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CHITRAL, HUNZA, AND THE HINDU KUSH.*

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It is with a good deal of compunction that I address you on these states of the Hindu Kush which are to form the subject of my lecture to-night, for I feel that the honour of doing so should have fallen on others than myself. I was not the first, by many, to explore and open up these states. Many had gone before me, and all that I could do was to follow in the steps of these first pioneers, and carry on the work which they had commenced. Poor Hayward, the first intrepid Englishman who pushed his way into these mountain recesses, never returned to tell the tale of what he saw, for he was cruelly murdered in Yasin in 1870. But Biddulph, the first to visit Chitral and the first to visit Hunza, might well have borne the privilege which is now falling to me. And Macnair, Sir William Lockhart and the members of his mission, Mr. Ney Elias, Colonel Durand, Mr. Robertson, Captain Tyler, &c., were all my predecessors, and could have told a more interesting tale than mine of how they found these primitive, picturesque hill-men at their very first touch with the outside world.

But while I cannot lay claim to your attention as the first to visit this interesting region, I can, at least, ask it as the last to do so. It has been my privilege to represent the British Government in both Hunza and Chitral, and it is only a few months ago that I returned from the latter place, after a stay of more than two years among these little states of the Hindu Kush.

Before, however, proceeding to any description of these, it is necessary for me to put clearly before you the reasons why these regions

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MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE PAPER ON CHITRAL AND ADJACENT COUNTRIES.

By Capt. F. E. YOUNGHUSBAND, C.I.E.

Scale of Miles. 0 10 20 30 40 50
 One inch = 23.6 miles or 1:1,500,000

Vincent Brooks, Day & Son Imp.

should especially interest you. These are many. There are, first, the political and military reasons. Here is the point where, as the title of Mr. Knight's remarkably interesting book runs, 'Three Empires Meet.' The Indian, the Russian, and the Chinese empires all meet here, and where three such empires meet the eyes of the people who inhabit them must naturally be turned.

To the members of a scientific society, however, such considerations may possibly not have much weight. These would require some deeper attraction than the mere political boundaries of different races. To such the Hindu Kush affords the highest interest; for we have here moun-



A LOST SNOWPEAK, HINDU KUSH.
(From a Drawing by Colonel H. C. B. Tanner.)

tain ranges of colossal height and only of recent years explored, and races of people of a very primitive type, who, shut up for centuries in their mountain fastnesses, have preserved intact much of their original type of manners and customs.

I was brought up a soldier, and became a "political," as we are called in India; my interests were therefore more purely military and political rather than scientific; but as it was a part—the main part, I may say—of my duties to study the character and nature both of the people and the country, I shall hope that some of the impressions I formed of them may prove interesting to you.

The country I am to describe to you, then, is that lying immediately north of Kashmir and south of the Pamirs, which is drained by water

flowing into the Indus, and comprises the states of Hunza, Nagar, and Chitral. It is an entirely mountainous country, with never a stretch of plain more than 3 or 4 miles in length. The valleys are all deeply cut, and even the lowest mountains are 13,000 or 14,000 feet in height, while some rise to 25,000. The nature of the mountains will best be gathered from the lantern slides I propose to show you. Except in the lower part of Chitral and in occasional secluded side valleys, they are perfectly bare. In some parts one may travel for march after march without seeing a sign of a tree outside the valley bottoms, and the barren character of these hills has much to do with their forms and with that of the valleys. What we see here are great masses of rocky mountains, their summits in the loftier regions clothed in snow and ice, but in most parts bare, and their bases always so. On these rocks the sun in summer beats down with a force which makes them so hot it is impossible to keep one's hand on them without burning it; and in winter come frosts reaching below zero Fahrenheit, which freezes the draining of the snow and rain in the crevices of the rocks, and breaks them off by the same process as water swollen into ice bursts up our water-pipes. Owing to the extremes of temperature, the rocks in all this region are very loose, so when the snow melts off them at the close of winter, and still more so when a storm of rain or a cloud-burst falls upon these mountains, the whole of their sides is washed of their loose *débris*, which comes pouring down a liquid stream of mud and stones and boulders into the gorges, and there piles itself up till, by the pressure of weight from behind, it is forced out into the more open main valley and then spreads itself out in one of those alluvial fans, or *cones de déjection*, which occur in all mountainous countries, but which are seen in these dry lofty regions of the Hindu Kush in their fullest development. These are one of the most characteristic features of this country, and it is for this reason that I direct your attention to them. The traveller here sees in the distance some big snowy peak, but the greater part of the scene around him is of bare hillside, and the valley bottoms, which to traverse are simply a succession of these alluvial fans separated here and there by some huge rocky bluff, but often running one into the other in a continuous stretch.

The climate of these regions is one of extremes. At Chitral (5000 feet) the maximum I registered was 100°, and at Gilgit (4800 feet) Dr. Roberts recorded a maximum of 110°. These temperatures were in the cultivated parts, where the vegetation makes it cooler. In the bare open valley, where the sun comes with full force on the rocks, it must be certainly greater. As to the minimum, in Chitral in February (I have no January records) the lowest reading was 15°, and in Mastuj (7800 feet) 5° below zero. In Gilgit it is not so cold; the thermometer there does not appear to fall below 20°. The air over most of the region is extremely dry, and the rainfall very small. Nearly all the

moisture from the monsoons, which break over the plains of India, is precipitated on the outer ranges of mountains before reaching these remote valleys; and, though not so dry as the countries east and north—for a certain amount of moisture seems to come up the funnel of the Indus valley to Gilgit and Hunza, and over the Bajaur hills to Lower Chitral—the rainfall on the whole is very slight, and the climate dry and healthy.

The people are all Mohammedans, and a great number of them belong to that Maulai sect who look to Aga Khan of Bombay as their



MIDSUMMER SNOWFIELDS LOOKING TOWARDS CHITRAL.

(From a Drawing by Colonel H. C. B. Tunner.)

chief. They all dress alike, and they are very similar in feature and appearance.

My first visit to these Hindu Kush states was made in 1889, when I entered Hunza from the north and traversed the length of the country on my way to Gilgit. In 1891 I again crossed the Hindu Kush from the north, and followed down the Ashkuman valley on my way to Gilgit once more. Of these journeys I gave you some account three years ago. I had been a mere bird of passage through the states, and had had no opportunity of really studying them. But in 1892, after holding the appointment of Assistant-Resident in Kashmir for three months, I was delighted to find myself appointed to the important and interesting little state of Hunza.

Since my visit to it three years previously, however, a vast change

had taken place. That great potentate, Safder Ali, who had boasted and really believed that he was the equal of his three neighbours the Empress of India, the Czar of Russia, and the Emperor of China, had been obliged to flee from his country, which was now ruled by his younger brother, Mohamed Nazim Khan, an attractive young man who had accompanied me through Hunza on my former visit, and whom I had also met in Sarikol.

It might have been expected that now, only seven months after our little war with these people of Hunza and Nagar, the country would still show signs of disquiet. But anything more quiet and peaceful than these two little states it would be hard to find. My predecessor, Captain Stewart, had been in political charge ever since the war, and to him and the instructions he had received from Colonel Durand at Gilgit must be due the credit that these people, who had only a few months previously been up in open arms against us and fighting us tooth and nail, were now so quiet that British officers could ride anywhere about the country without an escort of any description. The fact is that the people soon recognized that our presence implied no interference with their internal affairs or customs. They were still ruled by their own chiefs and in their own way. The only difference was that they were obliged to have rulers who would preserve peaceful relations with the British Government, and that their incessant raids on Yarkand territory and fightings with the Kashmir troops at Gilgit and amongst themselves had been stopped once and for ever. Whether this result is really satisfactory for them is a question to which we have to pay attention, and seek to solve by peaceful methods. At any rate, the people are now happy and contented, and, with the usual Oriental acceptance of the inevitable, pass their lives as if the sight of British officers in their country was one which they had been accustomed to from their childhood.

The Nagar people are less taking than their neighbours across the river, but the Hunza people are a particularly attractive race. I adhere to the opinion I expressed after my first visit to their country in 1889, that they are not really a fighting people. They do not fight for fighting's sake like a Pathan tribe does. When they did fight, and certainly when they raided, it was more by command of their chiefs than from an impulse of the people themselves. But the fighting and the raiding had created in them a strong, hard spirit, noticeable at once in their faces and in their carriage; and the severity of the climate, and the hardship of existence, in a country only able to support a very limited number of inhabitants, had contributed to the formation of that power of endurance which is so especially remarkable in them. I found them, too, to be a cheery, companionable lot, who would go mad over a game of polo, delight in dancing, and always be ready for a "tamasha" of any description. Every British officer who has been

in the country since the war has spoken well of them, and I thought myself very fortunate to have been appointed to superintend such an interesting, attractive state.

And besides the people, the country itself is very fascinating. I had remembered the grandeur of that great mountain Rakapushi from my former visit. But now seeing it again, I found it to even surpass my remembrance of its glories. From Baltit, the capital



RAKAPUSHI.

(From a Drawing by Colonel H. C. B. Tanner.)

—if one may apply such a dignified title to a small collection of huts—of Hunza, you look out over a mass of foliage down the valley to the giant mountain mass at the end, a wall of snow of glittering beauty. There were other scenes, too, of almost equal grandeur; but I must not detain you by describing all the beauties of Hunza and Nagar, for that has already been done far more eloquently than I could by Mr. Knight, Mr. Conway, and Mr. Curzon, and the scenes in Hunza are now becoming as familiar as those in the Alps. I will only say, speaking from the point of view of a resident in the country, that they are such as one can never tire of; that each fresh

glimpse of Rakapushi's glories, each look across the river to the Golden Parri of Nagar, each new sight of the rugged peaks that tower above the fort at Baltit, seemed to enter deeper into one's soul than the last. They never failed to impress, never palled on one. As things of beauty they were a joy for ever.

While I was quietly enjoying all this grandeur of scenery and all the pleasure of the autumn season in Hunza, with its glowing autumn tints on the trees and frosty invigorating air, I was rudely disturbed one morning from these dreams of peace by an urgent letter from Colonel Durand, the British agent at Gilgit, telling me that the Mehtar of Chitral had been killed, and the throne usurped by an uncle; and that Nizam-ul-Mulk, the elder brother of the man who had been killed, was starting off from Gilgit to make a bid himself for the throne. Colonel Durand was going to protect our frontier with a small force, and he asked me to come down at once to Gilgit with as many Hunza-Nagar men as I could collect to join the little force. The note arrived at 8.30. I had an interview with the Mir as soon as I could. Before 11 I had packed up my things, and handed over charge to Mr. Gurdon, my successor. At 1 that same night I was in Gilgit, 65 miles off, and by 10.30 the next night a hundred men from Hunza and Nagar were there too. That is to say, in about thirty-six hours from the time of receiving the warning, they had covered on foot 65 miles of mountainous country. Nor did they halt at Gilgit. They went straight on by double marches—that is, 20 to 25 miles a day—towards Chitral, where they rendered very important services in the little scrimmage which decided the fate of the usurper, and put Nizam-ul-Mulk on the throne.

I quote this as an instance of the marching powers of these hill-men, and their readiness to start off on a long march at a moment's notice. It is an instance, also, of how readily former enemies can be turned into useful allies. I ought, too, to describe the man who was the moving spirit in this march. He was named Humayun, the principal Wazir and right-hand man of the Mir of Hunza, and the leader of one of the most renowned and successful raids which these Hunza men had ever made upon Yarkand territory. A man of extraordinary ability and force of character, one of the best polo-players in the country, full of go and dash, and a born leader of raids. On one occasion in Hunza I asked the Mir to allow Humayun to take a hundred men and just show me how they would attack a village. Humayun, with great alacrity, collected his men, took a rapid glance round to grasp the situation, and then in clear, quick words he gave his orders, dividing his men into two parties, each under a leader, and pointing out to them how the attack was to be made, the objective point of each party, and the general line by which they were to reach it. With wonderful dash each party then set off. They rushed at full speed from rock to rock, seized every point of cover in the most perfect manner, and finally joined in a combined

attack on the village. The whole thing was a most interesting exhibition, and what struck me most about it was the dash, the promptitude, and the intelligence with which it was carried out, without any preparations, on the spur of the moment.

As I have said so much about the intelligence of these people in the science of war, I feel I ought, before changing the scene to Chitral, to say something of their aptitude for the arts of peace. Behind the fort at Baltit is a cliff beetling over a mountain torrent flowing down from the snow-peak in the background, and right along the face of this cliff may be seen a watercourse constructed there by the men of Hunza with but few other instruments than the curved horns of the ibex. Iron tools were until recently almost unknown in the country. Yet,



CHITRAL VALLEY, LOOKING SOUTH.
(From a Photograph by Captain Younghusband.)

with the simple means at their disposal, they had made a way for the water round the cliff, piling up stones and earth where it was at all possible to do so, and, with props and logs of wood let into the cliff, had made galleries round the more precipitous parts. In one portion—through the old morraine of a glacier—they had made a tunnel, scooped out entirely with ibex-horns. The water was then conducted in a wide channel for 6 or 7 miles through the cultivated lands of Hunza. Altogether this water-channel was a very good illustration of the ingenuity these rough people possess, and of their ability to do much with a very little.

I must now turn to Chitral. I fear it is too much to expect you to follow me through the kaleidoscope of events which has occurred during the last two and a half years in the country, but I will attempt to put them before you as clearly as possible. Up to September, 1892, Chitral was governed by a strong vigorous ruler named Aman-ul-Mulk, who

had a huge family which included seventeen sons. In Mohammedan countries, as a rule, no successor is named for the throne, which naturally falls to the son who can first manage to seize it and afterwards hold it. It was always anticipated, therefore, that on the death of old Aman-ul-Mulk there would be a general scramble for the throne. This is exactly what occurred. The old man died; his second son Afzul seized the fort at Chitral, killed as many of his brothers as he could lay hands on, and drove Nizam, the eldest, out of the country. This latter prince fled to Gilgit, and his fortunes seemed at the lowest ebb. Suddenly, however, like a bolt from the blue, appeared an uncle, named Sher Afzul, from Afghan territory. As I have already mentioned, he surprised Afzul in the fort at Chitral, killed him and one or two of his brothers, and seized the throne. Then came Nizam's chance. He started off from Gilgit with the support of Colonel Durand, and with that was able to turn out Sher Afzul, who fled to Kabul. Nizam-ul-Mulk reigned for a little over two years, and then, on the first day of the present year, was murdered by his brother, Amir-ul-Mulk. Now Sher Afzul has appeared on the scene again, and a Pathan chief from the south as well, and all is chaos once more.

You will have found it hard to follow me through this series of tragic events, but you will at any rate have gathered that the succession to the throne in these wild countries is a matter not easily settled. At the end of 1892, it appeared, however, to be settled for the moment, and Mr. Robertson, so well known for his adventurous journeys in Kafiristan and for the part he took in the little Hunza-Nagar campaign, was sent on a mission to Chitral with three other officers, of whom I was one. We had to march the 220 miles from Gilgit in the month of January, through constant snowstorms, and to cross a pass 12,400 feet high in the heart of winter. We and our escort of 50 Sikhs arrived, however, without any mishap at Chitral by the end of the month. The people were still panting after the excitements they had been going through, but, as they saw the British mission quietly settling down, they gradually calmed; those who had fled across the frontier or up into the mountains returned to their homes, and in a week or two everything was going on as sleepily and lazily as ever.

Mr. Robertson, whose knowledge of the people, gained from his former visits to the country, had contributed so much to this pacifying effect, returned to Gilgit in May, 1893, and I was left, with the escort of fifty Sikhs under Lieutenant Gurdon, to remain by the side of the prince, who was now acknowledged as the rightful Mehtar of Chitral. The task I had before me was a congenial one. Nizam-ul-Mulk I found to be an intelligent, sociable man, and we rapidly formed an attachment for one another. One could not help feeling that he was a weak and timid prince in many ways. But all his faults were open and well known, and, setting aside these, I found in Nizam-ul-Mulk a man

devoted to hawking, shooting, and sport of every kind; a first-rate polo-player; and a man who took a keen and intelligent interest in matters beyond the ordinary run of life in his own country. He had plenty of native ability, and, though unable either to read or write, was well up in everything that concerned his country, and in the character and history of every man, above the very lowest, in it. As he gained confidence, he was able to rule his people well; and he had that natural dignity, so common, indeed, in Orientals, which helped him to fulfil all the ceremonial part of his office with eminent success.

I soon began to see how fortunate I was to have such a pleasant-mannered, amenable prince to deal with, and during the long lonely



CHITRAL BRIDGE AND TIRACH MIR.

(From a Photograph taken during the Expedition of Colonel Lockhart.)

months in Chitral I got to look forward to his almost daily visits to me as one of the chief cheering events in my life there. He would talk away on every imaginable subject, from the manufacture of soda-water to the meaning of a New Testament a missionary had sent him, or the status of Dr. Leitner. I used to show him all the illustrated papers I would receive, and books with pictures, and these used to go the round of his following as well. Often there would be a long general discussion upon some point which had interested them, and I found many of these men could speak extremely forcibly and well. The occasions, however, when the orators were seen at their best were when we had to discuss some important political question. Then, in

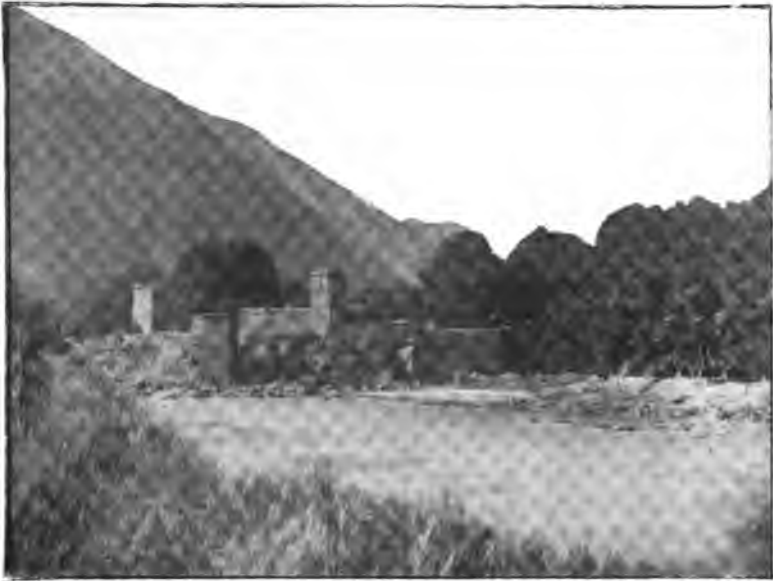
a perfectly natural manner, without any of that idea of "making a speech," one or other of the leading men of the country would proceed to give the durbar his view of the case. With eloquent gesticulation, and with great expression and flow of language, he would put it forward in a distinct and very forcible manner, which often much impressed me, and which would have done credit to our own House of Commons. I wish I could convey to you some idea of a durbar in Chitral, held in the open, under the shade of some huge plane-tree, with the Mehtar and myself seated on chairs; the principal men sitting on the ground in a semicircle before us; behind them the crowds of attendants and the ever-watchful guards of the Mehtar; and, in the background of all, the great mountain and snowy peaks above.

The Mehtar holds a durbar twice daily, once at about eleven in the morning, and again at about ten at night. At these durbars all the affairs of the country, from the smallest to the highest, and all the gup and scandal too, are discussed. One man comes in, goes up to the Mehtar, seizes his hand and kisses it, and proceeds to lay forth his case about some land. The Mehtar, after having probably put him off once or twice, hears his case, consults some of the men in durbar of the village he belongs to, and decides the case then and there. Another man rushes in, kisses the Mehtar's feet, and says he has killed his wife whom he had caught in adultery with another man. "Very well," says the Mehtar; "go away, and don't come back till you have killed the man too." It is considered in Chitral to save subsequent feuds if both parties in an adultery case are killed, and the matter once for all settled in this summary way.

Of course I was not myself present at these ordinary durbars of the Mehtar's, but I was interested in hearing what went on, to gain an idea of the system of government in the country. This system is an especially interesting one, and in theory, and to a certain extent in practice also, a very good one. Once during the year every leading man in the country is expected to come to Chitral to pay his respects to the Mehtar, and to remain in attendance on him for a couple of months or so. He has to attend these daily durbars and help the Mehtar with advice about the affairs of the state. He receives food from the Mehtar—the meals, by-the-by, are eaten during the durbar, and the most weighty matters decided at dinner—and he is often lodged by him also. At the end of his time the Mehtar gives him leave to return to his home, and presents him with a silk robe or some other sign of favour. Certain numbers of the lower classes have also to come to Chitral to serve the Mehtar or form his guard for two or three months. In this manner there is a constant ebb and flow from the provinces to the capital; the provincial people get to know what is going on at head-quarters, and the Mehtar to become acquainted with those he rules. As a matter of fact, Nizam-ul-Mulk knew nearly every man in the country. As the eldest son of his

father, he had sat in durbar all his life, and so had had ample opportunities for doing so.

In an informal manner, these men have, too, a considerable voice in the government of the country. Whenever a question is raised, the Mehtar refers it to the durbar. "What would it be best to do?" he would say to those about him; and a discussion would follow, the Mehtar would hear all that had to be said, and would then decide for himself what he would do. The more confidential matters were discussed by the Mehtar with his leading men in private audience. But in any case I do not think he ever acted without consulting some of his chiefs, and



CHITRAL FORT, FROM SOUTH BANK OF RIVER.

(From a Photograph taken during the Expedition of Colonel Lockhart.)

so, though he was in some ways an autocrat of the most pronounced type, and had the power of giving away his subjects and their lands and houses entirely at his own will and pleasure, yet practically these subjects had a very large share in the government of the country, and the Mehtar had to conform very largely to the customs and will of his people.

Of these people I perhaps saw most during a tour which Nizam-ul-Mulk and I made together in the autumn of 1893, right up to the northern frontier of his country. We rode together nearly the whole day long, followed by a hundred or more of his headmen and followers, and were met at every village by crowds of the people. Even after dark the Mehtar and one or two of his brothers and a few chief men who enjoyed his favour would come to my tent and often sit up to midnight talking

with me. On the march much of the formality of the capital wore off, and out hawking by the way; around the big bonfire at night or crossing a pass in the midst of a snowstorm, one could observe these hundreds of men as they really were, and mark all their traits and characteristics as they came out one by one. They are remarkably like children, these Chitralis, impulsive, gay, careless, easily roused and easily soothed, warm-hearted, I think, and certainly fond of their children; a people whom you would not care for at first sight, as they are, like all other children, shy and timid with strangers, but who, as you get to know them and they you, develop many likeable qualities. They are capable of becoming very warmly attached to British officers, and General Lockhart is a god among them. How he appears to have gained their hearts was by making jokes. They love a joke. It need not be a very deep one, but such as it is it will be received with shouts of laughter, and repeated for years after. The Chitralis are fond, too, of sport of all kinds; shooting and hawking are practised by every man who has or can borrow a gun or hawk. And they play polo with great dash and spirit, old men as well as young. I have seen an old fellow of sixty galloping about and shouting as hard as any of them. The bad points of the Chitralis are the same as those of children, the principal one being their avarice and covetousness. They are always wanting presents, and the more they are given—and they have been given a good many—the more they want. This is a very pronounced and certainly irritating defect in their character. If a present is given to one man, his neighbour wants to know why he too has not received one; and if presents of precisely equal value are not given to men of equal rank, endless jealousy and trouble are caused. They lack, too, the firm, fixed character of men, and are liable to be carried away by impulse in a careless, thoughtless way which may often cause difficulty in dealing with them. Still, with all their faults they are a people one likes to live amongst, and I hope for many years to come they may be allowed to remain in the simple independent state in which I knew them, and which they have maintained for so many centuries in the past.

I have spoken much of the people, but little so far of their country. I once, with Lieutenant Bruce, the companion of Mr. Conway, ascended a peak overhanging Chitral, and it was from the summit of that I obtained the best idea of what the country really is. It is just a sea of mountains, practically bare except in the lower part of Chitral, and it is only in small patches at the very bottom of the narrow valleys that any cultivation at all is to be found. All the remainder is bare brown rock, only relieved by the snowy peaks. Of these the great mass of Tirich Mir, 25,000 feet, is by far the most important. It is visible from Chitral itself, and though it cannot approach in grandeur to the Rakapushi of Hunza, it forms a lovely object as it is seen across the cultivated lands and orchards of Chitral, forming the snowy background to ridge

after ridge along the valley. Except for these snowy peaks, however, the mountains are bare, and the greater part of the valley bottom is so also. But the villages are wonderfully beautiful. At the end of a dreary ride by unadorned rock, the traveller suddenly finds himself amongst green fields and shady orchards, with smooth fresh turf under the shadow of the mulberry, walnut, apricot, or plane-trees with which the villages abound. A Chitrali has a very good idea of the pleasing in outdoor life. The interior of his house is dull and cold, but his garden is always charming, and he loves to tend his smooth green patches of turf, and lie under the shade of his fruit-trees. These village lands are not, however, very extensive. Chitral, the largest, is only about 3 miles in length and 1 mile broad, while most of the villages are not over a mile. The country is, therefore, but a poor one in reality, and a bird's-eye view of it would show that only a very small fraction of it was cultivated. Yet this is the country which will every year become of more and more importance in our Imperial affairs, and it is the very fact of its sterility and inaccessibility which has caused so much interest to attach itself to it. The rich accessible countries of Asia have been overrun again and again; but round these secluded little mountain states of the Hindu Kush, the tides of conquest have surged without disturbing them. And hence their interest; and, though I have this evening been able to give you only a short and imperfect account of these regions, I hope that I shall have said enough to attract you to these primitive people and the rugged mountains amongst which they dwell.

Before the reading of the paper, the PRESIDENT said: There is no occasion for me to introduce to you such a very old friend as Captain Younghusband, from whom we have already received two most interesting communications. I will, therefore, merely call upon him to read his paper.

After the reading of the paper, the following discussion took place:—

General Lord ROBERTS: Captain Younghusband has given us a very graphic account of a part of the world which has been hitherto almost a *terra incognita*, but that unknown country must now become of intense interest to some people in England, from the fact that it has been found necessary to organize a force for despatch to Chitral, for the purpose of expelling Umra Khan from a place with which he has no right to interfere, and of rescuing the British Agent, Mr. Robertson, and his companions. These officers, with some three hundred native soldiers, are reported to be surrounded in the fort of Chitral by this same Umra Khan, the chief of Dir, a petty state situated about midway between Peshawur and Chitral. Captain Younghusband has told us how precarious is life and how uncertain is succession in these out-of-the-way Mohammedan states, and he has also told us how his friend Afzul-ul-Mulk was treacherously murdered by one of his own brothers on January 1 of this year. Previous to the murder the fratricide had made friends with Umra Khan, and it is probable that the murder was arranged between these two worthies. At any rate, as soon as it had been committed Umra Khan appeared upon the scene. Meanwhile Mr. Robertson had moved to Chitral to support his assistant, Lieutenant Gurdon, and

watch over affairs in the interests of the British Government. Shortly after his arrival there, he had to take refuge in the forts, as the force accompanying him was not strong enough to cope with that which Umra Khan brought against it. Umra Khan was warned by the Viceroy of India that he could not be allowed to remain in Chitral, and that, unless a satisfactory reply was received from him within a certain date, an expedition would be sent to enforce obedience to the demands of the Indian Government. The serious events which have been reported within the last few days make the despatch of this force now a certainty, and we must all hope that it will reach its destination in time to preserve the lives of Mr. Robertson and those with him. The necessity for the expedition is much to be regretted, but one great advantage to be derived from it will open out of the direct route between India and Chitral, a place of great strategic importance in the scheme of our frontier defence. The distance from the Peshawur valley to Chitral by this route *via* Swat and Dir is about 200 miles, whereas the route through Kashmir and Gilgit, by which all troops and stores have now to travel, is more than 600 miles in length, and is closed by snow for nearly six months every year. Swat, through which the expedition must pass, is a district we have hitherto carefully avoided, as it is certainly inhabited by a very fanatical race of Mohammedans, and its physical obstacles are said to be even greater than those of other parts of the mountain ranges along which our trans-Indus frontier runs. But I feel confident that neither the one nor the other of these difficulties will prove unsurmountable to the well-equipped and well-organized force which Sir Robert Low will have under his command. Even if the difficulties should prove to be as great as they are reported, they must be overcome, for we cannot allow our officers and the gallant native soldiers with them to be sacrificed without making every effort to save them, and it is out of the question our continuing to occupy Gilgit and Chitral without having a route by which we can communicate with these places rapidly and at all seasons of the year. We have now got control over nearly the whole of the frontier south of the Kabul river, a task which was believed to be most dangerous, if not quite impossible. But the late Sir Robert Sandeman showed that, by discontinuing futile blockades and inconclusive reprisals, and by taking the tribesmen into our confidence, roads—those best of all civilizers—could be made, and the wild border tribes themselves turned from enemies into friends without scarcely firing a shot. With the exception of the Umbeyla expedition in 1863, British troops have never entered the hills north of the Kabul river, so that a special interest attaches to the expedition which General Sir Robert Low has been selected to command. Some may wonder why such stress is laid upon British influence being extended over tribes with whose religion and domestic arrangements we have no intention to interfere, and whose territories we have no desire to annex. Others, again, may think that they ought to be left to themselves, to murder and plunder to their hearts' content, as they have done for generations past, so long as they don't trouble us. The reason why it is advisable for us to try and gain an influence for good over the border tribes (looking at the question from merely a selfish point of view) is that they are a great factor in the defence of the north-west frontier of India. They number more than 200,000 fighting men, and our frontier is conterminous with theirs for some 1100 miles. Thanks to the enlightenment of the present ruler of Afghanistan, our relations with that country are becoming more satisfactory than they have ever as yet been, but it is just as essential we should be on satisfactory terms with the warlike tribes inhabiting the mountainous district between Afghanistan and India. We cannot leave them to themselves until the time arrives when we shall need their assistance, or at all events their neutrality. Before that time comes they should have learned to look upon us as

their friends, and to appreciate the benefits which civilized intercourse with us will confer upon them. Moreover, we must be able to pass through their territories, and make roads to those points which we shall have to occupy in the event of India being threatened by a foreign power.

The Hon. G. N. CURZON, M.P.: I am very glad indeed that Lord Roberts has spoken out with such very great clearness and force, and with the exceptional authority which he may be said almost alone to possess, upon the important question now raised upon our frontier. I of course shall not intrude upon that sphere, with which I have no right to deal; but inasmuch as, in the course of last autumn, I covered nearly every yard of the country which the lecturer has spoken of, for the most part in the agreeable company of himself, I may perhaps be allowed to say a word upon the larger question. Captain Younghusband has been unduly but characteristically modest in his description of the part he has played in these countries, which has been very considerable. In the first place, years ago, before we knew much about them, by his intrepid explorations, he first placed at the disposal of the Indian Government the essential and invaluable information upon which, when military operations were found to be necessary, they were glad to act; and his services have since been equally useful in the task of administration. From my own experience, I can say that Captain Younghusband is eminently gifted to win and to retain the confidence of the native peoples and their chiefs with whom he is brought into contact. A few weeks ago, when I read a paper here, I terminated my remarks at a point where, having crossed the Baroghil pass, I reached the head-waters of the Yarkhun river, which is subsequently known as the Kashkar, Chitral, or Kunar river, and which flows down by Mastuj to Chitral and Jellalabad. For three days I followed down the course of that river, through a gorge of great depth and corresponding grandeur. I remember on the first day of my journey, in the beginning of October, I had to ford the river no less than twelve times, and passed six glaciers. This valley is characteristic of all the Chitral valleys, which sometimes narrow down to a defile through which the river plunges, sometimes open out into a wider river-bed with jungle on either side. Captain Younghusband mentioned to-night the amiable and sporting proclivities of the Chitral people; and I shall never forget a picture that is imprinted on the retina of my memory, viz. the sight of the old governor of the Yarkhun valley, who rode with me for two days—a gallant old gentleman of some sixty or more years of age, with a magnificent beard stained a rich red, and enormous moustachios that protruded for several inches on either side of his face, his head wrapped round with a splendid gold and red turban, a velvet *chogha* or cloak on his shoulders, and his little boy sitting behind him on the saddle and clinging round his father's waist. This brave old sportsman rode hour after hour the whole day through with his hawk on his wrist, and when any quarry arose, whether quail or duck, he let fly his hawk, galloping after it to take up the bird again on to his hand.

In this way I went down to the fort of Mastuj, where I was joined by Captain Younghusband. He did not say much about that place, but I mention it for two reasons: to illustrate both the discomfort and the artistic taste of the Chitralis—the discomfort, because in order to get to my room, which was the principal one in the building, I had to crawl along a low tunnel and climb a rickety ladder, though this was in a royal residence; on the other hand, the artistic taste, because the woodwork of the room was most elegantly carved. From Mastuj we continued down the river by the route which has been described this evening, and I well remember the spot where Captain Ross and his men have been killed. Not that it differs much from any other spot, for the landscape characteristics are uniform, and no great variety occurs in any 10 or 20 miles; but just at that stage Captain Younghusband

will remember that he mounted me on a horse which had been presented to him by the Mehtar. Whether it was owing to my weight or to the severity of the ground, this unhappy animal gave out in the course of the march, and took to spitting blood, so I had to dismount and lead him into Reshun, where he died in the course of the night. That will indicate the steepness and stiffness of the ground, which aggravated the unfortunate disaster to our troops.

One word about the late Mehtar. Words cannot express my sorrow at the lamentable death of that poor man. I quite concur in what Captain Younghusband said about him to-night. He was a man not, perhaps, highly endowed with strength or resolution of character, but differing from the rest of his people in having some conception of mercy. Abandoning the immemorable usage of his family of killing every one of his brothers, he gave a safe conduct to the younger brother, who has now killed him. He also pardoned an old gentleman who plotted against his life, the old fellow of whom Captain Younghusband talked in his paper as playing polo. His sole revenge was to make him captain of the opposite team to himself, which was always sure to be beaten. It is a melancholy thing that this young prince, amiable in character and absolutely loyal, should have been killed.

Captain Younghusband has talked about the good manners of the Chitralis. They are also capable of sustaining a serious conversation. He will remember the morning I spent there, in which for the best part of three hours the Mehtar and his leading men came and laid before me the affairs of their state; and certainly, when we bear in mind the necessary ignorance as well as the remoteness of these tribes, it was remarkable to hear them state their case and conduct a conversation with as much dignity and good sense as these men did.

Colonel H. C. B. TANNER: The most prominent peaks of the Hindu Kush were observed and trigonometrically fixed by myself from points in Gilgit averaging from 17,000 to 17,400 feet in altitude, but sufficient suitable stations were not available in the small tract of country I was allowed to visit for fixing all the most lofty mountains seen. That slide with very dark clouds and white snow represents a peak the position of which is unfixed, having been observed from one point only. I wrote to Dr. Robertson about it, but unfortunately he is so far away that I have received no reply. It seemed to me to be on the continuation westward of the Hindu Kush range in the direction of Kafiristan, and in the neighbourhood of Tirach Mir. I should say it must be over 24,000 feet high, and sufficient to give rise to very large glaciers.* Dr. Robertson had no means at his disposal of fixing with accuracy the highest mountain ranges in Chitral and in Kafiristan, but when the cloud has blown over and our forces have visited Chitral, no doubt surveyors will follow, and by-and-by all the undefined part of the map now before you will be cleared up. It is for the Geographical Society to continue their efforts to see that accounts of these interesting tracts are brought to us. The vast numbers of languages spoken there render the country one of the most interesting in the world, and although Dr. Robertson has done a great deal, and Captain Younghusband is still at work, it will be very many years before we have cleared up all the more interesting points yet to be determined. I trust, therefore, that our interest in the country round Chitral and Kafiristan may not cease because a few explorers have already been there.

The PRESIDENT: It is so short a time since Mr. Robertson charmed an audience in this hall by his most interesting account of his sojourn in Kafiristan, and we were all so much interested in what he said, that we cannot but feel very anxious

* Tirach Mir, seen first by Colonel J. Biddulph, is 25,400 feet high; two other points to the eastward, and on the main ridge of the Hindu Kush, are over 24,000 feet. The unfixed peak of Colonel Tanner may probably be near the Doráha or Nukeán passes.

now that he is in danger, or that, at least, he is in a state of isolation. We must all, therefore, have listened with deep interest to what Lord Roberts has told us of the march by the Swat valley from Peshawur to Chitral, which, I believe, is only 186 miles, and two-thirds shorter than the route usually taken. Perhaps it is not too late this evening to ask General Walker if he will give us some account of what he knows in a little more detail of that route from Peshawur to Chitral.

General J. T. WALKER: I am very sorry I can give but little information. It is thirty years since I was employed on the frontier of Peshawur, and it is to be hoped that our officers there know a little more of the regions beyond now than they did in my days. I sincerely hope that Lord Roberts is correct in his anticipation that our army will be able to march from Peshawur to Chitral; but it is a very difficult country to traverse. I am not aware that any Europeans but one, Mr. McNair, an officer of the Survey, has been through it. It is a country without roads and with various difficult passes, and I am afraid that General Low has a very arduous task before him; but I can only hope that he will be successful, and will not only relieve Dr. Robertson, but that we shall be able to acquire permanent influence over the whole of the intermediate country. This will be certainly an enormous advantage in the management of affairs up in Chitral, as it will open out the direct route to that country, which is so much shorter than the route which has at present to be taken.

The PRESIDENT: I remember, when Captain Younghusband read his first paper in this hall in the year 1888, that Sir Henry Rawlinson, our lamented president, joined in the discussion, and he said that the name of Younghusband would always be in the first rank amongst explorers who had found their way over the great plateau of Central Asia. Since that time our gold medallist has worked hard in the same geographical field, and has explored the northern side of the Karakoram range and the Pamirs, and, as we have heard to-night, Chitral and Hunza. He has already communicated to us three papers, and the present one, like the two former papers, is valuable from a geographical point of view, is charmingly written, and most interesting. When I propose a vote of thanks to Captain Younghusband, I feel sure that I shall carry it with acclamation. And we must not forget to thank Colonel Tanner, who has contributed so much to the interest of the evening by his pictures.

NOTE ON MAP OF CHITRAL.—In the map to illustrate Captain Younghusband's paper on Chitral and the adjacent countries, the part north of lat. 35° 30' N. has been taken from the "Map of the Pamirs," compiled at the Intelligence Division of the War Office. The part south of this parallel has been taken from the "Map of Afghanistan," published by the Indian Survey Department, with additions furnished by Captain Younghusband.

THREE YEARS' TRAVEL IN THE CONGO FREE STATE.*

By S. L. HINDE, Captain in the Belgian Service.

HAVING been appointed to the Congo Medical Service, I landed at Boma in December, 1891, and went up to Stanley Pool. Thence I was sent to the district of Lualaba, commanded by the Baron Dhanis, and on arriving was immediately ordered to join an exploring expedition to Katanga.

* Paper read at the Royal Geographical Society, March 11, 1895. Map, p. 512.