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*EMOIR*

*WILLIAM WATTS McNAIR*

*J. C. Howard.*

Rev. G. Bruce.

April 23. 4.

A Souvenir from the other members of  
W. W. W.'s family whom he has met





Memoir of

WILLIAM WATTS McNAIR,

*Late of "Connaught House," Mussooree,*

*Of the*

INDIAN SURVEY DEPARTMENT,

**The First European Explorer of Kafiristan.**

*By J. E. HOWARD.*



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SOA FFINT

INSCRIBED TO  
THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON,  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF  
A LIFE MADE HAPPIER BY ITS  
RECOGNITION OF RARE AND MODEST WORTH.



# MEMOIR.

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WILLIAM WATTS MCNAIR, who was born on the 13th September, 1849, joined the great Indian Survey Department in September, 1867, when he was only eighteen years old, and served the Government of Her Majesty the Queen and Empress of India faithfully unto the day of his death, on the 13th of August, 1889. In the official proceedings or notes of the Surveyor-General of India, for August, 1889, will be found the following more than merely formal notice of the services of the deceased officer of a great but scarcely sufficiently recognised scientific department of the magnificent Indian Empire of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress. "The Surveyor-General deeply regrets to announce the death of Mr. W. W. McNair, Surveyor, 3rd grade, from fever contracted at Quetta while attached to the Baluchistan Survey Party. He was granted leave to proceed to Mussooree, where he died on 13th August. Mr. McNair joined the department on the 1st September, 1867, and was posted to the Rajputana Topographical Party. The first twelve years of his service were passed



on topographical duty with this party under Major G. Strahan, R.E., and in the Mysore Party under Majors G. Strahan and H. R. Thuillier, R.E. From the very first he showed special aptitude as a plane-tableer, and was soon recognised in the department as an accomplished surveyor. In the autumn of 1879 he was selected to accompany the Khyber Column of the Afghan Field Force, and was present with that force during the severe fighting that occurred before Kabul in the winter of 1879-80, and the subsequent defence of Sharpur. Whilst in Afghanistan he mapped a very large portion of hitherto unknown country, including the Lughman Valley and approaches to Kafirstan, and the Logar and Wardak Valleys to the south of Kabul. He explored the Adrak-Badrak Pass with a native escort, and made himself acquainted with the route from Kabul to Jalalabad, *viâ* Lughman, which was explored by no other European officer. At the close of the war he was attached to the Kohat Survey, under Major Holdich, R.E., and was specially employed in the risky work of mapping the frontier line from Kohat to Bannu, including a wide strip of trans-frontier country, and much of the hitherto unmapped Tochi Valley. On the break-up of the Kohat Survey he was temporarily employed on geodetic work in one of the Astronomical parties, but was re-transferred to the frontier when the Baluchistan parties were formed.





His chief work in connection with Baluchistan has been carrying a first-class series of triangles from the Indus, at Dehra Ghazi Khan to Quetta, which occupied him to the close of his career. His ability as an observer, his readiness of resource under unusual difficulties, and his power of attaching the frontier people to him personally, have been just as conspicuous throughout this duty as were his energy and success as a geographical topographer. Apart from his departmental career, he has won a lasting name as an explorer by his adventurous journey to Kafiristan in 1883, when on leave. It may be fairly claimed for him that he was the first European officer who set foot in that impracticable country, and he is still the best authority on many of the routes leading to it. His services to geographical science were recognised by the Royal Geographical Society, who awarded him the Murchison grant, and there can be little doubt that a distinguished career was still before him when he was suddenly cut off in the prime of his life."

To those who know what an Indian Department means, such language of eulogy, no less truthful than graceful, from so respected a functionary as the Surveyor-General of India, who knew Mr. McNair personally, will carry a weight far beyond the official recognition of that deceased officer's worth to his department. The comparative

neglect of a great scientific department of State, such as the Indian Survey Department undoubtedly is, as a mere ornamental section of the huge and complicated machinery of that gigantic Empire called India, is but too often repeated by a department and its official heads in regarding the merits of the living and the dead who sacrifice their lives to its achievements ; but in this one instance, at least, it cannot be said that the head of a department fell beneath his opportunities for doing himself and his subordinate due honour. It is not always from official neglect, or human pride and indifference, that this want of sympathy for human labour and human devotion arises, but rather from the infinite preoccupations and monotonous overwork of the faculties of all public servants of any position of importance in that vast continent of swarming bees intent on their day's labour and nothing else. It is a good token for the future that men shall feel their labour is appreciated, although a desire for official recognition may be no incentive to the devotion itself. It is certain that William McNair always valued the appreciation of his official superiors, and that nothing could have given him greater pleasure or more comfort, in his review of his own brief labours, than to have known he would be thus remembered by the head of his own department. To natures that regard the daily associations of an

arduous career as giving a sanctification all their own, the testimony of colleagues—and, most of all, of the responsible mouthpiece of those colleagues—is specially and naturally dear. Within this period of twenty-two years' faithful service to the State occurred the remarkable exploit, the account of which, as read in a paper before the Royal Geographical Society of London, on the 10th December, 1883, I transcribe into this memoir direct from the proceedings of that society, published in the number for January, 1884, in the following words, giving the substance of what was said by the President of the society, who introduced the lecturer, and the several speakers who raised a discussion on the subject of the paper after it had been read.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.\*

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

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

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

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\* In order to let the reader see how perfect was the disguise of McNair during his Kafiristan expedition, I have prefixed to this Memoir a portrait of McNair, taken a year or two before his death, and to the paper read before the Royal Geographical Society, the group attired as on their journey, with McNair in the centre, and his Mahommedan friends around him.

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 of 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 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 Mahommedanism, 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 *viâ* 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 three 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 Afghani-

stan 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 3,500; 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 eastward 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 blackmail 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 Meaghans 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 Kala 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 3,575 feet) is well wooded with brushwood 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 rivers 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 rule 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 7,310 feet, to Killa Rabat (3,900 feet) in the Panjkhora Valley, was for the first half of the distance by a long and densely wooded spur, within 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 chinar 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 till 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 4,420 feet) to Dir (5,650 feet). Crossed *en route* the Barawal range; height of the pass is 8,340 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 6,000 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 8,400 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 (5,151 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, viâ 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 Melter 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 9,000 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 Aruawai 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 Pathian Christian evangelist, who had unfortunately 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 5,000 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 cauldron, 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-feuds existing among themselves that they have succeeded in holding their own against the Mahomedans 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 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 with 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 7,000 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 "tobogging" system by sitting 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 embedding 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 *viâ* Kashmir. In return for the presents we had given Aman ul Mulk when we first arrived at Chitral, he gave us others, and immediately 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 (6,637 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 7,289 feet) is on the main or Chitral stream, and commands the entrance to the Laspur Valley, which leads more directly to Gilgit *viâ* 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 wickerwork. 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 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 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 of 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 by 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 divergencies 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?), who 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 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.

It will be noticed by those who read the paper closely how remarkably absent from it are all allusions to personal experiences, such as fatigue, weariness, physical discomfort, sense of disappointment, or other of the necessary incidents of so toilsome an effort and long sacrifice. As was the character of the man, so is his paper, simple, direct, without any of the exaggerations of peculiar features in the

exploration or rhetorical artifices of description to enhance the effect of the discoveries of the traveller, and with an entire suppression of himself. For all that appears in the paper, he might have been engaged in the most enjoyable pursuit, free from all personal risk or daily discomfort.

I desire to testify rather to what I knew of the man himself during a close friendship of over eighteen years.

In youth he was very ardent and affectionate, but as he advanced in years the hardships of his life and the long periods of solitude he passed through seemed to mellow the natural demonstrativeness of his nature, and he appeared to me to have suffered that chastening which all men derive as their blessed portion from communion with Nature in her loving and silent moods; the very ruggedness of mountain solitudes speaking to the heart of man with a solemnity no tongue can reach. A subtle writer in the London *Spectator* of the 14th September last, in the course of an article on "Clouds," has attempted to describe the idealising lesson of her works to the spirit of man as "the tranquil rhythm of this fair Nature, the hurrying throb of the human interests it measures, there is the eternal poem of human life." In this wise, a subdued sweetness in William McNair's nature remained, which

was a transfiguration of his ardent, buoyant, somewhat impulsive early manhood.

On the cricket-field he was in his heartiest element. Men would make a scratch team at the sound of his voice, just to be led by him as captain. No mean field or batsman, he excelled in bowling. His resource in taking wickets was only equalled by the good temper with which adversaries walked away from the field with their bats after that terrible McNair had done for their score, or their hopes of one. I have seen him demoralise a whole team by the way in which he would take wicket after wicket, within an hour, by the artful way in which he adapted the style of his bowling to the character of the man who fenced him at the wicket. Boys were simply enamoured of him, for, by that instinct which never fails the young, he won their heartfelt devotion by his quick discernment of the weaknesses and proclivities of all the young with whom he ever came in contact. I have seen my youngest son—a lad of eleven—after years of separation from him, when the boy met him in London, in 1884, nestle on his knee quite spontaneously, to listen to some of his Kafiristan exploits not touched on in his paper. His beaming, manly laugh of amusement and tender compassion over the boy's simplicity when asked by my ingenuous lad why he did not kill a lot of those fellows during those days of danger, I



fancy I see while I write. Indeed, this keen participation in the nature and delights of the young was the secret of his success during the Kafiristan exploration. It was the touchstone of his sympathy with the various barbaric tribes with whom he had to come in contact, and whose nature he did not require to learn, for he had already sounded all that was human in its touching variety. Love and sympathy for man as man, could alone give this knowledge and furnish this magic key to hearts in wilds unknown. No human system of mental training could ever do it. In this connection I smile somewhat at Dr. Leitner's profound German dialectic in the discussion on the paper read by McNair over the preliminary preparation in language and terms required by an explorer to do his work effectively. Where man is equipped by that instinctive faculty of accommodating himself to the men of all nations with their physical attributes and surroundings, I think he may dispense, in a large measure, with the science of language as an open sesame. Nature has her own methods.

This being more in the nature of a memoir purely personal in its details, giving the characteristics of the man who performed an exploit deemed by the Royal Geographical Society worthy of the Murchison Grant, I may be pardoned for adding a few private particulars of the events

leading to the death of one so young, and whose career was so full of promise at its earthly close.

During the summer of the year 1888, McNair met with a very serious horse accident, one, indeed, that might with complete natural sequence have terminated his life on the spot. The vicious horse of a friend he was riding to tame the brute (for he was a skilful horseman as well as good at sports), reared and fell over on him. By the display of personal alacrity he managed to avoid vital injuries, but sufficient of the animal's body came on his own to render it necessary that he should be carried home in a "jhampan," or Sedan chair, used in the mountain sanitarium of India for the conveyance of ladies. A friend's house in the neighbourhood of the spot where the accident occurred was of great use in restoring him somewhat from the effects of the accident. The kind friends who helped him to undertake the journey to his house, about a mile distant (carried in this way on men's shoulders), did Mr. McNair one of those services for which India is renowned as a land of friendly help. The injuries sustained internally nevertheless kept the patient in bed for a month, and the nursing of a mother and sister brought him round sufficiently to enable him to do his work as usual to all appearance. During the ensuing winter he had very hard work, which involved much

exposure, and he suffered exceedingly from the effects of that accident. Immediately after he felt indisposition of any kind he complained of a return of the pains due to the accident, and there can be but little doubt that the inward injuries then sustained had left their mark, though nominally healed. 1888-9 was a severe winter in the mountain regions of our frontier, and a letter I had from McNair in April, 1889 (the last letter I ever received from him), gave some description of the vicissitudes of temperature he had to undergo. I give the letter in his own words in the Appendix, as a facsimile of his handwriting, to show how precise a hand he wrote, and as a memento of himself which some of his many friends might wish to cherish, for I believe that in many respects handwriting bears marked characteristics of the qualities of the individual. Here I will only extract the following description of the trials my friend had to undergo in the matter of temperature. In camp, away from Quetta and all means of procuring supplies on the spot, he writes under date the 2nd of April, 1889: "For the past fortnight I have had a rough time of it with rain, wind, and haze. Since yesterday there has been a change for the better, so now I hope to push along with my observations. Just at present I am in a low valley, and consequently the heat is somewhat trying, but in another fortnight I expect I shall be com-

plaining of it being a *little bit* too cold, at an elevation of 10,000 and odd. I have little or no news to give, as it is now some time since I saw a pale face, but somehow or another solitude has its charms for me." The writer of that letter soon after applied for three months' leave, having experienced broken health for some time previously, in constant returns of fever, but owing to the delay that occurs in getting post letters despatched from the frontier away from posting stations, and the circumlocution which is a feature in all great departments of State, McNair did not get his leave sanctioned till sometime in July, 1889, and he was not able to start from Quetta for his mountain home in Mussooree, a distance of several days' trying journey, until the early days of August. The fond hearts of a mother and sister that awaited him there had no knowledge of the dangerous character of the fever from which he had been suffering for nearly a fortnight before he started from Quetta.

Within a very few days after his arrival at Mussooree, the doctors held a consultation over his case, as the fever could not be subdued by any treatment tried, and then the truth that it was typhoid had to be acknowledged. All that medical skill and affectionate nursing of devoted relatives, friends, and a qualified nurse, could do towards saving the patient was done, and hopes were entertained

of recovery till almost the last ; but three days before the fatal end, hemorrhage of the intestines set in, and then the medical attendants despaired. McNair himself spoke soon after his arrival at Mussooree of the hour of separation having come, and asked for his brother George. The suddenness of the end gave all his friends a painful shock, for many had not even heard that he was dangerously ill ; and, as to the relatives, silent consternation for the moment are the only words that can adequately describe their desolation and sorrow. A fervently attached younger brother George, a popular member of the well-known firm of Messrs. Morgan and Company, the solicitors for the East Indian Railway Company, hurried up from Calcutta, on a telegram to join his family at Mussooree, but when he left he did not know of his brother's death. It was only when he reached the foot of the mountains, at a place called "Rajpore," within two hours' ride of Mussooree, where he inquired of the hotel manager if any recent news had been received of his brother's condition, that he got news not only of his brother's death, but of his burial. The railway journey from Calcutta to Mussooree is a long one of about a thousand miles ; but Indian Railways, travelling even at express speed, do not exceed twenty-five miles an hour. The sympathy experienced by the sorrowing family from

near and distant friends was beyond mere conventional words of condolence. I have it, from the members of the family themselves, that they were comforted in a very real and essential manner by the tender and extremely touching devotion of their friends, the depth of whose regard was then for the first time in many cases discovered. Rising above and beyond this general sympathy, two proofs came with a binding and enduring force that mark them out for special mention. They typify the two extremes of human life and the complexity of human relations. On the one hand there was the perfect knowledge of every detail of daily life and sacrifice, and the loyalty and enthusiasm that made such a life possible, which *sharing* a life to the full means. On the other, there was the tender reverence bred of looking up to something that seemed better and higher than the common lot of men. The two extremes I refer to were centered in the man who had most scientific knowledge of William McNair's worth, and the closest sympathy with his life, namely, Colonel Holdich, of the Royal Engineers, under whom McNair served, and for whom I know McNair had the highest admiration and the warmest personal regard, and native subordinates McNair had under him, who loved him as only Asiatics can love Europeans whom they revere. An intrepid explorer himself, *vide* the announcement made

regarding Colonel Holdich by Sir Henry Rawlinson at the close of the discussion on the paper read by McNair, Colonel Holdich has added year by year to his many signal scientific services rendered to the Indian Government; and recently he has added to his many accomplishments the rarer merit among men of that love of worth in others, which culminates in human brotherhood. His words of appropriate Oriental metaphor, in writing to the family, that his sense of personal loss in the man with whom he had for years, in the wildest solitudes and the most prolonged hardships, eaten "bread and salt" together, made it difficult for him to say all he felt, were emphasised by the human grief he could not repress at the funeral; where, owing to the suddenness with which everything had happened, he was indeed the "chief mourner"—in touching emotion that bore witness to the depth and susceptibility of the man's noble nature. The other testimony, which kindled great comfort in the desolate household, came from the scene of McNair's latest exploit, far away, at and near Quetta, when his native companions and friends heard of his death. The grief felt was so profound, that it seemed irreparable to the men who mourned their beloved friend, as the leader who was also their constant companion, and always cheerful with them under every adversity. The Oriental may be unappreciated by the Saxon till the latter knows

the sentimental side of every Asiatic character, but then the floodgates of human sympathy are opened, and the very counterpart of characteristics and qualities exhibited by Saxon and Asiatic, conduce and contribute to a closer and more romantic union between them. It is on the principle which Bagehot so profoundly illustrated when he said that no age is just to the age immediately preceding it, because of their similarity and proximity. The appreciation of Colonel Holdich for his valued coadjutor and the executant of many of his plans was based on the contrary principle acutely observed on by George Henry Lewes, when he remarked that surprise, like appreciation, can only have for foundation of any worth, a background of close observation and exact perception.

I state the simple truth when I record that the testimonies, received in this way from the two extremes of highest knowledge and most diverse social and national conditions, remain the most grateful and enduring memorials of a life's work to those who must ever cherish the memory of what this memoir is precluded from touching on, namely, the more sacred domestic endearments of the life-long devotion to family ties of a son and a brother. This much I may be permitted to reveal without any intrusion on the hallowed reserves of the family circle. A more united or more tenderly-knit family, of strong



religious feeling, I have never known. I had the privilege twenty-one years ago, of knowing a younger brother of the deceased, named John, who in less than three years attained to an honoured position in the Finance Department of the Indian Government. He was preternaturally grave and philanthropic, and died at the age of a youth in England (I think he was not 23 years old) of small-pox contracted at Lahore, in the Punjab, where he was stationed at the time. He had for some time, although but a lad in years, spent his leisure hours in attending the hospital, and reading to sick soldiers, where it is believed he contracted the disease. Of the living, conventional usage forbids all mention, but I have deemed it right to reproduce as appendices to this skeleton and imperfect memoir the notices that appeared in the principal Indian papers of William McNair's death, as also the obituary notices taken from the proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society for October and November, 1889.

The extract reprinted from the *Pioneer* editorial gives the most complete and faithful description of Mr. McNair's achievements during a too brief day of usefulness. Portions of that editorial need a passing word so far as the subject of this memoir is concerned. With regard to the disapproval of the Indian Government of McNair's venture in entering Kafiristan without the permission of his Govern-

ment, I never heard a word from his lips by way of complaint, although no doubt the paper accurately describes the facts.

Nor did I ever hear a syllable from the brave, unselfish man of disappointment at the way in which his worldly prospects were never advanced in the slightest by the nobly adventurous work he had done. By nature he was too bent on doing the work in hand to theorise about anything. By character he was too loftily absorbed in loyalty and reverence for the law of obedience as a root-principle of his life, to deplore any want of appreciation of his worth on the part of the Government which he had so loyally served. It is true, as the "Pioneer" points out, that on the Russian side such a man would have had honours and distinctions showered upon him. He would have been dragged out of his retirement and made to feel he was the favourite of the monarch, for the risk to life he had undertaken in spontaneous devotion to the State. Not only is such warmth and enthusiasm not the English method, but the Indian Government is a huge machine which goes grinding on in its mechanical way, and is besides, a bureaucracy which has a good deal of pride in regarding any new departure as a dangerous token of disrespect to its old and consecrated tradition of simple obedience to written orders and codified instructions. The highest

originality is smothered in a secretariat as its fitting cabinet. McNair knew these attributes of the Indian Government, and never troubled his head about preferment or official promotion. It is said he was on the eve of it, and the State is believed to somewhat deplore the loss of an opportunity for rewarding a servant it prized, doubtless, in its own dull, routine sort of way. But he is now beyond earthly rewards or distinctions, and neither the praise nor the blame of men can touch him. In life he was very sensitive to kindness or coldness, but he was of too masculine a fibre to allow the natural sweetness and contentment of his disposition to be alloyed or marred by any such influence from without. He loved his work for its own sake. It became his sole occupation and serious aim in life. He deplores the weather in his very last letter to me, most characteristically, because it interfered with his "observations," which, with "the change" he hoped for and partly realized, he would "*push* along."

The epithet describes the simple, practical side of his character. His later love of solitude was the natural outcome of that closer contact with nature which made to him a living daily reality the command, "Thou shalt have no other gods but Me." His last hours were ministered to faithfully by a chaplain of the English Church in Mussooree. The religious life of the family resigned itself

speedily to that sovereign will of heaven which means to all who have tasted of its majesty and glory, and have seen glimpses of the wisdom and foresight that put man's desires to shame, the submission of heart and mind in all their integrity. Nay, more, as one from that inner circle very beautifully put it in a letter to the writer of this memoir, "It was 'infinite love' alone that permitted his return to us to die, surrounded by our love," and in a lovely mountain region where for many years he spent his annual summer and autumn "recess," working out the results of the observations made during the rough winter's campaign, he lies buried near the home of his loved ones. There the eternal stars give a more brilliant light to the pure air surrounding his last resting place, and the solemn pines and firs pointing heavenwards with their venerable age and sighing their constant hymn give an everlasting pathos to the story of man's day on earth. The hill sides, terraced into beds of flowers — many wild and more cultivated, especially dahlias, which grow in great luxuriance and richness of colour in the hills of India — form the beautiful ground-work of an Indian cemetery in a sanitarium like Mussooree. On that spot, as it lies, the visitor will behold on one side, to the south, the dark shadow of a mountain elevation, called the "Camel's Back," by reason of its shape and sheer projection upwards,

typifying the wall of human sense at sight of death; and on the other he will look out upon the ever-changing, though distant line of perpetual snow. The snow view in India, on mountain regions, is beyond description. No word-painting could give an idea of it; and few artists have been able to reproduce the magical effects of sunrise and sunset on the snows during the varying seasons of the year. The roseate tints of dawn blush on their peaks till they become a flame, and pale into iciest marble; and the evening splendours of purple and violet and death-like blue are the phantasmagoria which no human hand has ever made a living picture. Like the human life, it grows into beauty, coruscates, and then passes into darkness.

Looked at from the purely materialistic side, doubtless, the lives of men are mere seaweed thrown up by the mighty ocean of Creation on the shores of Time. But from the Christian's higher standpoint, the broken arc is made a magic circle on the side we cannot see.

*There*, let us trust, all lives which seem to us to have snapped asunder here, in imperfect fruition of bright promise, may find their perfect fulfilment of desire. As Faber poetically says:—"Death, after all, is a darkening and disappearance of those we love, and we must be content to take it so. It is only a question of more or less, where the darkness shall begin, and what it shall

eclipse first. To the others who have loved the dying, and have gone before him, it is not a darkening, but a dawning. Perhaps to them it is the brightest dawn when it has been the most opaque and colourless sunset on the side of the earth." Or as Keble, with divine humility of richest spiritual imaginativeness, expresses it—

“ Ever the richest tenderest glow  
 Sets round the autumnal sun—  
 But there sight fails: no heart may know  
 The bliss when life is done.”

J. E. H.

20, Earl's Court Square, South Kensington,  
 London, October 20th, 1889.

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*Extract from "THE DELHI GAZETTE," August 19th, 1889.*

A LIFE OF PROMISE ABRUPTLY ENDED.—It was with feelings of deep sorrow that we read in *The Pioneer* of Friday last the death notice of Mr. William McNair, the Kafiristan explorer. A man singularly frank and genial, he was 33 years of age when he undertook the venture that won for him the medal and fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society which were conferred in 1884. In that year he had the satisfaction of lecturing before British audiences on the results of his travels, and as it was the first time

he had visited the land of his fathers the pleasure of seeing the old country under circumstances so honourable to himself was doubly keen.

The story of his adventures may be briefly told. Every one knows that the Government of India issued strict injunctions against allowing any European to cross the Afghan frontier. Nevertheless that restless spirit Sir Charles McGregor, Quarter-master-General, was naturally anxious to know something of the debateable land that lies north of the Kabul river and south of the Hindoo Koosh, and which tradition alleges to have been colonised by the soldiers of the Great Alexander himself. We have no doubt, that McGregor prompted the enterprise, though McNair never distinctly said that he had been urged by so high an officer to break the orders of his official superiors. The affair was arranged in this way. McNair took furlough, and ceased for the moment to be a servant of Government. He disappeared across the frontier and was not heard of again till his safe return was assured. Of course he had confederates; one in particular, a tribal chief whose friendship he had secured in the Afghan campaigns of 1878-79. His disguise was, however, pretty complete, walnut juice being, we believe, the material that converted a florid complexion into the tan so natural to Afghan mountaineers. He had the wisdom to confine his words to a language he understood as well as English, viz., Urdu, and posed as a *Hukeem* from India impelled by a spirit of benevolence to visit unknown lands for the

sake of curing the ailments of his fellow creatures. Had he attempted to talk Pushtoo, his foreign intonation would have been detected, while his knowledge of that tongue enabled him to detect the drift of any conversation that was carried on in his presence. Once, we believe, he was in imminent danger, a proposal having been set on foot to put an end to the wanderings of the *Hukeem*, as an English spy. A rapid change of quarters averted the danger, and he afterwards fell in with the people he came to see, viz., the Kafirs, who whether, descending from Alexander's Greeks or not, received him kindly. We believe the *Hukeem* was aided in his researches by a big book supposed to contain medical receipts, but which was in reality a box of surveying instruments, its outside covered with cabalistic signs bearing a family resemblance to a plane-table! The *Hukeem* was much given to solitary meditation, and generally sought mountain peaks for that purpose. On such occasions the plane-table afforded him invaluable assistance.

But we have said almost enough of poor McNair's adventure. On his return he was ordered to Simla and officially reprimanded by the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, for disobedience of orders! He was consoled, however, by being told by the same nobleman at a private interview that his pluck was admired, while his fast friend, Sir Charles McGregor, received him with open arms. Such was the bright opening of a career that was so soon to be cut short at Mussooree by typhoid fever.



McNair was a favourite with both sexes. By the men he was adored on the cricket-field, where his bowling was most effective, while the girls, who always possess second sight in the way of detecting a good fellow when they see him, loved him *en masse*. It may be some consolation to the widowed mother now robbed of her darling boy, to know that there are heavy hearts in other homes besides her own—the purest tribute that can be laid on the grave of one who was a good son as well as a gallant explorer.

We note that the fever of which he died was contracted at Quetta.

*Extract from "THE PIONEER," August 20th, 1889.*

THE LATE MR. MCNAIR.—The lives of some men are so intimately connected with certain phases in the general development of knowledge that their biographies afford short but useful pages in the history of progress which may well be read in connection with more stirring national records. Thus it was with the life of a man who quietly passed from the subordinate branch of the Survey Department into the land of shadows on the 13th of this month at Mussoorie. At the commencement of the year of grace 1879, a little over ten years ago, we were groping our way across the borderland which separates India from Turkistan, in unhappy ignorance of all but two or three partially illustrated lines of advance which might land us either at Kabul or Kandahar. Con-

sidering the vital importance that it always has been to India that at least a creditable knowledge of the countries separating her from Russia should exist, the geographical mist which enveloped the highlands of Afghanistan and the deserts of Baluchistan in 1879 was certainly remarkable. It is true that the war of 1839-43 had brought to the front one or two notable geographers, amongst whom North, Broadfoot, and Durand were conspicuous, but it had also developed a host of inferior artists, whose hazy outlines and indefinite sketches tended most seriously to obscure the really trustworthy work of better men. More, a good deal, was known about Kandahar and Kabul than of our present frontier opposite Dera Ismail, or of the passes leading from Bannu across the border only a few miles distant. Indeed, so far as that frontier was concerned, from Peshawar to Sind, no military knowledge of it existed whatever. It is with the gradual evolution of light over these dark places that McNair's name is so closely associated. For many years previous to the Afghan war he had been making himself thoroughly acquainted with modern survey instruments of precision, which are to the scientific weapons of our forefathers of fifty years ago what the Gatling and Henry-Martini are to the old Brown Bess. He was one of the first to grasp the true principles of using the plane-table when rapid action is necessary, and right well he turned his knowledge to account. It was the advance on Kabul in 1879 that first introduced him to the notice of military authorities, and in the course of that year's campaign he had added

more to our map information than all the geographers of the "old" Afghan war put together.

Some of his exploits were remarkable, as for instance when he explored the Adrak Badrak pass leading from the Lughman valley to Jugdalak with no military escort whatever, trusting only to the tender mercies of an "aboriginal" guard. He thus made himself acquainted with every detail of the direct road from Kabul, *viâ* the Kabul river, to Jalalabad; and with him our practical acquaintance with that important route has passed away. No sooner had he left Afghanistan than he was attached to the frontier party then working in the Kohat district; there he was Major Holdich's right-hand man. If there was a specially hard frontier nut to be cracked, McNair's powers of assimilating himself to Pathan manners, and of winning the confidence of all classes of natives, which had already carried him through many a perilous undertaking, were most fully utilised for the purpose of cracking it. From Kohat to Dera Ismail he was incessantly engaged in quiet little unobtrusive excursions (with full political sanction *bien entendu*) which resulted in a very complete map of the border, a map which it will be hard to supersede. There is one particularly awkward corner of our frontier—awkward from a military as well as geographical point of view—which thrusts itself forward over the general line into British territory, and which can never fail to attract the attention of the frontier traveller. This is the rocky fastness of Kafir Koh. From the red salt hills south of Bahadur Khel the three-headed peak

of Kafir Koh is seen standing up like a monument in the southern distance: nor is it less a conspicuous feature when viewed to the north from the Bannu road. At the back of it, to the west, is the direct road connecting the upper Meranzai valley with the Bannu district, of which the existence was known, but not the nature, when McNair took it in hand. Up the sheer face of that square-cut peak, composed chiefly of shifting sand and pebbles, which overtops the rest, McNair did his best to climb. He did not succeed for the reason that no living thing without wings has probably ever succeeded in surmounting it, although there is a legend to the effect that a specially active Waziri robber did once contrive to reach the top—and there remained to starve; but the English explorer at least got far up enough to obtain the clear view he required, and he came back richer in wisdom to the extent of many square miles of most remarkable mapping. His name soon became well known on the border, especially amongst the Waziris, and so much did they appreciate his own appreciation of themselves, that there is a story current that one well-known Mahsud chieftain stopped a Punjab Cavalry detachment near the border line and demanded a passport order from McNair. Perhaps his best achievement about this part of his career was the mapping of all the approaches to, and the general features of the lower Tochi valley.

In 1883 he conceived the bold scheme of taking leave and exploring Kaffiristan in disguise, trusting to the good fellowship of

certain Pathan friends, amongst whom two members of the Kakur Khel were chief. It was a bold scheme for many reasons. The physical difficulties of the project were many. The impossibility of keeping up a continuous disguise was well known to him, and last, but not least, "What would Government say?" For fear of involving others in any venture of his own, he resolved to cut himself adrift from his department for the time being and take his chance. In order to appreciate properly the spirit of enterprise which animated the man, critics of his actions should put themselves in his place. He was well aware that the information which he could obtain would be of the highest value; further, he knew that probably there was not another man in India who could obtain it as successfully as himself, and he judged that some slight exception might be made in his favour if he took on himself the responsibility of accepting a most favourable opportunity of doing most valuable work at the expense of infringing certain rules about crossing the border. These rules were, to say the least, vague and indefinite, and had never been officially promulgated. Reward or recognition of service he rightly never expected. It must fairly be conceded that the conditions under which such a spirit of enterprise was shown made that spirit especially honourable—for the Government of India has never been in a position to encourage any such ventures. On the contrary, the possible gain in information has always been held to be more than counterbalanced by the chance of "complications." Lord Lytton, ever ready to bewail

the decadence of a soldierly spirit of enterprise amongst our officers, was yet never quite able to see his way to making such enterprise possible to a man who valued his commission. Lord Ripon, under whose rule indeed more geographical work was completed than under any previous Viceroy, was apt to regard the line of frontier peaks and passes much as a careful gardener regards a row of beehives—as subjects of tender treatment and watchful care: whilst Lord Dufferin has lately with one wide sweep removed the great incitement to all exploration enterprise by making the results thereof “strictly confidential.” These are cloudy conditions under which to grow a true spirit of enterprise, and where it here and there crops up and flourishes in spite of circumstances it is surely all the more to be commended.

The story of McNair’s journey to Kaffiristan need not be told here. It was not made strictly confidential in those days, and it will be found in the chronicles of the Royal Geographical Society. For this performance he obtained the Murchison grant of the Society, and on the strength of it he may be said to have taken his place amongst the first geographers of the day. His frontier work did not end here. For the last two years he was engaged on the most trying work of carrying a “first class” triangulation series from the Indus at Dera Ghazi Khan, across the intervening mountain masses, to Quetta, thence to be extended to the Khojak, a work which involved continuous strain of mountain climbing, of residence with insufficient cover in intensely cold and high elevated

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spots, and the unending worry of keeping up the necessary supplies both of food and water for his party. No doubt it tried his constitution severely, and a hot weather at Quetta is, unfortunately, not calculated to restore an impaired constitution. Although very ill he determined to leave Quetta when his leave became due, and he made his way with difficulty to Mussoorie to die amongst his own people.

McNair belonged to a department which is not great in distinctions and decorations, and is connected with no celestial brotherhood. Indeed, it has no dealings with stars but such as are of God's own making—and he belonged to what by grace of official courtesy is called the “subordinate” branch. Out of it he never rose, though had he lived on the Russian side of the border his career might well have brought him high military rank and decorations in strings across his uniform. They say that decorations are “cheap” there. Yet it should be remembered that zeal, industry, enterprise, and patriotism are “cheap,” too, if they are to be won by them. Perhaps we manage better. The good old copybook maxim, “Virtue is its own reward,” must be McNair's epitaph, whilst we cannot help feeling that India could have better spared many a “bigger” man.

*Extract from “THE STATESMAN,” August 27th, 1889.*

By the death of Mr. McNair, of the Survey Department, a most valuable officer has been lost to the Government of India, and a

contributor to our geographical knowledge of Afghanistan. It is difficult to estimate the value of his services, as they have never been brought prominently into notice like those of others who have lived in the sunshine of official favour. We believe that, as in many similar cases, the public record of his work was nothing to what he really did in the service of geography, without any official publicity or recognition of the fact whatever. From what we know of his life's work, we can gather information that is amply sufficient to entitle Mr. McNair to being placed in the front rank of geographers, in respect, as a contemporary remarks, of that "borderland which separates India from Turkestan." It is said of Mr. McNair, that in the course of the Afghan campaign in 1879, he added more to the sum of our knowledge of Afghanistan than all the geographers of the "old" Afghan war put together, while some of his exploits in surmounting what appeared to be absolutely insuperable difficulties, make him take rank with the great geographers of his day. His work in the Kohat district was especially valuable, although it never, we believe, received the official recognition it deserved. Thanks to his excursions and observations, we have, as the *Pioneer* justly observes, a complete map of the border, a map which it will be hard to supersede. His journey to Kaffirstan resulted in some valuable contributions to our knowledge of that region, but the conditions of Government service unfortunately prevented his receiving the reward, which he would have secured as a matter of course, had he been the servant of a power more

quick and more liberal in its recognition of merit. As the *Pioneer* happily remarks, "Mr. McNair belonged to a department which is not great in distinctions and decorations, and is connected with no celestial brotherhood. Indeed, it has no dealings with stars, but such as are of God's own making—and he belonged to what by grace of official courtesy is called the 'subordinate' branch. Out of it he never rose, though had he lived on the Russian side of the border, his career might well have brought him high military rank, and decorations in strings across his uniform." By his death, India loses a valuable public servant, and that loss, we venture to say, will be more deeply felt should complications arise on the frontier, when the knowledge, experience, and ability of men like Mr. McNair will be the primary condition of success in any operations in that quarter. We do not know whether we should regret of any man that he did not receive the full meed of the success achieved by him in his life career amongst his fellows. Certain it is that it is but deferred to the general audit of every man's claims, for the hard and thorough work he has done to the generation from which he has passed away, but to which and to its successors he has left an example for them to emulate, and if they can—surpass.

*Extract from "THE TIMES," 10th September, 1889.*

The Indian mail brings intelligence of the death of Mr. William Watts McNair, of the Indian Survey. In 1883 Mr. McNair, dis-

guised as a Mahomedan doctor, succeeded in reaching the outlying valleys of Kafiristan, travelling by way of the Swat Valley and Chitral. For this adventurous journey, in the course of which he obtained much valuable information regarding the passes of the Hindoo Khoosh and about the manners and customs of the Sirjah Push Kafirs, the Royal Geographical Society awarded the Murchison Grant. Mr. M'Nair, in whom the Indian Government has lost an able and zealous servant, died at Mussoorie on August 13 of fever contracted at Quetta.

*Extract from "UNITED SERVICES GAZETTE," 19th October, 1889.*

MR. W. W. McNAIR.—The death is announced of Mr. McNair, a distinguished member of the Indian Survey, who expired at Mussoree of typhoid fever. He had been twenty-two years in the Survey Department, and had rendered signal service, especially during the Afghan War of 1878-79. In the disguise of a native doctor he made a journey into Kafiristan in 1883, and this achievement gained for him the Murchison Grant of the Royal Geographical Society. This expedition was, up to the time, unparalleled. Mr. McNair ascended to the Dora Pass over the Hindoo Khoosh Mountains, which he found to be over 14,000 feet high, but with an easy ascent, quite practicable for laden animals.

*Extract from Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society for  
October, 1889.*

**Obituary.**

W. W. McNAIR.—We are sorry to have to record the death of this distinguished member of the Indian Survey, who has died at Mussooree of typhoid fever. He had been twenty-two years in the Survey Department, and had done good service, particularly during the Afghan war of 1878-79, when his work lay along the valley of the Kabul river, and during the last two years, in which he has been extending a series of triangles from the British frontier at Dera, Ghazi Khan, by the direct route across the Suliman Mountains to Quetta and the Khojak Amran. But his most conspicuous piece of work was his journey (in the disguise of a native doctor) into Kafiristan in 1883, an achievement which gained for him the Murchison Grant of the Royal Geographical Society, and which stands quite alone, as unless Russian explorers have recently succeeded in entering the country, there is no record of any other European ever having done so. Major Biddulph had visited Chitral, but Mr. McNair had not only reached that town by way of the Swat river and Dir, but crossed the mountains to the west, which divide the valley of the Kashkar or Chitral river from that of the Arnawai. He reported that he was kindly received by the villagers of the Lut-dih district, who belong to the Bashgal tribe of Kafirs. The valley is important, for along it there runs a

direct and comparatively easy route from Badakshan to Jelalabad. No doubt he would have explored the country more fully, but owing to the conduct of a native, who maliciously spread about the report of his being a British spy, Mr. McNair was forced to abandon further attempts. He ascended, however, to the Dora Pass over the Hindu Kush Mountains, which he found to be a little over 14,000 feet in height, with an easy ascent, quite practicable for laden animals. This pass had been previously explored by the "Havildar" on his return journey to India in 1870-71. Mr. McNair returned by way of Mastuj, Yasin, Gilghit, and Srinagar. The account of his adventurous and important journey was read by him before the Royal Geographical Society on the 10th December, 1883, but official permission to publish the map could not be obtained.

*From the "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society,"  
November, 1889.*

### Obituary.

THE LATE MR. W. W. McNAIR.—Colonel T. H. Holdich, R.E., sends us from India the following additional details regarding the career of Mr. McNair, briefly noticed in our last issue:—Amongst the many practical geographers who have passed away during the year 1889 is Mr. W. McNair, of the Indian Survey Department. His career was very closely connected with a new phase of military

exploration carried out on the frontier of India, which had gradually superseded the older forms of reconnaissance, and was rendered possible by late improvements in the smaller classes of instruments, and a wider knowledge of the use of the plane-table. For about ten years previous to the Afghan War of 1879, McNair was attached to the topographical branch of the Indian Survey, and he had always shown a special aptitude for that class of work, which consists in acquiring a comprehensive grasp of a wide field of geographical detail in the shortest possible space of time. When war broke out, Afghanistan no longer afforded a field for such simple geographical exploration as had already been accomplished during the campaign of 1839-43. A completer military survey of all important districts was required, which would furnish detailed information of routes and passes which were far removed from the beaten tracks of previous armies. At the same time the conditions under which such a survey was to be made were exactly the same as those under which the rough reconnaissances of the former campaign were obtained. The surveyor was under the same urgent restrictions, both as to time and as to the limits of his own movements off the direct line of march. McNair, with one or two others, was selected for this topographical duty with the Afghan field force, and right good use he made of his opportunities. He was present during the fighting which took place before Kabul in the winter of 1879-80, and was shut up with the garrison of Sherpur during the fortnight's siege. His energy and determination carried him

through the campaign with more than credit—he was able to illustrate modern methods of field topography in a manner which threw new light on what was then but a tentative and undeveloped system. He was one of the first to prove the full value of the plane-table in such work as this, for it must be remembered that he was working in a country peculiarly favourable to the application of a system of graphic triangulation, and very different to the densely forest-clad mountains of the eastern frontier into which the plane-table had been carried before, with advancing brigades. At the close of the war, which brought no recognition of his exceptional services, he was appointed to the Kohát survey party, which was primarily raised for the mapping of the Kohát district, but which afforded occasional opportunities for extending topography across the border. When this party was first raised our frontier maps were of the most elementary character; there was many a wide blank in the topography of the lower borderland, and geographical darkness shrouded nearly the whole line of frontier mountains. The hostility of the border people had always been such that it was a matter of considerable risk to approach them, but the temper of the tribes was then rapidly changing with the times, and McNair rapidly succeeded in establishing himself on a friendly footing with frontier robber chiefs, whose assistance was invaluable in arranging short excursions across the line, by means of which he was able to complete a fairly accurate map of most of the border country. No work



that ever he accomplished has been of more value to the Government of India than this unobtrusive frontier mapping. It was whilst he was thus occupied between Peshawur and Dera Ismail Khan that he made the acquaintance of certain influential men of the Kaken Khel, who offered to see him safely through the dangerous districts outlying Kaffirstan, and give him the opportunity of being the first European to set his foot in that land of romance. The snow-capped summits of some of the more southerly peaks of Kaffirstan had been seen and fixed by McNair during the progress of the Afghan campaign, and it had ever been a dream with him to reach those mighty spurs, and turn those peaks to account by using them as the basis of a topographical map of the country. He did reach them, as the records of the R. G. S. sufficiently show, and he may fairly claim to be the first Englishman to lift even a corner of the veil of mystery which has ever shrouded that inaccessible country so far as its topographical conformation is concerned. This excursion won for him the Murchison Grant of the Society, and established his position as a leading practical geographer. For the last few years of his life he has been almost incessantly occupied in the rough work of frontier surveying, which his knowledge of frontier people and power of winning their confidence and help especially fitted him to undertake. At the time of his death he was employed in the Baluchistan Survey party in the completion of a triangulation series which should carry the great Indian system to the Kojak range, and furnish a scientific and highly accurate base for future

extension into Afghanistan. This was a duty which severely taxed even his vigorous constitution. It involved incessant labour in examining lofty mountain peaks in order to select suitable sites for stations, and subsequently days and nights of anxious watching during the progress of the observations, whilst food and water (when snow was not lying on the ground) were scarce, and mists and clouds hung round the mountains. No doubt it tried him hard, and when typhoid attacked him at Quetta he seemed unable to make a good fight for his life. He was able, however, to reach Mussoorie, where he died on the 13th August, leaving a gap in the Department which he served so well which it will be exceedingly hard to fill.



Campo de Quetta

2. 4. 89.

My dear Mr Howard,

As desired in yours of the 16<sup>th</sup> Ulto: I write to let you know of the arrival of the parcel containing the frames. - unfortunately they arrived after I had left Quetta, but are certain of their being in safe custody with Mess<sup>rs</sup> Ruston & Co. For the past fortnight I have had a rough time of it with snow, wind & haze. Since yesterday there has been a change for the better

so now I hope to push along with my observations

Just at present we are in a low valley & consequently the heat is somewhat trying but in another fortnight I expect I shall be complaining of it being just a little bit too cold at an elevation of 10,000 or odd.

I have little or no news to give as it is now some time since I saw a Pelican but somehow or another Sol. birds has it clear for some

Can you not manage to have a car

on that would require your presence  
 at Quetta. It is well worth a visit now  
 that the Landeron Bridge is open. The  
 journey is considerably shortened - what  
 say you to paying the place a visit when  
 en route Home. This is very easily done if  
 you go via Karachi.

With best wishes to all

Yours very truly  
 W. W. C. Hall