stages, the procedure of pointing to objects that are required will not only generally give their native equivalents, but will also elicit the orders or imperatives for these objects being brought, whilst the use of these imperatives by the traveller will often elicit the indicative or future in the assent or dissent of those to whom the imperatives are addressed, or else an ejaculatory affirmative or negative. The early training in, at least, two languages will also enable the inquirer to discriminate between the substance of a fact or thought, if he might use such a term, and the sound that represents it, for, if he has only studied his own language early in life, he will never be able to emancipate himself completely from the confusion which is naturally engendered between the idea and his special manner of expressing it. Adaptation, again, even more than translation, is what is required, and in order that the adaptation should be practised successfully, geographical inquiry cannot be altogether dissociated from philology, nor can philology be dissociated, as it so often is, from ethnography, history, and anthropology, which throw either a full light or at least a side-light or a half-light on linguistic problems, as has been pointed out by Dr. Abel. The gestures too of a race are of importance in eliciting correct information, for it is obvious that where, on rugged mountain sides, ascent or descent can only be practised by the aid of the hands as well as of the feet, the terms for "up" and "down" may be significant of surrounding topography, just as, to reverse the argument, where many meet only to fight, the putting of the fingers of both hands together will mean "collision," instead of its being the more usual sign for "multitude," or the limit of computation which a savage race may have reached. Finally, in this age of subdivision of labour on a basis of general knowledge, the present practice of explorers working separately without the co-operation of colleagues in the same or kindred branches, and sometimes even without a knowledge of the material that already exists, should be discouraged. The first step to be taken is the compilation of travellers' handbooks, dialogues, and vocabularies for the various districts of the so-called "neutral zone," so as to give to these travellers the key to information and to the sympathy of the people, and our Government of India especially might with advantage steadily collect both old and new information, not at the time *when*, but long *before*, an emergency arises, so that it may be dealt with a wealth of knowledge when it does arise. Had this view obtained when the "poor relatives of the European" were seen by Sale, Macnaghten, Wood, and others, thousands of Kafir men and women

would not have been carried into slavery by the Afghans, hundreds of Kafir villages would not have been destroyed, and the area of Kafir traditions would not have been both corrupted and narrowed by the broadening of the belt of "Nimchas," or converted Kafirs, which so increases the difficulties of an exhaustive inquiry into at least the *past* of an interesting race. Above all should we have had a faithful ally in our operations against Kabul, for even as it was, the tardy knowledge of that war by the Kafirs sufficed to bring thousands into the field ready to be let loose on their hereditary foe, whilst it put a stop, at any rate temporarily, to the internecine feuds, which, as much as Muslim encroachments, reduced the number of Kafirs. He hoped that the visit of Mr. McNair and of the native Christian missionaries recently in Kafiristan, might be another step towards the future union and civilisation of a race that, whether in part descended from the colonies planted by Alexander the Great or not, should no longer be treated as "poor relatives" by their European brethren, for whom the interposition of friendly and vigorous tribes of mountaineers, along with the Dards with whom they have so much in common, between the British and Russian possessions in Asia, cannot fail to be an advantage in the interests of peace. As to the various routes to and through Kafiristan, he would add nothing to-night to what had been so ably stated, but as regards the languages, he could not forbear mentioning that there are at least five distinct dialects spoken by the tribes, which differ as much as Italian does from French, if not from German, although based on Aryan roots common to them all. Their religious beliefs and customs also show great divergences as well as similarities. The members of various Kafir and kindred tribes, of whom he submitted a few photographs to the meeting, and whose measurements have been taken, have supplied an amount of information which may be laid before the Society in due course, along with, he hoped, a very full account of a neighbouring race that is anthropologically and linguistically perhaps even more interesting than the Kafirs, who are mainly Dards; he meant the people of Hunza (Hun-land?), whose language is, if not a prehistoric remnant, at any rate like no other that has hitherto been discovered, in which the pronouns form an inseparable part of numerous substantives and verbs, and in which gutturals are still in a state of transition to vowels. This people practise a code of religion and of quaint immorals fortunately confined to themselves, but which is not without some bearing on the question of the "Mahdi," now giving us some trouble in Africa. As some Kafirs call themselves "Kureishis," which favours a Shia notion in opposition to their Sunni persecutors, he might incidentally observe that the expectation of a "Mahdi" is a singular importation of a Shia notion, not entirely without our aid, into the orthodox Sunni Mahomedan world, which has so long been content with the *de jure* Khalifa, the Sultan, belonging to the category of "imperfect" Khalifas, as a chief and representative who is admittedly a "defender of the faith" only so long as he has power to enforce his decrees and is accepted by the general *consensus* of the faithful, the very essence of Sunni-ism, the "ahl-sunnat wa jamáat." This view is in bold contradiction to the *hereditary* principle, represented by the "Mahdi," of the "Imam's" descent from the Kureish tribe of Arabia, which caused the very separation of the Shia sect from the Sunnis, which is the very essence of Shia belief, and which has, among other fictions, led to the assumption of the name of "Kureishi" by some of the Kafirs.

Sir HENRY RAWLINSON was glad of the opportunity of expressing his high appreciation of the value of Mr. McNair's exploration. His journey was not a mere holiday trip, or an every-day reconnaissance survey; on the contrary, it was a serious undertaking, and opened up what he (Sir Henry) for twenty years had maintained to be the great natural high-road from India to Central Asia. The route to the

north of the Kabul river and along the Chitral Valley was by far the most direct and the easiest line of communication between the Punjab and the upper valley of the Oxus ; and although native explorers had, as Colonel Yule had observed, already traversed the route and brought back a good deal of general information concerning it, Mr. McNair was the first European who had ever crossed the Hindu Kush upon this line, or had gained such an acquaintance with the different ranges as would enable geographers to map the country scientifically, and delineate its physical features.—The seal which Mr. McNair had exhibited to the meeting was of Babylonian workmanship, and although relics of the same class were of no great rarity in Persia and Mesopotamia, it was a curious circumstance to find one in such a remote locality as the Swat Valley, and could only be explained by supposing it to have belonged to one of Alexander's soldiers who brought it from Babylon. Eldred Pottinger had found a similar relic at Oba on his journey through the mountains from Herat to Kabul. The tradition in the country had always been that the Kafirs whom Mr. McNair visited, were descended from Alexander's soldiers ; but there was not in reality the slightest foundation for such a belief. Neither in language nor religion, nor manners and customs, was there the least analogy between the Kafirs and Greeks. The various dialects spoken by the tribes of the Hindu Kush, including the Kafir tongues, were all of the Perso-Indian branch of the Aryan family, and showed that the mountains must have been colonised during the successive migrations of the Aryan tribes from Central Asia to the southward. It might perhaps be possible some day to affiliate the various tribes, when the vocabularies had all been collected and compared by a good philological scholar, but at present there was much uncertainty on the subject.—Colonel Yule had expressed his pride and satisfaction at Mr. McNair's success, and had congratulated the Society on the great feat of exploring Kafiristan for the first time having been accomplished by an English rather than by a Russian geographer. He (Sir Henry) would furnish a further source of gratulation by remarking on the fact that on the very day when Mr. McNair had related to the meeting the incidents of his most remarkable journey, intelligence had been received from the Indian frontier of another surprising geographical feat having been achieved by a British officer who was already well known to the Society, and who was, in fact, the chief of the department to which Mr. McNair belonged. He alluded to the successful ascent of the great mountain of Takht-i-Suliman, overlooking the Indus valley, by Major Holdich, of the Indian Survey Department. This mountain, from its inaccessible position beyond our frontier, and in the midst of lawless Afghan tribes, had long been the despair of geographers, but Major Holdich with a small survey party had at length succeeded in ascending it, and was said to have triangulated from its summit over an area of about 50,000 square miles. The Survey Department might well be proud of holding in its ranks two such adventurous and accomplished explorers as Major Holdich and Mr. McNair.

The PRESIDENT said that Mr. McNair agreed with Sir Henry Rawlinson that the route he had described would undoubtedly be the best into Central Asia, but the account of the journey did not inspire him (the President) with any confidence as to immediate results in the future. Mr. McNair had to disguise himself as a Mahomedan who was acceptable to the Kafirs, and it did not appear that he had in any way facilitated the entrance into the country of any one who could not conceal his nationality. The reports, furnished by native explorers sent from India, had, however, been fully established by Mr. McNair, and it would therefore appear that the best way of solving the problem was to send educated natives into Kafiristan. He was sure the meeting would heartily join in giving a vote of thanks to Mr. McNair for his interesting paper.