



SUBHANA, HEAD SHIKARI OR GUIDE, TAKEN ON YARKAND ROAD

[Frontispiece

An Unexplored Pass

*A Narrative of a Thousand-mile Journey to the
: : Kara-koram Himalayas : :*

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Introduction by Brig.-General The Hon. C. G. Bruce, C.B., M.V.O.

WITH MAP
AND 25 ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY MOTHER

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PREFACE

THIS is the story of an attempt to cross the New or Western Muztagh Pass, in the heart of the Kara-koram Himalayas, and the return journey by way of the Shyok valley, through Ladakh or Western Tibet. I left Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, on June 24th, 1922, and returned on September 10th, having travelled over a thousand miles, mostly on foot, at altitudes varying from 5,000 to nearly 18,000 feet above sea level ; allowing some ten days for halts, this gives an average of over a hundred miles a week.

Travelling as a private individual with modest resources, the only European of my party, and with but little experience of mountain travel either in the Himalayas or elsewhere, it was but natural that I should meet, at times, with difficulties, not to mention that of transport. Without making any comparison, one has but to read the published accounts of some of the recent expeditions into the glacier region of the Kara-koram Himalayas to appreciate the difference made by ample resources, Government recognition and support, or the patronage of scientific societies.

This record is based on a careful diary kept at the time, but I wish to make the fullest acknowledgments to the writers of books on the subject, such as the accounts of previous travellers, most of which I have since read. Of these, Waddell's *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, and the Rev. Dr. Francke's *A History of Western Tibet*,

were invaluable; the latter work contains the result of much recent research, of which I have made full use, and my thanks are due to the learned author, as also to the Moravian Mission, who have freely placed at my disposal further information.

The distances and place-names are given as in the last edition (1922) of the *Routes in the Western-Himālaya, Kashmir, etc.*, vol. i, published under the direction of the Surveyor-General of India. In the route map, the mountain ranges have been omitted for the sake of clearness, as also a few unimportant places mentioned on the journey. It should be remembered that the political situation in India, the echo of which was referred to in the text, was that of 1922—now happily improved.

I have gratefully to acknowledge the help of my family and friends, as without their encouragement and assistance, this work, written in the intervals of studying and qualifying for another profession, would not have been completed.

Finally, this book has no claim to be scientific, and no one recognises more than I do the difficulty of satisfying the specialist and the general reader; but if it induces anyone to undertake exploration, however modest, in the Kara-koram region of the Himalayas, I shall be fully repaid for the labour of writing it.

B. K. F.

LONDON,

February 27th, 1926.

INTRODUCTION

CAPTAIN FEATHERSTONE'S book, dealing with his attempt to reach the New or Western Muztagh Pass, adds one more to the number of the explorers of the gigantic region of the Kara-koram Himalayas. Most of the previous expeditions in this area have been on a larger scale than that now described, with official backing and ample financial resources. Captain Featherstone's attempt on the pass was a private enterprise, undertaken while on ordinary leave, and he was the only European in his party.

This country is in every sense a prodigious one and its secrets by no means fully probed. Every year and every expedition that takes place adds further to our knowledge. There are still great tracts left doubtful on the map to be filled in, and if the author in the time to come will only complete what he has begun and cross the New or Western Muztagh Pass and descend into the Shaksgam, it would fill a gap and add knowledge which would be very welcome. There still remains an immense amount to do in the revision of the only maps made of this region by Godwin-Austen, Montgomery and others, and it is very doubtful if the rather small staff of our Indian Survey Department will have time now or in the near future to turn their attention to the re-mapping of this country.

Although this pass, the New Muztagh, has appeared on maps and in Baltistan tradition for a very long time,

I have never heard of any European who has been known to cross it. If it was ever really a pass, the ice conditions of the mountains have probably vastly changed, although the tradition of it having once been a pass in actual use remains.

It must be understood that, good hill-men as the local races are, they are not clothed and equipped for dealing with the serious difficulties of ice and snow, and therefore, if used at all, the pass must have been a fairly easy route.

The difficulties which Captain Featherstone encountered with the people of Askole are quite natural. They are a very poor people, unambitious, unenterprising. Expeditions for them into the great mountain regions can only mean hardship, very hard work, discomfort and fatigue, and the reward money for which they have little or no use. Further, this one village has had to bear the full brunt of all the expeditions, such as those of Sir Martin Conway, the Workmans, the Duke of the Abruzzi and others, which have explored the Biafo, the Baltoro, and neighbouring glaciers. Accounts of the hardships experienced on the glaciers are now a tradition, so much so that it is not many years ago that a friend of mine, on arriving at Askole, with the object merely of proceeding to the Snout of the Baltoro, was surprised to find the entire inhabitants take to the hill-sides, until he made it clear to them that he had no designs on the great ice mountains.

The Balti is a gentle, biddable, and hardworking creature, entirely unambitious, and entirely without initiative. It is wonderful what many parties have got him to do, but given funds, it would be better for future exploring expeditions to bring a party of a more virile,

determined, and sporting race for use when the real difficulties occur.

However, Captain Featherstone, besides his story of the attempt on the Western Muztagh Pass, which came within a few miles of success, has written an interesting account of his return journey along the Shyok valley, on the Yarkand road to Panamik, and back through Leh.

I think the whole character of this country lies in the sentence that it is a country to see but not to live in. Its gigantic scale, its barrenness, the enormous tracts which are completely and absolutely uninhabitable, the size of its many glaciers, the largest outside the Arctic and Antarctic circles, place it alone among mountain regions. The size and steepness and number of its mountains are unbelievable unless seen. Remote and repellent, it is a most savage and cruel country, and one of the marvels of the world.

C. G. BRUCE.

An Unexplored Pass

CHAPTER I

MARCH TABLE					Miles
June 24th	..	Srinagar to Gandarbal	..	..	14½
„ 25th	..	Gandarbal to Bimbaja	..	..	15½
„ 26th	..	Bimbaja to Rezim	..	..	15½
„ 27th	..	Rezim to Baltal	..	..	17
„ 28th	..	Baltal to Matayan	..	..	15
					Crossed Zoji La
					— 11,578ft.
					77½

THE START

It was in 1922, while stationed on the North-West Frontier of India with my regiment, the 54th Sikhs (Frontier Force¹), that I thought of this thousand-mile trip to the Kara-koram Himalayas. The New or Western Muztagh Pass lies some seven miles to the west of the Old or Eastern Muztagh Pass, the latter being that crossed by Sir Francis Younghusband on his journey from Peking to India in 1887. My plan was to cross the New Muztagh Pass, as all previous attempts to reach its summit, 18,400 feet up in the icy wilderness of the Kara-koram Range, had failed. This range lies athwart the direct route between the plains of Northern India and the tablelands of Central Asia, and the New Muztagh Pass is the only known pass not yet explored over the Kara-koram mountains; though earlier European travellers and native rumour to this day speak of another pass further east, which has not, up to the present, been definitely located.

Rudolf Schlagintweit tried the ascent of the New

¹ Now the 4th Battalion (Sikhs) 12th Frontier Force Regiment.

Muztagh Pass from the south in 1856, but was driven back by a snowstorm, and Godwin-Austen met with the same experience five years later. Sir Francis Younghusband, besides crossing the Old Muztagh Pass in 1887, reconnoitred the new pass, both from the north and south approaches, without finding anything practicable. Since 1887, however, although some of the great Himalayan expeditions, such as those of the Duke of the Abruzzi, Sir Martin Conway, and the Workmans, have explored the glaciers and peaks in its immediate neighbourhood, the New Muztagh Pass seems to have been neglected.

Several generations of family connexions with India, including service with the Honourable East India Company, had aroused my interest in that country—Kashmir, and especially the Himalayas, always making a strong appeal. Finding myself within easy reach of them, I determined to seize the opportunity. My scheme was an ambitious one, so much so that I hardly felt inclined to refer to it in conversation with my brother officers. In a moment of confidence I roughly outlined my plan to a genial Irish messmate, but the incredulous amusement with which it was received did not encourage me to repeat the indiscretion. It occurred to me, however, that the experience gained chiefly on week-end trips from the Khyber Pass to Peshawar, a distance of some ten miles, was hardly sufficient to raise anyone to the position of an authority on Himalayan travel, so that I was not unduly dismayed.

While stationed with a handful of Sikhs in a small blockhouse in the Khyber Pass, that sun-scorched gateway to Afghanistan seemed to have lost even the historical interest it had always held for me. I had ceased

to think of the numerous conquerors, Mogul, Greek, Persian, and Tartar, who, during the last two thousand years, had passed between its rocky walls, and I found my thoughts dwelling more and more on the question of leave. One of the privileges of officers serving on the North-West Frontier at that time was an extra thirty days, should the exigencies of the Service permit, making, in all, three months a year.

The North-West Frontier figures largely to many as the scene of frequent murders of British officers, and I may perhaps be forgiven a slight digression to recall the words of a former Viceroy of India, in 1887. "I believe that our North-West Frontier presents at this moment a spectacle unique in the world; at least, I know of no other spot, where, after twenty-five years of peaceful occupation, a great civilised power has obtained so little influence over its semi-savage neighbours, and acquired so little knowledge of them that the country within a day's ride of its most important garrison is an absolute *terra incognita*, and that there is absolutely no security for British life a mile or two beyond our border." Concerning the progress made towards the security of British life it should be remembered that these words were penned nearly half a century ago. It might be interesting to hear an optimistic politician compare the situation then described with that of to-day.

The much-hoped-for leave at last fell due, and in a few days I left for Srinagar, in Kashmir, the starting-point of my adventures. The first part of my journey from Peshawar, the capital of the North-West Frontier province, to Rawalpindi, was accomplished by train. Kashmir is approached by several routes from the

plains of India, and one of them, the Jhelum valley road, starts from this place. I at once hired a car, and before long had left the heat and dust of the glaring plains far behind and was enjoying the cool breezes of the Murree hills. The night was spent at Tret, and the following morning, after an early start, we entered the Jhelum valley. Those unacquainted with its splendour I must refer to other writers, some of whom have described it in a far more eloquent manner than I could ever hope to attain. About seven o'clock the same evening, after a run of nearly two hundred miles, Srinagar was reached.

This town is built on either side of the Jhelum River, and the numerous canals intersecting it give rise to the inevitable comparison with Venice. One cannot help being struck with the picturesqueness of the rickety wooden dwellings, contrasting oddly with mosques and Hindu temples. The mosques of Kashmir, in the possession of graceful, tapering spires, are entirely different to those of the Near East, with minarets. Palaces and merchants' houses line the river banks, and snowy mountain ranges form an opalescent background at sunset. Many houses have gardens on their earth-covered roofs, and in spring-time a riot of flowers in full bloom lends a charming note of colour to the scene. The river is crossed by seven log bridges, and on the banks are found massive stone blocks, remains of former architectural glories of Hindu times; upon these are quaintly built houses, with overhanging, semicircular balconies and latticed windows. Here and there, leading down to the river, are flights of steps, which are used from daylight to dusk by people washing their clothes, their cooking utensils, and occasionally themselves. In the

cool summer evenings these steps provide a meeting-place for idlers and gossipers, whose chatter can be heard far into the night.

The European quarter is situated not far from the native city, and includes some fine buildings, such as the post-office, the Residency, banks, English officials' houses, shops, church, missionary station, and the club. The Bund, or river embankment, shaded by willows and *chenars*, or plane-trees, makes a lovely walk, and the river is lined on either side with house-boats. A comfortable hotel, games, and sports of all kinds, dances, picnics, and garden-parties, make Srinagar a delightful place in which to pass the summer. A short distance beyond the city may be seen the old palaces of the Mogul Emperors, with avenues of fine trees and the remains of charming gardens ; altogether Srinagar is wonderfully attractive, and deserved more time than I was able to give it.

On arrival, I was accosted at once by numerous native tradesmen, in dealing with whom some caution is necessary. Thirteen centuries ago a Chinese pilgrim described the Kashmiris as given to cunning, while about a hundred years ago Moorcroft, the explorer, left on record his impression of them in these words : " Selfish, superstitious, ignorant, subtle, intriguing, dishonest, and false, they have ingenuity as mechanics and a decided genius for manufacture and commerce, but their transactions are always conducted in a fraudulent manner, equalled only by the effrontery with which they face detection." Some of these characteristics will be found among them at the present time.

The next day I set about getting my kit and stores for the trip, procuring the necessary passes and permits

without which certain districts cannot be visited. Suitable personnel were engaged, the most important of these being the *shikari*, or native guide. I succeeded in finding an excellent man about fifty years old, a native of Kashmir, called Subhana, who spoke Persian, Tibetan, Turki (the language of Chinese-Turkestan), and many hill dialects. He was widely experienced, having crossed the Kara-koram Range into Central Asia on several occasions, and also journeyed through Greater Tibet with an English explorer who intended reaching Lhasa, but was turned back. Subhana's contact with Europeans had developed a fine character, and I found him satisfactory in every way. But for his ready smile and cheery willingness, and above all, his complete influence over the other natives, I could neither have covered the distance nor surmounted the many difficulties, mainly those of transport, encountered on my way. Two other natives of Kashmir, Lala and Asdu, were engaged, and my personal servant, a Punjabi, who acted as cook, completed my staff.

Such preparations as were possible were completed in three days. Some previous expeditions to the Kara-koram region of the Himalayas had been specially organised for distant exploration, with Government support and unlimited financial resources. I had thought of applying for help to the Survey Department of India, but a request of this nature would have released a flood of inquiry, and so the idea was abandoned. Had I been successful, I might at the most have been given a surveyor, which would have involved extra transport and expense, but I should then have felt under an obligation not to alter my plans unless absolutely necessary. Thus I started off on my journey through the Himalayas with

no Government assistance, small financial resources, and consequently insufficiently equipped.

The word Himalayas probably conveys to most of us the idea of a lofty chain of mountains to the north of India, with a series of snowy peaks. There are perhaps few who can picture the immense area covered by the name, as is often the case with parts of the world known to us only by a map. It is used to include a collection of ranges, extensive tablelands, and deep valleys, forming the watershed of the great rivers of India, and a barrier between the Indian peninsula and Central Asia. Modern authorities define the Himalayas as a mountainous region about five hundred miles in breadth, and extending for a length of fifteen hundred miles from Afghanistan to Burma. Most of the mountain ranges run more or less from north-west to south-east, and increase in height northwards towards the tablelands of Central Asia.

The whole district is comparatively unexplored, and a large area is practically closed to Europeans—an icy wilderness far from human habitation; in this latter group is the Kara-koram Range, which contains some of the highest peaks in the world. This mountain mass is so involved and intricate that our knowledge of its topography is somewhat small. The word Kara-koram in Turki means black rock or boulder, being used by the traders to designate the pass of that name, and is not applied by them to the mountains. Hayward appears to have been the first to suggest applying the name to the mountains, and one should bear in mind that this extension of the name is purely European, whereas the natives speak of it as the Muztagh Range. In the heart of this labyrinth of snowy peaks lies the New Muztagh

Pass. Once away from Askole, the last inhabited place, one is dependent upon one's own resources, the country being entirely bare of supplies of any kind.

Travelling in the Himalayas is largely a matter of transport, the organisation of which, on the trade routes, leaves little to be desired. Off the beaten track, however, one's patience is sorely taxed and one's vocabulary possibly inadequate. This organisation is directed by various functionaries, who, in order of seniority, are the *tehsildars*, the *naib-tehsildars*, the *zaildars*, the *tekkidars*, the *lambadars*, and finally the *raiswallas*. The *tehsildar* and the *naib-tehsildar* are appointed by the Kashmir State, and are in charge of districts and sub-districts respectively. They are generally Hindus, and have been trained in the Government schools of India, thus acquiring a slight knowledge of English. The *tekkidar*, or local contractor, who is not appointed by the State, acts as intermediary between the above and the *lambadar*. The *zaildar* is rarely met with, while the *lambadar* is the head man of the village or hamlet. Under his orders is the *raiswalla*—literally, the man on duty—whose work is to collect the ponies or porters and see to their loading up. In theory this arrangement appears all right, but in practice it often falls short, as will be seen later.

Towards evening, on June 24th, I set out from the Dal Gate in a *shikara*, or native canoe. Passing through a small canal, we soon entered the Anchar Lake, where Kashmiri women were making floating gardens, which are a distinctive feature of the country. They commence by cutting the weeds at the bottom of the lake, and these rise to the surface, where they are then matted together; and, upon them, as on a platform, are placed

small heaps of weeds about two feet high ; soil is next taken from the bed of the lake and put on the top of the mounds, where it remains without being washed away, being kept moist by the weeds. Melons, vegetables, and other plants grow easily on the soil with little attention. There is nothing similar to this anywhere in India, but Lawrence, in his *Valley of Kashmir*, quotes a parallel in the "Chinampas" of old Mexico.

Kashmiri women are said by some to rank among the most beautiful in the world, and Vigne, who travelled here extensively over eighty years ago, becomes almost lyrical on the subject. Women are much in evidence, there being no *purdah*, or concealment of features, generally speaking, except in the upper classes, where it is seen now and again. Travellers in the East are familiar with similar claims to beauty on behalf of other women, such as the Japanese and the Burmese. For my part, I could see nothing to support this claim in Kashmir, as, apart from their appearance, their want of cleanliness is sufficient to turn the scale against them.

Their costume is a long skirt of red, blue, green, or white cloth, with loose sleeves, a skull cap surrounded by a piece of red material, and a white *chaddar*, or large veil, thrown over the shoulders. A curious tradition amongst the Kashmiris is that, owing to the prolonged resistance offered by their race to the Mogul armies about 1588, the ancient dress of the people was changed by the Emperor Akbar as a mark of degradation. Both men and women were ordered to wear the loose garment, which resembles the old-fashioned smock frock of the English agricultural labourers ; formerly, they had all worn coats, vests, and trousers.

We glided along the Anchar Lake, and the twilight

shadows fell on the purple hills, no sound breaking the stillness save the splash of the paddles. The scene was one of unforgettable beauty, and I must join in the chorus of admiration for this country. One hears occasionally of people who have been disappointed with its charms, among whom were the members of a well-known expedition a few years ago. It was natural for them to compare it with their own country, and they advanced the theory that the descriptions of the attractions of Kashmir were influenced by the fact that travellers generally arrived there from the sun-baked plains of India, where scarcely a green blade of grass can be seen in summer. In my case, it is true that I had come from the Khyber Pass, which has a sombre beauty of its own, perhaps more appreciated after one has left; but I had recently travelled through some of Europe's beauty-spots whose loveliness was still fresh in my mind, and the vale of Kashmir surpassed anything I had seen.

Geologically, the vale has led to much theorising, and the literature on the subject is extensive; surrounded by mountains, its shape suggests a lake at some period. It consists of a large basin ninety miles long and from about twenty to thirty miles broad. Current legends in Kashmir, which are also found in the works of a Kashmiri historian of the twelfth century, appear to support this theory. Modern geologists are, however, inclined to abandon the lake theory, and to ascribe the deposits to a fluvial rather than to a lacustrine origin.

After about three hours we arrived at Gandarbal where I was unable to find my servants; I had sent them on earlier in the afternoon with the baggage, ordering them to camp on the left bank of the Sind River. It was disconcerting, as in the baggage was the money

for the whole trip, not to mention the petty cash in small coins, convenient for paying off the porters and making other disbursements. For some reason they chose the right bank to camp on, and it was fully an hour before I saw them. That night I arranged with the *tekkidar* to have three riding and three pack ponies ready at five o'clock the next morning.

Pack transport is the most desirable, but generally it can only be used on the caravan routes in the Himalayas; off the beaten track, even if the country is at all suitable, ponies are rarely obtainable. They carry about 150 pounds, averaging about two miles an hour, and are really not much faster than porters. Given the option of ponies or porters, where it is doubtful whether the former can go owing to the path, one should invariably take the latter. Subhana once advised me to take porters when ponies were available, and I unwisely chose the latter. When we reached a very rough bit of track each pony had to be unloaded and led separately for some hundred yards, the baggage being carried and reloaded. Needless to say there would not have been half as much delay if porters had been used.

Our path from Gandarbal led through rice-fields, that being the staple grain and the principal sustenance of the people. We crossed the Sind River by a suspension bridge, and soon reached Kangan, a pretty village with a walnut-tree grove; I pushed on ahead to Bimbaja, arriving there an hour before the baggage, and sat down under a tree to wait for it. While I was thinking of the hundreds of miles ahead of me, natives brought me mulberries neatly served on leaves. The Kashmiris are physically a fine race, the men being mostly tall and strong, having generally sallow complexions, although

one sees occasionally a fair and ruddy type. Their features are well defined, and many have a decided Semitic look, reminiscent of the Pathans I had met in the Khyber Pass.

No sooner were the tents pitched than dense black clouds appeared, and all hands set to work preparing for the inevitable downpour. Small trenches were dug round the tents and bivouacs, and large stones piled round the tent-pegs to keep them in the ground, which would soon become sodden ; the ponies had scarcely been tied up when the rain started to beat heavily down on our tents. Suddenly the valley was lit up by lightning, the trees standing out sharply as if in bright daylight ; thunder crashed and rumbled, making the very earth itself seem to tremble with shock, and scarcely had the echo died away before another blinding flash and deafening roar followed. This continued with unbroken violence for several hours, and we should have fared badly but for the precautions taken.

The climate of Kashmir is much cooler than the plains of India, owing to the greater elevation. It resembles that of Switzerland and parts of southern Europe, and it is admirably adapted to the English constitution, as any suitable temperature can be selected, owing to the facilities for moving about. At the beginning of the year snow falls in Srinagar, lying at times for weeks at a moderate depth, whilst frequent and sudden storms of rain or hail occur in spring. In the summer months it is close and relaxing, but by ascending to 8,000 feet or more an average daily temperature of about sixty degrees can be obtained at Gulmarg or Sonamarg. There are occasional heavy showers in June and September, but from the latter month to the end of

the year the climate is perfect from an English point of view.

We were now well into the Sind valley, justly considered one of the finest in Kashmir. It commences at Kangan, and runs north for sixty miles to the Zoji La, the gateway from Kashmir proper to the provinces of Baltistan and Ladakh. The path is shaded by trees, and jasmine on either side scents the air, while extensive slopes covered with silver firs stretch upwards for thousands of feet, and the Sind River—a mountain torrent—dashes through the valley, filling it with a constant roar. I shall not dwell long on the Kashmir portion of the route traversed, so the reader will allow himself to be taken across the Zoji La to the commencement of the high tablelands of Central Asia.

The next day there was no delay in loading up and starting, as the ponies were on the spot. The path led along the river's edge, crossing and recrossing, until Rezim was reached, where we camped for the night. While pitching our tents a large flock of goats and sheep passed by; such an opportunity for fresh meat was not to be missed, so a good fat sheep was selected and payment made to the shepherd, who seemed satisfied. Soon afterwards my camp was besieged by Kashmiri women begging me to return the animal. It was not quite clear why they wanted it back, but after giving them more money they went away contented. Subsequently, I learned that the reputation of these shepherds, who are known as Gujuri, is not of the best, and it is extremely probable that I was not dealing with the owner. These men often kill their charges, accounting for the loss by the alleged attacks of wild animals, such as leopards and panthers.

The Gujuri inhabit log houses in the Himalayan foothills during the winter, and in summer they take their flocks up to the mountain pastures, together with their families and belongings, living in tents for the season. They are said to be the descendants of a tribe always occupied in this work, and there is another similar class who tend horses. I noted later that the natives were disinclined to part with their sheep and goats, however good the price offered in silver rupees. In some cases scarcity of food may have been the reason, but, in others, money is not much sought after, having comparatively little exchange value.

We continued our march up the Sind valley, soon reaching the Ganganir gorge, with its cliffs, 1,700 feet high, towering up on both sides of the river; even the most severe critic could scarcely fail to be impressed with its grandeur. Just before Sonamarg we crossed the Sind River, and came out on to a large meadow 9,000 feet above sea level, a great resort for English tourists in summer; at the far end is a collection of tumble-down houses clustered beneath a cliff rising sharply to a great height. What would have been a pleasant march became dreary, wet, and tedious; a Scotch mist filled the valley, and it continued to rain until we reached Baltal, hidden away among trees at the foot of the Zoji La, where we spent the night in the rest-house. The pleasure of my stay was enhanced by meeting two ladies, an American and an English, both on their way to the celebrated cave of Amarnath. They were traveling alone, and kindly invited me to dine with them. We passed an enjoyable evening, and I much appreciated their company, and incidentally, their first aid, so to speak, to my knees, which were badly swollen with

sunburn ; their remedy, the white of egg, was new to me, and I found it most efficacious.

The cave of Amarnath lies about ten miles from Baltal, over 13,000 feet high, among snowy mountains, far away from human habitation, amidst some of the most imposing scenery in Kashmir. It is a place of pilgrimage to the god Siva, who, history tells us, assumed the form of a block of ice ; and towards the end of July many pilgrims from India and Kashmir come to attend the religious ceremonies. It is to the Hindu what Mecca is to the Mahomedan, though owing to its comparative inaccessibility, the number of pilgrims, who are of both sexes, is naturally smaller than that attending Mecca. In spite of Government assistance and supervision, the poorly clad wayfarers suffer from exposure, which occasionally proves fatal, but luckily, those who perish are accounted fortunate and deemed to have had a happy end.

My hostesses had plenty of time at their disposal, and they sportingly decided to accompany me the next day to the top of the Zoji La. This pass is 11,578 feet high, and is the Tibetan name for the lowest point in the Western Himalayan ridge, separating the Indus valley from Kashmir. It is of great historical interest, as it was here that the Sikhs crossed in 1846 when they invaded and conquered Baltistan and Ladakh. Lying on the main trade route from Central Asia to Kashmir, it has assumed a commercial importance, and is open to pack transport about six months of the year. During the winter months pedestrians have great difficulty in getting over, being in much danger from avalanches, the path leading up the ravine being then filled with snow from this cause. The numerous skeletons of men and animals, to be seen near the summit, justify the description

sometimes given of this pass as one of the most treacherous in the Himalayas.

The sky was cloudy on June 27th as we left, just before dawn, the ladies setting such a good example that I was a little late ; though we had ponies, we were obliged to walk, on account of the steepness of the path. To the summit is about five miles, and one climbs 2,000 feet ; the rugged path zigzagged up, and in places became a narrow ledge, overhanging a precipice of some hundred feet. At times it was blocked by landslides, and as we mounted, avalanches of snow and rocks came hurtling down in front of and behind us. For pedestrians there was no real difficulty, but each pony had to be led over separately, often without its load, which took some time. We continued slowly, the effect of the rarefied air making it impossible to keep up a conversation and walk at the same time ; needless to say, we made frequent halts to admire the view.

Just before reaching the summit I took a last look at the pine-clad slopes of Kashmir, which I was not to see again for some months. We found ourselves on a level surface some six hundred yards wide, enclosed by mountains ranging in height from 13,000 feet to 17,000 feet above sea level. Suddenly I noticed water running in the opposite direction to what it had been, and at one point it can be seen flowing in both directions. We had passed the highest point unnoticed, and, unlike many passes, this is the only visible indication of having crossed the summit. Halting here, we waited for the pack animals ; desolation reigned supreme ; near me lay the skeletons of three men, serving as a grim reminder of the perils of Himalayan blizzards, the drivers passing with an apprehensive look. The sky rapidly darkened,



SUMMER PATH HEWN FROM ROCKSIDE OVER ZOJI LA



VICTIMS OF A BLIZZARD ON THE SUMMIT OF THE ZOJI LA

and this was indeed the signal that the time had arrived to take leave of my companions, as for them to be caught in a snowstorm would have been very unpleasant, with perhaps fatal consequences. After a hurried farewell, with kindly wishes for good luck, we started off on our respective journeys. I was soon called back and handed a four-leaved clover, but even this did not bring me the luck I wanted.

We had hardly lost sight of each other when the first flakes fell, and we were overtaken by a blinding snowstorm ; unable to see more than a few yards ahead of us, though it was not a bad blizzard, it made one realise the possibilities of the pass in winter. In an hour the weather cleared, and the sun shone on a barren and treeless country. The latter feature is very marked, and it would be hard to find another range with so great a difference between its northern and southern slopes. The result of the condensation of moisture brought by the south-west monsoon on the southern slopes leaves the northern side dry. We continued the descent, our path following the river and leading over extensive snowdrifts, undercut by the current. Bridges had been swept away, and the river had to be forded twice, the water being icy cold and about waist high. After ten miles of gradual descent, in which we dropped a thousand feet, Matayan was reached, where we camped for the night. This was our first village in Baltistan, and we felt that our trip had really commenced.

CHAPTER II

MARCH TABLE				Miles
June 29th	..	Matayan to Dras .. ..	..	14
„ 30th	..	Dras to Shimsa Kharbu	..	21½
July 1st	..	Shimsa Kharbu to Kargil	..	15½
„ 2nd	..	Kargil to Olthing-thang ..	..	18
„ 3rd	..	Olthing-thang to Chooksi Do	..	27
				—
				96

Total distance from Srinagar, 173½ miles

A LAND OF DESOLATION

MATAYAN, a small collection of native hovels, is over 10,000 feet above sea level, with a desolate appearance ; an occasional tree stands out amongst the barren expanse of rocks and loosened stones, in striking contrast with the well-wooded hills of Kashmir. The inhabitants, a mere handful, were dirty, ragged, and wretched-looking, and moved about in a lifeless manner, in spite of the invigorating air ; on passing them they took not the slightest notice, appearing utterly indifferent. I was glad to reach Matayan and thoroughly appreciated the scant shelter afforded by the dirty and draughty little rest-house. We had arrived wet and cold and lost no time in making a blazing fire ; this was an occasion when Subhana's previous experience of travelling proved more than useful, for, knowing that there would be no fuel here, he had brought a supply from Baltal. A steaming cup of tea was soon brewed and life took on a brighter aspect. My clothes had got soaking wet wading through the river, so I took this opportunity of drying them, as did the rest of my party. Although late in June,

snow fell heavily during the night and the wind whistled mournfully ; clearly this could be no winter resort judging from our experience of the summer climate.

The desolation around us is characteristic of the whole of Baltistan, sometimes called Little Tibet. This province is bounded on the north by the Kara-koram Range, on the east by Ladakh or Western Tibet, on the west by Gilgit and Astor (Dardistan), and on the south by Kashmir. It is a wild district having an area of about 12,000 square miles, with mountains over 28,000 feet high, plains fifty miles in width at an altitude of from 15,000 to 17,000 feet above sea level, and glaciers over thirty miles long, the largest known outside the Polar regions. The villages cling to the valleys, the most important being those of the Indus, Shyok, and Shigar ; and winding its way through the province is the Indus River into which all the valleys and other rivers drain.

The small rainfall of about six inches a year and the consequent barren soil provide but scant food for the population. There are no forests of any size, while trees are few and far between and grass is only found in patches on the small cultivated areas carefully tended by the natives. The climate in spring and autumn is mild, but in winter the cold is intense. There is considerable snowfall and this is of great importance to the inhabitants, who depend upon it, when melting, for their irrigation. The severe cold also freezes the rivers, which then form better natural roadways than the rough mountain tracks.

Baltistan is practically isolated from the outer world during the winter months, all the passes being then closed. The only outlet is by the Indus valley, but the

natives consider this route to be even more dangerous than the highest pass, as the valley is inhabited by fanatical tribes. They are Mahomedans, but belong to the Suni sect, whereas the Baltis belong to the Shiah sect, and, in spite of their common religion, great antagonism prevails between the two. The Sunites accuse the Shiites of practising all kinds of bloody rites, including human sacrifices, and the Shiites return the compliment. It is doubtful if there is anything more than sectarian squabbles in these charges, but the fact remains that even at the present day this route is dangerous for anyone to use, especially Baltis.

The early history of Baltistan up till the fifteenth century is largely bound up with that of Ladakh and is very obscure, probably on account of its isolation and inaccessibility. Ptolemy about 1100 B.C. mentions the nation of the Byltæ, which may be Balti, and in 400 B.C. Herodotus writes of the gold-digging ants of a country which authorities are generally agreed is that of the Dards, early inhabitants of Baltistan. According to Pliny, who wrote in the first century of the Christian era, this country produced much gold. The first known inhabitants, from philological inferences, are considered to have been nomadic Tibetans of Mongol origin, but this is debatable. Next came the Mons tribe, of Aryan origin, from India, about 200 B.C. when the Buddhist religion was introduced. They were followed by the Dards from the Gilgit district, likewise of Aryan ancestry who were also Buddhists. These Tibeto-Dard kingdoms lasted from about A.D. 500 to 1000, during which period we have Hiouen Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim, mentioning in A.D. 640 the road to Po-lu-lo or Bolor, which must have been Baltistan. During the early part of the

eighth century under the Tang dynasty the Chinese Empire included Turkestan, Baltistan, Ladakh and Kashmir, and the brave resistance of Baltistan to the Chinese conquerors is noted. In the tenth century the Central Tibetans conquered the country, and their kings lasted from A.D. 900 to 1400.

It was only then that the history of Baltistan became distinct from that of Ladakh and that the historical records of the two countries separated. The Baltis apparently never had a single ruler or king over their country and became semi-independent, being governed by local chieftains called *magpons* or dukes. The term, *magpon* in Tibetan means commander-in-chief and in time of war these dukes acted as generals, taking command of their respective forces. Owing to the written records of the *magpons* having been destroyed, probably at the time of the Sikh invasion, we know practically nothing about their history for the next two hundred years. We then come to the period of war between Baltistan and Ladakh, which lasted from 1560 till 1640 ; at one time the Baltis overran Ladakh and at another the Ladakhis were in the ascendant. Ultimately the Baltis were the cause of a Turki army invading Ladakh, only to be defeated, after which the war seems to have died out. We hear nothing more of Baltistan for about two hundred years, until the Sikh conquest in 1841, which is described later on.

We resumed our journey from Matayan in the early hours of a frosty morning. The pony drivers who had come from Gandarbal pushed ahead knowing that at Dras, the next stage, their contract would be finished and they could return to Kashmir ; incidentally, they were making a good impression in anticipation of the

moment when gratuities would be disbursed. In the sheltered spots on the hillsides snow still lay, and the sun shining on the snow-capped mountains presented a brilliant spectacle. With the brisk air we all felt very much alive and made good progress along the right bank of the river Gumber which runs in a narrow valley. At Pandras, some six miles on, we crossed over to the left bank by a rickety wooden bridge, and later, more than once recrossed the river, which at times dashes through narrow granite gorges, one being only three yards wide for a distance of a hundred yards. The Gumber valley soon opens out into the great Dras basin, a plain encircled by high bare mountains. We passed the remains of an old Sikh fort, built in the days of Rangit Singh, with four towers at the corners, and then entered the village.

Dras itself is a collection of hamlets spread over about a mile and is situated amidst a barren desert; but from the Tibetan point of view it was comparatively fertile, for there were grassy patches in places, and here and there an odd poplar tree seemed to struggle for existence. The mountains were higher, mightier, and even more impressive than ever; dusk was falling and the surrounding hills looked striking with their white peaks sharply outlined against the sky; even the gaunt barren valley, lying in the after-glow of a brilliant sunset, was transformed into a thing of mystery and beauty. The inhabitants are of various nationalities, Dards, Baltis, Kashmiris and Ladakhis, and all make a living by finding transport for the caravans crossing the Zoji La. Besides this the only other source of wealth is their cattle, which, in spite of the sterility of the country, live on a shrub called *prangos*, growing some distance up

the mountain sides in such abundance as to provide fodder for the winter months.

The Dards, it will be remembered, are among the earlier inhabitants, and their language still survives in two districts surrounding the towns of Dras and Da. Besides these two areas there are traces of Dard colonies along the valley of the Indus, to be inferred either from archæological remains or from being mentioned in the hymns sung by the Dards of Da at a race festival held triennially. The Dards of Dras became Mahomedans three centuries ago and their customs and folklore are largely Tibetan, their own having been stamped out. On the other hand, the Dards of Da have become neither Mahomedans nor Buddhists in the pure sense, and have thus retained a considerable amount of their own originality. Every third year and occasionally oftener, they celebrate their national race festival, during which they give themselves up entirely to trying to forget for a few days that they were under Tibetan and Dogra rule. Hymns are sung recalling olden days, and it is from one of them that the names of their former colonies are known.

It is not clear how the Dards were conquered and became subject to Tibetan rule. Herodotus spoke of them as the most warlike of all the Indians, so that, assuming they retained this character to any degree, it is not likely that they gave in easily. One tradition is that on a certain occasion a party was besieged in a castle and their food, water, and supplies ran out. They unanimously decided to die together, and, assembling in the central hall, the oldest man present caused the pillar supporting the roof to be dislodged, the falling roof burying them all. Stories are told of the difficulty the

conquerors had in getting forced labour from the Dards, and there is still a current proverb to the effect that "you cannot force labour on a Dard, just as you cannot put a load on a dog."

The Dards are very fond of sport, and polo is said to have been kept up by them when it had fallen into disuse in other parts. Rock carvings, of which there are many of Dard origin, tell us of sports, which seem nowadays to have been entirely forgotten. Scenes are shown of riders standing on the backs of bulls and shooting arrows while they were charging. The commonest sport, however, was hunting, which is not only referred to on rock carvings, but an ancient song¹ describes a hunting scene which took place at Gilgit.

At Brushal and Gilgit

One hundred youths appear.

In the fertile village of Satsil

One hundred maids appear.

They form a great assembly at Gilgit ;

The lion king of Gilgit appears at the head of the dancers,

Then all you girls, twirl your hands, to greet us !

All you boys, clap your hands, to greet us !

Hurrah for love ! Well done, hallo !

.

Then, oh boy, who art clever at imitating the antelope's cry ;

Then, oh boy, who art clever at getting out of sight,

Here the ibex can be seen, the ibex can be seen in a herd !

Now take the arrow, oh boy ;

Then take the arrow-shafts and heads,

.

Thou art clever at shooting them !

Offerings of flour, butter, milk and water,

Must now be brought ! Honour to thee, oh God !

Now cut the flesh with a sharp knife,

Roasted meat must be offered !

Cut it to pieces !

Give a mouthful to each of one hundred boys,

They will carry the meat in their pockets of leather ;

¹ I am indebted to the learned Moravian Missionary, the Rev. A. H. Francke, for the translation of this song, which has been taken from his book, *A History of Western Tibet*, page 37.

They will give some to father and mother, oh boy !
They will make presents of it to one hundred girls, oh boy !
Now we have come to happiness and abundance, oh boy !

The Dards have many peculiar customs which survive to the present day ; they do not breed fowls nor do they eat eggs ; the milk of cows is not used, neither do they make butter ; and the cow is held in abhorrence, in much the same way as is a pig by a Mahomedan. They do, however, breed the *zhos*, the hybrid between the *yak*, or Tibetan ox, and the common cow, to sell to other people. In some districts one generation is Mahomedan and the next Buddhist, alternately. They greet one another by twirling their hats in front of them as rapidly as possible ; and the women, I am told, wear rows of needles in their hats, each needle representing a friend.

New transport had to be arranged in Dras for Kargil, two stages on, in place of the Kashmiris who were paid off. The prejudice which I had entertained against those latter, owing to their complete disregard of time and general slackness in starting, had by this time entirely gone. I so much appreciated their efforts that I was sorry to lose them, as they had shown considerable skill in leading the ponies over the Zoji La ; we parted on the best of terms, in spite of several altercations on the road. I was fortunate in meeting with no obstacles in getting ponies for Kargil, possibly due to Subhana's influence, and was thus able to continue my journey on the morrow.

The organisation of transport which obtains is called the *rais* system, *rais* meaning turn or relay. On the main caravan routes there are fixed stages where porters and animals can be hired, the prices being fixed, and each village supplying transport for a certain period

and distance. These facilities are primarily intended for traders, to whom precedence is always given, and the ordinary traveller may sometimes have to wait before being supplied. Villages in the Himalayas frequently consist of a group of small hamlets spread over an area of several miles. This naturally makes it difficult at times to find the head man, as he may be in any one of the scattered hamlets. He seems generally to be elsewhere, probably tilling the soil, and when at length he arrives he invariably begins with the formula that all the men are away. Ultimately the *raiswalla* appears on the scene, and, after preliminary disbursements have been made, you can feel that your transport is under way and practically assured. When in a hurry it frequently happens that the hamlet, whose *rais* or turn it is to supply ponies or porters, is two or three miles away. The traveller must then exercise his patience as best he can, and, to avoid delay on this score, one should arrive at the end of a stage in the evening. Off the main routes it is always advisable to see that the head villager, or *trampa* as he is called in Baltistan, sends a man on ahead with a *chit*, or note, to the next village, so that transport is ready for you when you get there, the *chit* being carried wedged in the split end of a stick; this precaution is admirable in theory, but in practice often goes wrong.

My departure the next morning was witnessed by a small crowd, who had collected outside the rest-house; there were about thirty of them, all standing together silently gazing at each movement of our party. A native is a curious individual to watch on such occasions, for he betrays no emotion whatever, neither enthusiasm nor indifference, his mind seeming a blank.

I was initiated into the knowledge that there could be several head men in the same village, as there were seven persons who claimed to have been instrumental in getting us ponies. The special excellence of each pony was pointed out to me, and with a little stretch of imagination I might have been buying thoroughbreds at Tattersalls! Having been brought up to show respect for age, I bestowed the gratuity on the oldest of the party and we moved off.

Just outside Dras we passed two curious stone pillars, standing nearly six feet high, which have been thought to represent a man and woman. The clue to their identity would appear to have been discovered by Cunningham, who found on one of them an inscription in Kashmir Sarada characters, and read among others, the word *maitreyan*. He thought the principal figure was a woman, and therefore could see no connexion between the two. The Ladakhis, however, say that the figure is not a woman, but that of a *maitreya*, literally, the loving one, the coming Buddha, or the Buddhist Messiah, whose image is seen carved on the rocks in Tibet. The latest authorities see in these sculptures, probably, a relic of the introduction of Buddhism from Kashmir. We shall see later that the first Buddhist missionaries must have passed here on their way to Yarkand, though I am not aware that their passage is actually recorded.

The road leads for seven miles down the valley, which then contracts and turns north-east. This feature of gradually contracting at the lower end is common to most Western Himalayan valleys, and the theory has been advanced that the more or less wide river bed at the upper end is due to glacier action. Throughout the

length of this valley, tributary streams join the river through gorges, and, at the mouth of each of these, large fan-shaped alluvial deposits and detritus have collected. Between these deposits more huge quantities of detritus have slid down from a considerable height on the mountain side, and the river races fiercely through granite blocks or slabs which are often of considerable size. Soon we reached Tashgam, formerly the stage, a pretty village fifteen miles from Dras, and I halted there in the shade of a pleasant little orchard for lunch.

Any traveller to whom time was not of great importance would do well to camp there for the night, in preference to the new stage, Shimsa Kharbu, about six miles farther on. The ponies were not long in coming up and they continued straight on, though it was so peaceful and quiet that I remained for some time. It was with reluctance that I eventually moved on, but had my baggage been with me I should certainly have stayed. The path crossed the river by a good bridge built in 1889 and followed the right bank, making a series of ascents and descents over spurs, until Shimsa Kharbu is reached. About a mile this side of the village, I caught up and passed the baggage ponies, expecting to have to wait for them on arrival, at the most, half an hour; as it turned out, I waited more than an hour, the only explanation forthcoming, when they arrived, being that the ponies were tired. The village is situated on a small plateau and there is a good rest-house on a site directly above the river, the roar of which was heard continuously through the night.

The next morning—July 1st—there was marked discontent among the pony drivers, largely due to my

having told them that they would have to go to Olthingthang, unless I could arrange for ponies to come from Kargil to meet us at Hardus, twelve miles out from here. I had sent a messenger on ahead to Kargil, with a note to the *tehsildar*, requesting him to send fresh ponies to meet us at Hardus suspension bridge. My route lay to the left over the bridge to Skardu, and I had hoped to avoid the unnecessary journey of four miles each way from there to Kargil and back. I was not successful in this, as will be seen later, and subsequently found that my proposal was against the regulations. About two miles beyond Shimsa Kharbu, the Shingo tributary joins the Dras River, the track being good but the country uninteresting. The valley gradually opens out the road leading along the face of precipices and then over sandy tracks to Hardus, sometimes called Kharal, where the Suru River joins the Dras, both eventually flowing into the Indus.

It was three o'clock when I arrived at the bridge, and there was no sign of either ponies or the man I had sent on ahead. I therefore dispatched another messenger, and after some two hours, he returned with a message to the effect that the *tehsildar* had told him that if I wanted transport I must come and fetch it. In the meantime, I had unloaded the ponies, with the twofold object of resting them in any case and of being ready when the fresh ponies arrived. We therefore loaded up again, as there was nothing else to be done but to go on to Kargil, which was reached after another hour's march.

Kargil is a group of villages presenting a prosperous appearance, with more flourishing vegetation than is generally seen. The mountains are not so high as

elsewhere, and instead of being granite are of sandstone and clay. The natives think a great deal of the "Vale of Kargil," and it is certainly one of the most fertile tracts in Baltistan and Ladakh. Wheat and barley grow, while mulberry and apricot trees, as well as willows and poplars, do well, the climate being mild on the whole. Wood for fires is scarce and dear, all road scrapings being collected and dried in the sun for fuel. Native provisions may be bought in the bazaar at small booths grouped on either side of the pathway, and the whole place showed signs of life, the inhabitants having a much more cheerful countenance than we had hitherto seen.

Kargil is the capital of the district called Purig, a province chiefly inhabited by Ladakhis, who have become Mahomedans and are subordinate to the Government of Baltistan. Purig, owing to its position, is a kind of buffer territory, and at one time during the Balti wars it belonged to Baltistan, being recaptured later by the Ladakhis. At the neighbouring village of Kartse, reigned a dynasty of chiefs who called themselves, according to an inscription, Tri Rgyal. When they became Mahomedans, they altered their title to Tri Sultan, and it is remarkable that this line of chiefs, now extinct, lasted down to the time of the Dogra war in the nineteenth century.

On my arrival in Kargil, all efforts to find the *tehsildar* failed, and no assistance of any kind was given me though I had a *parwana*, or permit, enjoining those in authority to help me. Travellers should ask for, and are generally given one written in the vernacular, and signed by a British Government official or one of the Kashmir State and addressed to a *tehsildar*; he in turn will give you a *parwana* signed by himself and addressed to all head villagers, who are the most important people. It will

be seen that the fact of being in possession of a *parwana* is not a certainty that you will be given either transport or assistance. Later, however, a message reached me in a roundabout way to say that no transport was available. There was undoubtedly a shortage of ponies and drivers, as the Kashmir Medical Mission had recently passed this way and taken a large number of them. Apart from the scarcity of transport, the attitude of the *tehsildar* showed the great decline in the prestige of the white man, largely symptomatic of the recent political situation in India.

Unfortunately, when the local natives see this attitude taken up by an anti-English official, there is naturally a tendency for them to copy his example. If any reader thinks that a report of this incident should have been made, he may be reminded that it is desirable in such cases to be sure that any such complaint would be dealt with impartially, not to say sympathetically. Without the official assistance I was entitled to, I was reduced to offering bribes and rewards to anyone who would produce the required transport. Eventually an individual stepped forward and undertook to supply me with ponies to go as far as Olthing-thang, where I would be reasonably certain of getting more; I closed with him, and did my best to conceal my annoyance at the discourtesy I had experienced at the hands of the *tehsildar*.

I got up early the next day anticipating trouble with my transport; besides this I wanted to start as soon as possible, reports having been received that the path was very bad and in places completely washed away. A solitary pony met me with the man who had overnight promised me all the animals I wanted. One by

one, however, the ponies turned up and when loaded we were soon ready to start. The drivers were a discontented crowd and it was quite a relief to move out of the place. We retraced our footsteps of the day before and crossed the suspension bridge at Kharal. The rocky path along the river bank, almost completely washed away by floods, often became practically impassable, necessitating unloading the ponies three times. The worst place, only a hundred and fifty yards in length, took nearly two hours, each animal being led over separately and the baggage carried by hand ; this was clearly an occasion when porters would have been preferable to ponies, had they been available. After fifteen miles Olthing-thang came into view, perched a thousand feet above the river. From the flat-roofed houses, curiously built upon terraces one behind the other, unkempt, ragged children, and men and women watched us slowly toiling up the steep incline ; the roof of each house being on a level with the terrace on which the house above is built. This thousand feet climb was the worst feature of the sixteen miles from Kargil, which took over twelve hours, and we all arrived in a very exhausted state, the heat having been very trying.

The dress of the Balti is an easy fitting coat reaching just below the knee, with short trousers, both made of loosely woven cloth ; round the waist they wrap a broad scarf, the end sometimes flung over their shoulders, and a skull cap is worn on the back of the head, which is often shaved. Though generally bare-footed, the Balti always carries with him his *pabboos*, or ankle boots, for rough ground or snow, and they are made of soft skins with the hair inside. There is not much difference between the dress of the men and the women. Some

of the girls had a very pleasant expression, and in spite of their flat faces and snub noses, might be thought almost pretty, one in particular being, as the French say, *une belle laide*.

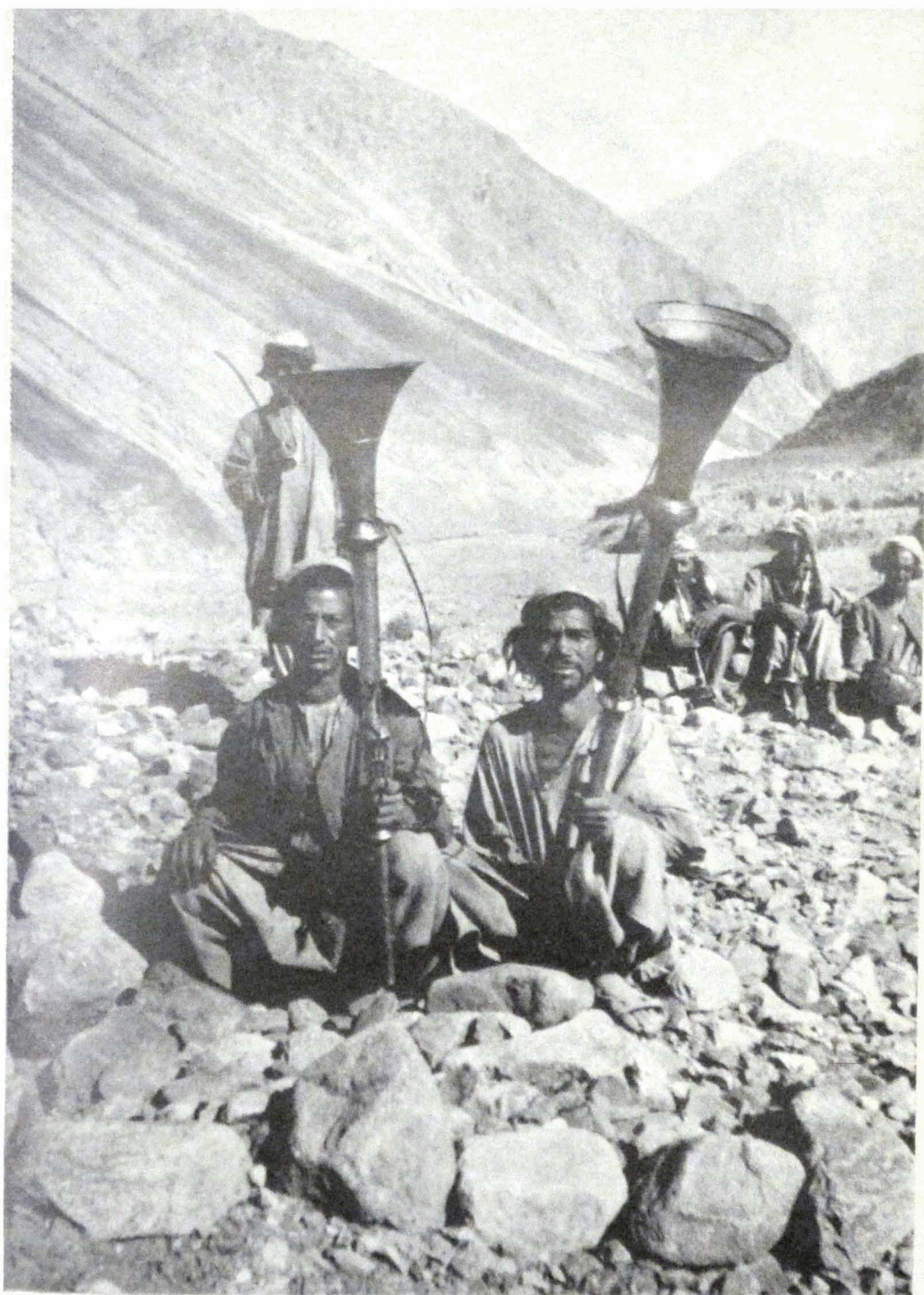
On arrival, I found the Kashmir Medical Mission, and I have to this day a vivid recollection of my appreciation of the cup of tea they generously supplied me with. It was Sunday and these hospitable souls were taking a well-earned rest from their labours. By this time my ponies were arriving, and, as the rest-house was very dirty, I pitched my tent beneath some apricot trees in a small *bagh*, or compound. I then sent for the *trampa*, and having had enough of pony transport for the moment, arranged with him for the supply of seventeen porters to take my baggage on to the next stage. To avoid the discomforts and delays resulting from the heat in the middle of the day, I decided to start during the night. My only chance of doing this was to have the porters on the spot and it was settled that they were to sleep under the walls of the rest-house. I turned in about eight o'clock when all my men had arrived.

Each porter is nominally supposed to carry forty pounds, but they invariably take more of their own free will, the average load being about seventy pounds. The Balti is a born load carrier and always has with him a hair-rope or a leather thong to which is fastened a wooden ring, for slinging the loads; he often has besides a *khilta*, which is a cone-shaped basket sometimes covered with leather or undressed goat-skins. The *khiltas* obtained in Srinagar for European travellers are flat-bottomed with a wooden framework, the shape enabling them to stand upright, in which respect they are superior to the native article, though not nearly so

durable. To support the weight of the *khilta*, when the porter is standing still or resting, each man carries a T-headed stick.

I left Srinagar with the wooden kind, but after a very short time they had to be thrown away as beyond repair. Travellers should always try to obtain the strong native kind, though they will have some difficulty in doing so. Various writers claim that the Ladakhis are better load carriers than the Baltis. It is difficult to make a direct comparison, because women are frequently used for this work in Ladakh, whereas, in Baltistan, such a thing is unknown. Although most of the transport in Ladakh is done with animals, on a few occasions I had to use porters; I found the men inferior to the Baltis, but the Ladakhi women very good in this capacity.

I was roused shortly after midnight and found the porters had already been awakened. A dreary sight greeted me, kit strewn everywhere and the men quarrelling over the weight of the different loads; in a little while, however, order was restored from what appeared to me absolute confusion. I soon learnt that this was the ordinary state of affairs on such occasions, and I may now say that, had there been no scenes of greater confusion than on this occasion, I should have nothing to complain of; on the contrary, I should have only words of praise for Himalayan transport. It must have been near three o'clock when we set out, for after a short time it became light; there was a nip in the air and marching was pleasant, as soon as we could avoid the loose rocks, over which we had stumbled in the dark. We made a slight ascent outside Olthing-thang to round the corner of a big hill, and then descended steeply



BALTI MUSICIANS WITH LONG BRASS TRUMPETS

to the junction of the Indus and the Suru which meet in a gorge. From here to Skardu, our first objective, is eighty-five miles, and the path follows the left bank of the Indus, dropping some 1,500 feet on the way. The old path formerly led over the cliffs and was very difficult going, but a new one has now been cut out of the mountain-side, at a very much lower level.

Just before entering Tarkuti, we passed a fine waterfall with a drop which I estimated to be 150 feet. The water appeared to come from a spring as it dashed over the jutting edge of the rocks above us. At the base of the fall, for some distance around, the spray had caused a fine patch of beautiful green grass to spring up, forming a welcome sight in this arid country. I waited here till the porters caught me up and then marched with them to Tarkuti, which was formerly the stage. It is a large village with a good water supply and nice shady camping grounds ; these were tempting, but I decided to push on to Bagicha, the new stage, arriving there about noon.

I was met by a crowd of people, and, after threading my way through them, encountered the village authorities, who bowed profusely and led me to a circle of about fifty to sixty persons. They were either seated, lying down or propped up, and all of them greeted me as their saviour ; they pointed to various parts of their bodies and as I was then asked when I would see the sick, it dawned upon me, perhaps a little late, that I was being mistaken for the doctor. News had been received that the Kashmir Medical Mission were attending the sick and giving away medicine while on their journey, and were due to arrive in Bagicha that day. It was rather embarrassing for me, particularly as my explanations were received with polite incredulity and treated as a

little joke on my part. By dint of repetition, I eventually convinced them that I was not the doctor, who, to my great relief, arrived a short time afterwards.

There was evidently plenty of work to occupy the Mission for some time and they camped here for the night. It was a pathetic sight to see this muster of sick, many of whom had come from a long distance. I stayed for a little while and saw the doctor begin his work among the invalids, one of whom had dislocated his thigh by a fall from a mulberry tree some days previously. An anæsthetic was administered to him in the presence of the crowd, under the shade of the trees; the father was present and burst into tears as his son became unconscious, thinking he was now dead. The thigh was then set and put up in an improvised splint made from a pole, and, needless to say, great surprise was shown when the patient apparently came to life again. It occurred to me that the mental processes of the average native, on an occasion of this kind, would afford an interesting study, could they be unveiled. I watched a few more cases being treated, and then bade farewell to the doctors, setting off from Bagicha to catch up my porters. We had already covered nineteen miles that day, but being only noon, I had ordered a fresh lot of porters, in spite of feeling rather fatigued. The Olthing-thang carriers were paid off and in a short time my baggage was under way again.

It was two o'clock when I left for Chooksi Do, some ten miles on, and I soon overtook the porters, as owing to the heat, they had made slow progress. They were a cheerful crowd, and as they were going along they sang in much the same way and spirit as our Tommies do when on the line of march. The path led through

cultivated fields, with little shade, and at length we came in sight of Kharmang on the opposite bank of the Indus. This village is curiously situated on the slope of a hill upon which are the ruins of a fort, formerly the residence of the Rajah, who now occupies a house near the river. A *jhula*, or twig-bridge, with a span of nearly 300 feet, connects Kharmang with the left bank of the river. My feelings and experiences when crossing my first *jhula* at Askole, likewise its construction, which is ingenious, will be described later.

The adaptability of natives to circumstances is often the subject of comment by travellers ; in this connexion the inhabitants of the Himalayas are perhaps among the most adaptive races in the world. An illustration is to be found in the way the Dards construct their bridges across the Indus every winter at places where they may be required. Several beams are fastened to the river banks in such a way as to project into the river, and, after an interval, these soon become frozen in an encrustation of ice so solid that one can walk on it to the outer end. More beams are then fastened to the first in such a manner that they project still farther into the river. This process is repeated until eventually the other bank is reached and a substantial bridge remains for use. On one occasion during the Dogra war, the invaders were defeated by the Baltis, who had lured some 5,000 Dogras into an ambush so successfully that only 400 escaped. By the rapid construction of one of these ice-bridges, the remainder were unexpectedly able to cross the river and by this means surprise the Baltis, completely retrieving the situation ; the result of this night combat was that the Baltis were defeated and fled towards Skardu.

To resume our journey, a mile or so beyond Kharmang the Indus breaks through a rocky gorge, forming rapids for some distance. A little farther on we found a fairly good camping ground just outside the hamlet of Chooksi Do, after having done twenty-seven miles that day. We were all tired and did not appreciate the reluctance of the inhabitants to supply us with fuel. There was nothing left but to help ourselves, after which we turned in as soon as possible to get the much-needed rest. Even the porters and my servants were too tired to stay up late for their usual gossip, so silence pervaded our camp early that night.

CHAPTER III

MARCH TABLE						Miles
July 4th	..	Chooksi Do to Parkutta	..	..	25
„ 5th	..	Parkutta to Gol	..	..	14½
„ 6th	..	Gol to Skardu	..	..	21
„ 7th	..	Skardu	..	..	—
„ 8th	..	Skardu	..	..	—
						—
						60½

Total distance from Srinagar, 234 miles

THE INDUS VALLEY

WE had turned in thoroughly fagged out after our twenty-seven mile tramp, and a good night's rest did wonders for us all ; in the morning I woke to the not altogether unmusical chatter of the porters securing the loads. After a quick breakfast we were away in good time and arrived about eight o'clock at Tolti, where I at once ordered the *trampa* to provide a fresh lot of men. Tolti is a small village, the residence of a Rajah, lying in the deep shade of a ravine into which the sun never penetrates in winter. It boasts a good polo ground, a quarter of a mile distant, which travellers would do well to use as their camping ground. At about half-past nine, the new porters were ready and I lost no time in loading up and getting under way for Parkutta, eighteen miles farther. Once clear of the village, the valley opens out and the fertile cultivated fields of Karmango are soon reached.

The Balti depends entirely on these areas for his food, and their cultivation plays a great part in the lives of the inhabitants. The actual work of cultivation, with the

exception of ploughing, is done mostly by the women, the men being otherwise engaged in carrying loads or repairing the water courses for irrigation. All hands set to work in the spring when the snow has melted ; the winter accumulation of refuse and manure is carried in baskets and spread evenly over the surface of the ground. The soil is generally light and requires but little cultivation, the fields being sometimes too small for ploughing, in which case spade labour is used. The plough is made entirely of wood, having a movable head-piece and is drawn by two bullocks. After the seed has been sown, primitive harrows—either a simple wooden frame without spikes or a thorny bush weighted with stones—are used, and another man breaks up the larger clods of earth. The chief crops are barley, peas, beans, lentils, and buckwheat, and if the land can be sufficiently irrigated, it bears two crops a year. There are many peculiarities of cultivation in Baltistan, and the one that perhaps strikes the traveller most is the pulling out by the roots of the crops, instead of cutting them.

The path now passed under steep cliffs and we came to a series of hamlets—Ghahori, Shadok, Urdi and Chok ; outside Chok a mountain torrent flows into the Indus, and, owing to the comparatively late hour of the day, a tremendous volume of water was running. Several attempts to ford it failed and we were obliged to go three-quarters of a mile up the rocky ravine, crossing by a small log bridge. Rejoining the Indus valley, we continued along the river bank and about three o'clock reached Parkutta, a place of considerable size. The houses are built on both sides of a deep ravine, and, like Kharmang and other villages, it is dominated by the

fort or palace of the local Rajah, perched on a rock, some three or four hundred feet above the river. The place bore a festive air and through the trees I could see polo being played ; some local officials greeted me while two musicians played in the background, my arrival drawing a large number of spectators away from the polo match, and once again I was mistaken for the doctor ; however, even after I explained who I was, everyone still seemed pleased to see me. A relative of the Rajah expressed regret that His Highness was absent, but hoped to see me on my return journey ; so, after the usual complimentary speeches, I went to the rest-house and paid off the porters.

The polo match still being in progress, I went off with the *trampa* to look on ; everyone was present, squatting either on the ground or on the wall. The polo field, about three hundred yards long, was enclosed by a low wall, and had pillars of stone for goal posts ; the size of grounds seems to vary, as that at Tolti was much smaller. There were twelve players a side, and, with so many riders, the game appeared to be a succession of confused rushes and charges. The band played with vigour and changed the time of the music to suit the progress and incidents of the game. It occurred to me that conductors of local brass bands at home might be trained to do something of the same kind for their favourite football teams ; they could either add volume to the encouraging cheers of their supporters or possibly drown the yells of the other side. A charge down the field, the horses going "hell for leather," with trumpet blasts and the beating of drums, concluded an exciting match with a goal being scored ; the rider, after scoring, must dismount and pick up the ball. The winning side

rode up to the band, which played louder and louder, while their friends congratulated them. The standard of horsemanship struck me as being high, though I could not learn that there were many rules, except, as one writer mentions, to hit towards your opponent's goal and not intentionally to kill any of the other side. The ball, a knot of willow wood, was rather larger than a cricket ball, and the stick or mallet resembled an elongated hockey stick, being made of almond wood.

There are some writers who claim that polo had its origin in Baltistan, but this is hardly the case, though it reached us from there. The earliest records, established from inscriptions on Persian monuments, show clearly that the game was first played in Persia, but then fell into disuse. The Dards introduced it into the Himalayas, and though their language has in many places now become extinct, polo has survived to the present day. It is a curious fact that polo really came to us from this mountainous region—the Western Himalayas—a barren desolate country which makes one marvel at the fact that the inhabitants have ponies at all.

It is true that the game was first played in Persia, but it became extinct there and only survived in Baltistan and some neighbouring districts, where it is still played in the old ceremonial style, reminding one of European mediaeval tournaments. It spread hence through Constantinople, Turkestan, Tibet, China, and Japan, and flourished in India during the sixteenth century. We hear nothing or little more of it for a long time until, in 1854, it came to Bengal and later on to the Punjab. As regards the name, some authorities say that the Tibetan word *pulu* means a ball and is the origin of polo ;

Vigne gives *chaughan* as the name used by the natives, and an Italian writer mentions *atka*. The only name I heard used everywhere was *pulu*, and I think that there can be little doubt that polo is derived from it.

Watching the polo revealed a new side of the Balti character and their capacity for enjoyment ; after days of seeing them do nothing but carry loads and drive ponies, with frequent disputes and arguments, it came almost as a relief to find that they had a still more human side and were capable of relaxation.

The original family to which the Balti race belongs, and their origin, has given rise to many different opinions. All English travellers who have written on the subject hitherto have expressed the opinion that they are of the Mongol type with some little reservation. Vigne described them as a mixture of Mongol and either Indian or Persian. Cunningham stated clearly that they are a branch of the Mongol race, slightly modified by climatic conditions and by mixture with the Aryan races of India. Drew classes them with the Ladakhis with slight modifications due to climatic influences ; Biddulph acknowledged a strong element of Aryan blood in their Tartar type, owing to mixture with the Dards. Doctor Neve is of opinion that the Baltis are Tibetan in origin and appearance. So far as their appearance goes, although the writers quoted had far more opportunity of judging than myself, I am unable to agree with them.

Since my return to England I have been able to consult the writings of the Hungarian anthropologist Ujfalvy, who, during the early 'eighties of last century took anthropometric measurements in a number of villages in Baltistan ; the results of these measurements clearly support his opinion that the Baltis are Aryan in type.

They were found to possess an average cephalic index of 72.35 as compared with the Dards 73.62 and the Ladakhis 77. There can be little doubt that these anthropometric investigations are more accurate than judging by features which had hitherto been the case. The Balti, in my opinion, has no facial Mongol features, and has, in fact, a decided Aryan look¹ resembling very much the Pathan. In this connexion it may be recalled that Reoro Cortanzo, one of the older writers, describes the Baltis as "of the Caucasian or white, in contradistinction to the Ladakhis, who are Mongol and coffee coloured." The origin of the Baltis is also rather obscure. Ujfalvy believes them to be derived from the ancient Saci who came from the north of the Tien Shan, and mixed later with the natives of Northern India, the Dards and the Tibetans. Biddulph mentions a tradition current in Skardu and Rondu to the effect that Baltistan was first inhabited by Dards and later was invaded by Mongols, who intermarried with the former.

The Balti speaks a form of Tibetan, but so far as I was able to observe when crossing the border into Western Tibet or Ladakh, the Baltis and the Ladakhis do not seem to understand each other. Earlier travellers, on the other hand, have stated that the Balti and Ladakhi languages are very much alike and that the two races can understand one another. I am inclined, however, to ascribe their statements to the fact that they based their opinions on what they noticed at "frontier" towns where the two races are in daily touch with each other. It is quite natural then that

¹ Since the above was written, confirmation of the opinion as to the Aryan origin of the Baltis, founded on Ujfalvy's measurements, has been published in the Report of the De Filippi Expedition 1913-1914 to the Kara-koram Himalayas and Chinese-Turkestan. Professor Biasutti, as a result of over 400 measurements of individuals, taken by Dianelli, contributes a strictly anthropological report which would seem to settle finally the question of the origin of the Baltis in favour of the Aryan.

they should be able to understand one another. However, on my journey, Turtok, the last place in Baltistan, and Kharu, the first in Ladakh, were separated by a distance of thirty-six miles, and the inhabitants hardly, if ever, met. My Balti porters on that occasion could neither understand what the Ladakhis were saying nor were they understood.

The next morning the village officials assembled to see me off, and we exchanged the usual compliments. Everyone wished me a pleasant journey to Gol, our next camping place, only fourteen miles away, a fact I much appreciated after our long march of the day before. The path varied considerably, at one time leading through strips of cultivation, and at another along the edge of cliffs. The complete sterility and desolation of the country since crossing the Zoji La became more and more marked ; the same feature being noticeable in the Dras valley, and even more so, but on a bigger scale, in the Indus valley. Passing through the latter, one cannot help becoming interested in the geology of the Himalayas.

The earliest records in the geological history of the Himalayas show us that they were part of the bed of the great Purana Sea. This shallow sea stretched over the present Indian peninsula and up to the slopes of the main Himalayan Range. Whether it extended farther northwards cannot as yet be settled, since the geology of the interior of Tibet is not well known to us. It is quite possible that it did not and that a great Tibetan continent existed. During the Purana era there were great volcanic disturbances, resulting in the rise of land and the birth of Gondwanaland, a continent extending to South Africa and Australia. India then

became an integral part of Gondwanaland, the Himalayas being the northern coast but not necessarily a mountain range. Then followed periods during which disturbances took place, and only in a comparatively recent date in the geological time-scale do we get to the period of mountain-building and the final emergence of the Himalayas as mountains.

There are several theories which have been put forward to explain the origin and nature of the forces which produced the Himalayan mountain system and the chief of these are the contraction of the earth, and change in the speed of the earth's rotation. This is a very brief summary of the geological history of the Himalayas, and those who wish to study it further should refer to some of the excellent books on the subject to whose authors I am especially indebted for extracts taken from their works in connexion with the geology of this region.

Readers of geological text books are apt to form the opinion that, apart from volcanic action, the ordinary changes in the earth's surface are carried on slowly and continuously during long periods. Thus the small annual deposits, following upon the weathering and disintegration of rocks by changes of temperature, gradually accumulate to something appreciable. It would be difficult to imagine anything less like this process than that which actually occurs in the Indus valley. The whole country is a confused mass of lofty mountain ranges with jagged cliffs split in all directions, generally forming sharp precipitous edges.

The disintegration of these rocks is so continuous and on such a gigantic scale, that the valleys change their appearance frequently. The effect of avalanches

is visible on all sides, and rocks with sharply cut edges can be seen close to those worn smooth by years of running water and attrition. It is easy to get the impression that one is seeing geological processes in active operation—almost, so to say, while you wait. Another feature, as a result of this rapid action, that cannot fail to strike the ordinary traveller, is the variety and extent of the deposits of sediment and detritus. They are seen not only in the actual valley at the same level as the river, but sometimes at heights of from one thousand to two thousand feet above the river.

Schlagintweit found pebbles and sand from three to four thousand feet up, which tends to show that the Indus did not always flow at its present level, or that some uplifting of the whole region has occurred. These phenomena have given rise to various theories such as glacier action or a chain of lakes. Concerning the latter, the temporary damming up of river water, such as happens now and then, would not cause any great changes in the valleys, as not being ordinarily of long duration.

We soon came to the confluence of the Indus and Shyok rivers; the latter rises in the Kara-koram Range and is one of the largest tributaries of the Indus, descending from the Dapsang plain, some four hundred miles away with a drop of about 11,000 feet, or 27 feet a mile. The rivers join near Kiris in a deep gorge, as do the Suru and the Indus, some miles up. To the eye, the volume of the Indus after receiving the Shyok is not perceptibly increased, but in reality it is nearly doubled; as it cannot widen in the narrow rocky gorge it takes effect by increasing its depth considerably. A ferry boat crosses the river at this point, and I used

it some weeks later on my journey along the Shyok River to Western Tibet ; it replaces a skin-raft, but the ferry is much safer and more expeditious.

It was about three o'clock when we reached Gol, a pleasant oasis in a wide sandy valley, which is approached by a long avenue of willow trees. I found the *trampa* was a good fellow, and he took a personal interest in getting my wants supplied. It was very pleasant and peaceful sitting under the trees, and with a little imagination, one might almost have thought oneself in England. A large number of wild pigeons were flying about and I went off to do some shooting and bagged a number, though with rather an excessive expenditure of cartridges. Subhana said the cartridges had got damp crossing the Zoji La, but whether this was merely tactfulness on his part or not I do not know. Later in the evening I was shown over the mosque ; in Baltistan they are generally poorly built and it was of the usual modest style, rather low in structure with mud-built walls.

The Baltis are Mahomedans of the Shiite sect, and it is interesting to note that the Mahomedans of the neighbouring countries, Chinese-Turkestan, Kashmir, and India belong to the Sunite sect. From the point of view of religion Baltistan is a Shiite island surrounded by Sunites, Hindus and Buddhists. It has been pointed out that here we are at the meeting place of the three great Asiatic religions. From this point, and none other in Asia, could we go eastward to China through countries entirely Buddhist, westward to Constantinople among none but Mahomedans, and southward, over lands where the Hindu religion prevails, to the extremity of the Indian peninsula. It is supposed that the Baltis

became Mahomedans in the thirteenth century and that the conversion was due to the missionary zeal of the four brothers Kurasan, probably Shiites. As there are Brahminic bas-reliefs carved upon stone slabs near Dras, and religious inscriptions and Buddhist symbols inscribed on rocks, it is probable that Baltistan has witnessed the rise and fall of the same religions as northern India.

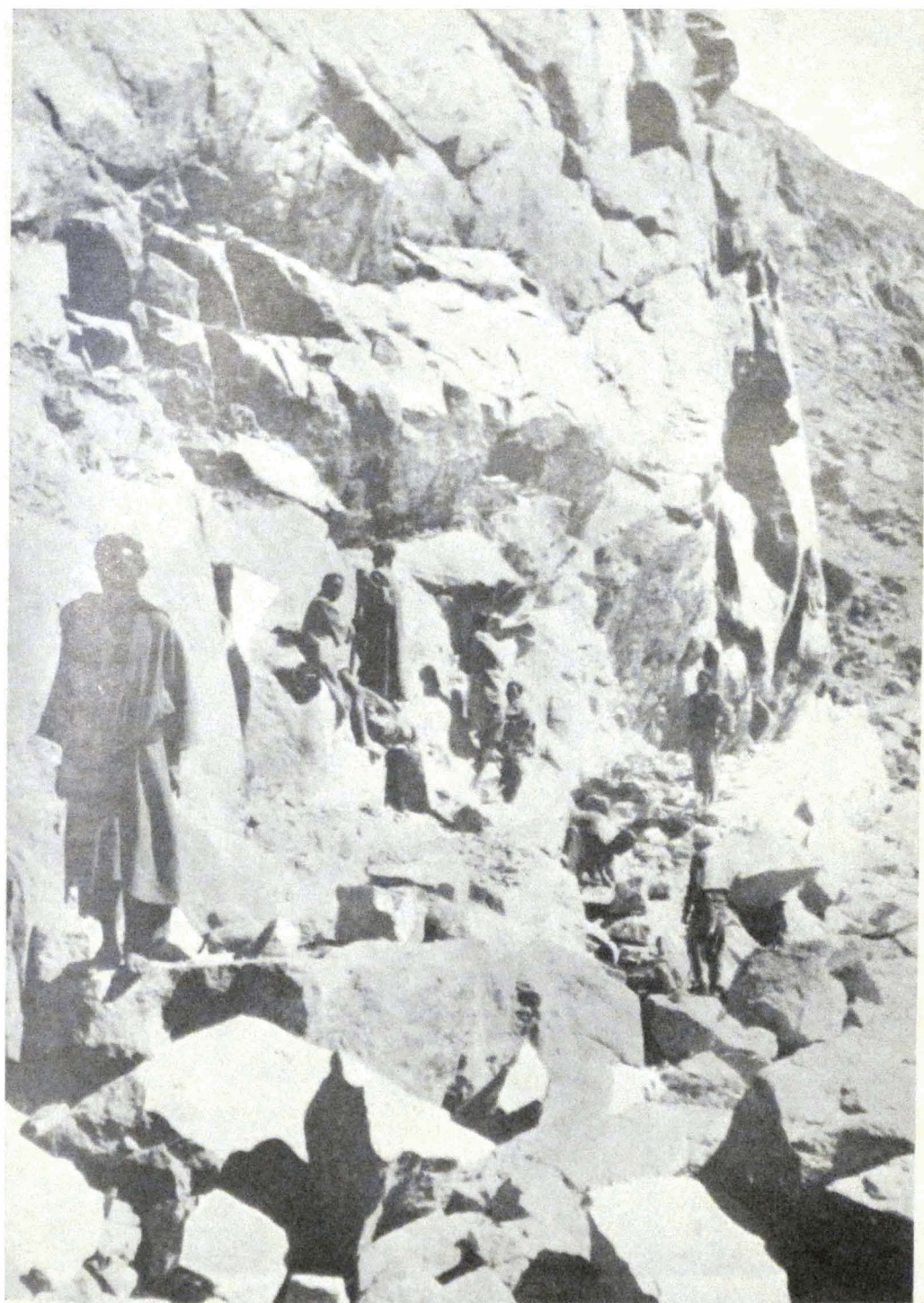
When the Baltis became Mahomedans, they adopted the custom of polygamy, polyandry being dropped, and this in the main was bad for the welfare of the country as tending to an increase in population ; this latter should be avoided, as the land for cultivation is limited and the importation of food very difficult. The hardships, however, from scarcity of food have to a certain extent eliminated polygamy, and it has been said that polygamy is not common among the poorer classes at the present day. In Skardu I found it was still in vogue generally, and the result is that the country is over-populated as compared with the available food supply. The Balti, therefore, has taken to emigrating to India, where he earns good wages and, as mentioned later, nowadays acquires a knowledge of political ideas of doubtful value. Parties of perhaps a dozen men set out laden with dried fruit for Simla, and by the sale of their wares are able to exist. Frequently, after a stay of a few years, they return, as capitalists on a small scale, to their native villages.

July 6th was wet as we left for Skardu, twenty-one miles away. The path follows the banks of the Indus and in places leads over long stretches of sand, varying from a mile to a few hundred yards long. In these the river forms small bays, with white sandy beaches, upon which the backwash of the Indus breaks like waves on a

calm day. Sometimes the path leaves the river level and makes its way across the steep slopes formed, at the base of cliffs, by falling rocks. Where the valley narrows to a gorge we had to climb to considerable heights to cross these ridges and the going was bad. The rough-hewn path in places dwindled away into the face of the cliff, and, where there is no foothold, *parris* have been built with much ingenuity.

These structures are made by fixing beams of wood on the ledges and into the recesses of the rocks; over them are then laid cross-beams, covered with stones and beaten earth to form a track. The whole is supported by struts, the lower ends of which are kept in position by piling rocks round them. Generally the *parris* are maintained in good repair, but one occasionally comes to places where the earth is washed away, and one sees, between the beams, the river, hundreds of feet below. It is very alarming to watch a laden pony forced near the outer edge by a projection from the cliff-side, but I have never seen an accident from this cause. The Baltis rank, probably, among the best road builders extant, especially considering the absence of scientific knowledge in the past. Some of their engineering feats can be seen in the military roads from Kashmir to Chitral and Afghanistan.

After thirteen miles the village of Torgum is passed, leaving eight more miles over a sandy track. The country then gradually becomes more cultivated with meadows and fields, and the scenery completely changes as the valley widens out, eventually forming an extensive plain twenty miles long and, in places, five miles broad. The Skardu rock stands out prominently, reminding one of the rock of Gibraltar, and numerous snowy peaks,



BALTIS REPAIRING A PATH WASHED AWAY BY FLOODS

with Mango Gusor over 20,000 feet high, can be seen in the distance. On the top of the detached rock is an old fort built in the beginning of the seventeenth century by Ali Sher. He was the first of the line of independent Mahomedan chiefs, of which the last, Ahmed Shah, was conquered and dethroned by the Sikhs in 1840.

I reached Skardu about half-past one and the porters, who had found the loose sandy track very bad going, turned up three hours later. There is a good rest-house lying to the east of the town, which is a straggling collection of villages dotted about the plain. The valley here is enclosed by high mountains, bare and inaccessible, to the eye, the Indus winding its way through the plain, forming immense sand banks on the south side of Skardu. The bed of the river varies in width from 150 to 250 yards, and, in spite of the intense cold during the winter, the river here rarely freezes. The Indus rises on the north side of the sacred Kailas mountains, the Elysium of ancient Sanskrit literature, and is nearly two thousand miles long; from its source to Attock, on the plains of India, the river drops some 16,000 feet in a distance of over a thousand miles.

Skardu is no longer the important place it was under its former Mahomedan chiefs. Thomson, who spent a winter there in 1874, found remains of buildings constructed of stone, marble fountains, aqueducts, and even the so-called hanging garden, and other travellers found antique household utensils showing considerable artistic work. Many of the houses were two storey, the lower being built of rough stones and mud, and the upper storey appeared to be wicker work, space being left on the ground floor roof for a terrace. Besides these houses there were some, evidently occupied by a better

class such as merchants, and these were of one storey with rooms and verandahs opening out on to a central court. It is curious how the legend of Alexander the Great persists in Central Asia, and it has been claimed that Skardu is a corruption of Iskandria, the city of Alexander. There does not, however, appear to be any foundation for this derivation, Skardu being considered a form of the Tibetan name Skardo and Kardo, the prefix *ś* to words beginning with a consonant being very common in the East.

Baltistan has changed hands on numerous occasions, and at times the Baltis have put up a good fight. The final conquest of Baltistan was accomplished with little difficulty by the invaders, and is of interest, though, to make it clear, the state of affairs in its westerly neighbour, Ladakh, must be briefly outlined. By a series of operations lasting from 1835 to 1840, the Dogra armies under Zorawar conquered this country, Ladakh surrendering entirely, though the inhabitants remained in a state of unrest. A man called Sukamir from the district of Purig, together with several other influential men, rashly issued a call to arms to the whole country. King Tsepal, who had wisely been allowed to remain on the throne, on payment of an annual tribute, did nothing to encourage this movement, but equally, did nothing to suppress it.

Unfortunately for the leaders, Zorawar entered the capital, Leh, before the rebels had time to organise themselves. This temporary force, which had been mobilised, could not be concealed, so it was announced that they were a body of petitioners who had come to greet their ruler and lay their grievances before him. This did not deceive Zorawar, who was quite equal to

the occasion, and he advised them to leave their leaders with him and return to their homes. While the Ladakhi army melted away, a cross-examination of the ring-leaders correctly revealed Sukamir, Rahim Khan, and Hussein as the chief instigators of the revolt.

Zorawar soon realised his position in Ladakh. He was in a country which might become aggressively hostile to him at any moment. The number of troops at his disposal for quelling disturbances was limited, and further, he could not obtain additional forces if required. He therefore decided to give the Ladakhis something to do and thus prevent them intriguing against his army. The Rajah of Skardu, Ahmed Shah, had just excluded his eldest son, Mahomed Shah, from the succession, in favour of his second son; the latter thereupon came to Zorawar and asked for his assistance to obtain the throne. Zorawar was only too glad to have an opportunity or pretext for an expedition into Baltistan and decided on a joint one, with the Ladakhi army under his orders. The Ladakhis were quite willing to take part, as there was not, at that time, much love lost, as the saying is, between the two countries.

Accordingly, General Bankapa took command of the Ladakhi troops again and received orders to enter Baltistan by way of Hanu and the Chorbat Pass. In course of time his forces arrived at Skardu without having fired a shot or even sighting their enemy. It should be noted that Zorawar did not allow old King Tsepal to remain in Ladakh during his absence, but made him accompany his troops. The Dogra portion of the army had marched by way of Kargil and the Dras valley and defeated the Baltis, who fled towards Skardu. The fort, besieged by the combined Dogra and Ladakhi

armies, eventually surrendered ; and Ahmed Shah was taken prisoner, and Mahomed Shah made ruler of Baltistan.

Zorawar now ordered his captive, Ahmed Shah, to send two Baltis to find Rahim Khan and Hussein, two of the leaders of the Ladakh revolution, and to bring them to Skardu. He at first demurred to this, but under threats, complied with his orders and, after a while, both men were found and brought before Zorawar. The latter next gave the Baltis an object lesson to show what their punishment would be in the event of any insurrections breaking out.

At the appointed hour everyone in Skardu was mustered in a lucerne field in the middle of the town, Zorawar and Tsepal having their tent pitched there ; Rahim Kahn and Hussein were then brought bound before the crowd. The former was tortured first by having his right hand, tongue, nose, and ears cut off, and he died two days later ; Hussein was treated in a somewhat similar manner, but survived his injuries. A refinement of cruelty was the attempt to keep alive the mutilated ones by dipping the bleeding surfaces into boiling hot butter to stop the bleeding. The fate of Sukamir, the third rebel leader, will be described later in connexion with the conquest of Ladakh.

Zorawar, having given those present some idea of what was likely to happen to them in the event of any resistance to the Dogra power, seized all the treasures from the Skardu castle and transported them to Leh, together with Ahmed Shah, their former owner. King Tsepal and Bankapa, with their army, were allowed to return to Ladakh, but both died of smallpox on the way. Zorawar, however, acknowledged as vassal king

of Ladakh a boy of eight or nine years old, a son of Prince Chogrsprul, who had fled some time before and died.

This is briefly the story of the final conquest of Baltistan and the incidents that led to it. Zorawar had displayed great ability and resource in his campaigns, and was without doubt a great general. Later on, one may compare him with Napoleon, as both met their fate through faulty strategy of a similar nature.

My party had walked two hundred and thirty-four miles in thirteen days, an average of eighteen miles a day, without a halt, and I decided, therefore, to spend a day or so in Skardu. This would give us time to overhaul our equipment and take a rest. The next day I took things easy, and, about noon, was glad to see one of the doctors of the Kashmir Medical Mission arrive in Skardu. We lunched together, and, soon after, the other doctor and his wife came, bringing along the transport. Before dining that evening we all went for a stroll in the town, which nowadays has rather a mean aspect, though the straggling appearance of the place is somewhat relieved by the number of fruit trees of different kinds. There is a poor bazaar where one can sometimes buy vegetables and a few other useful commodities.

After an excellent dinner we turned in, and the following day the Kashmir Medical Mission continued their journey on to Shigar. I rose early and took breakfast with them. Their carriers arrived one by one, and it was two hours after the arranged starting time that the baggage was loaded up. I walked down with one of the doctors and chose what we thought was a short cut across the sands to the Indus, where the ferry was waiting. We had got about half-way when we found ourselves

in some very unpleasant quicksands and had to retrace our footsteps.

Our short cut proved the usual lengthy way of getting to the desired point. By the time we reached the river the ferry had taken across the kit and porters, and was now ready for the doctor and his staff. Just as they were embarking a Balti came dashing up and asked the doctor to wait as he had just brought his brother to be cured. A few minutes later a young man was led along, unfortunately an incurable case and nothing could be done. When one sees such incidents one cannot fail to appreciate the good medical missions do by visiting outlying parts of the world, thereby relieving a good deal of suffering in many cases. After seeing the party off and safely landed on the opposite bank, I returned to the bungalow.

Delays in getting new carriers at each stage are frequent and the traveller may find himself held up for some time. I therefore tried to enrol some porters who would take my baggage right through to Askole, my next immediate objective. I offered extra pay but it was of no avail; Subhana said it was not *dastur*, or the custom, and therefore quite out of the question. The head villager had told him that no transport, in any case, was available to-morrow for Shigar, so I sent for the former, who emphasised his point by saying that there was not a single man remaining in Skardu available for carrying loads.

I threatened to make him carry a load himself, and at the same time handed him a rupee, the equivalent of a little over a shilling, with the remark that more would be forthcoming when the porters arrived. He left with a smile on his face, and, returning in an hour, assured me

that fourteen carriers would be here without fail tomorrow at six o'clock. The rest of the day was spent in getting extra stores and repacking our kit ; I was able to get ten pounds of potatoes which had just arrived from Srinagar, this being the total supply at that time in Skardu.

We had the prospect of cold weather ahead and sleeping in the open with but little shelter, so I gave each of my servants an extra blanket and a warm waistcoat, both of which were purchased in the local bazaar. Everything was now in readiness, and I turned in, fully satisfied that my party was fairly, though modestly, equipped, sufficient to enable me to set out from Askole, our base, with the full hope of reaching the summit of the Western Muztagh Pass.

CHAPTER IV

		MARCH TABLE	Miles
July 9th	..	Skardu to Shigar	16
.. 10th	..	Shigar to Skoro	7
.. 11th	..	Skoro to Skoro Lumba Hut ..	13 Camp 12,500ft.
.. 12th	..	Skoro Lumba Hut to Skoro La Bivouac	4 Camp 15,000ft.
.. 13th	..	Skoro La Bivouac to Darso Brok	9 Crossed Skoro La 16,700ft. Camp 13,500ft.
.. 14th	..	Darso Brok to Askole	11
.. 15th	..	Askole	—
			60

Total distance from Srinagar, 294 miles

ACROSS THE SKORO LA

I WAS up early seeing to my transport, though it was after nine o'clock before the porters were under way. I had arranged overnight for the *khistiwallas*, or ferry-men, to take my carriers across the Indus first, as this would give them a good start. About an hour later, I followed with Subhana, and on this occasion allowed him to choose the way over the sands. We arrived at the Indus, and found the men and baggage safely transported to the other bank, the ferry then being ready to take us over. There was a strong current, and we took some little time getting to the other side; our intended landing-place on the opposite bank was beside an isolated tree, but instead we were carried some 400 yards past this point; having paid off the *khistiwallas*, we set off at once for Shigar.

Our path for the next four miles or so lay over a sandy stretch of undulating country, forming distinctly-marked

dunes in places, and altogether very heavy going. The heat and glare were intense, and no shade of any kind was to be found. Having soon caught up the porters, it was with a kind of relief that we reached a stretch of water about a foot deep, through which we had to wade. We came at length to a small clump of trees, where I called a halt for lunch and indulged in an hour's *siesta*. After another mile of loose sand the path bifurcates, one branch to the right, going to Nahr, and the other to the left to Shigar. We took the left one, leading up a steep, narrow, winding *nala*, in which the heat was stifling, not a breath of air stirring. At the top we emerged on to a stony plateau, upon which boulders have been traced whose condition is held to prove that the Shigar glacier must at some time have flowed over this ridge. This plateau is perhaps a mile wide, and from it we caught our first view of the fertile Shigar valley.

The Shigar valley, so called from the village of that name, runs from north-west to south-east for some twenty-five miles, with an average width of three miles. It lies at an altitude of about 7,500 feet, with mountains on either side rising to a height of 16,000 feet, and behind them to a greater height still. The valley itself is occupied by the Shigar River, which drains the southern slopes of K2 and collects its waters from the Baltoro, Chogo *Lungma*, and Biafo glaciers. It has a stony bed, with extensive alluvial deposits on the banks, also numerous side ravines, down which run tributary streams to join it; these have, at their mouths, cultivated areas irrigated by waters diverted from them. The soil produces plentiful crops and good orchards, which justify the name frequently given it—the Paradise of Little Tibet.

To reach the valley we descended by a steep path,

and once there, passed through the most wonderful orchards of mulberries, peaches, apricots, and nectarines. I had the greatest difficulty in getting the porters along, as they persisted in stopping to eat fruit, and I must plead guilty to doing the same myself, at times. Close at hand were fields of rice and other crops, separated by irrigation canals, which maintain the great fertility of the soil in this valley. A long avenue of trees led us into Shigar, where I was welcomed, on behalf of the Rajah who resides there, by his representative, who expressed His Highness's regret that he was prevented by illness from paying his respects in person. I was led to the Rajah's private orchard, which had been selected for me to pitch my tent in, and here I found my friends of the Kashmir Medical Mission, who, with their usual kindness, insisted on my dining with them that evening.

The villagers had been ordered by the Rajah to do all in their power to assist me, but notwithstanding this, they seemed unwilling to do so. I broke the news to the *trampa* that sixteen men were wanted to carry my baggage and stores to Askole, crossing the Skoro La. He replied that this was quite impossible, the pass still being blocked with snow, and that his men would refuse to go. As I persisted in my demand for the porters, he inquired the object of my journey to Askole, and what I proposed to do on arrival there. I told him of my intention to cross the Western Muztagh Pass, to which he rejoined that I should find the greatest difficulty in getting men from Askole to accompany me, unless liberally supplied with extra clothing and blankets. Several men were then brought with *chits* and certificates showing they had served with Guillarmod in 1902 and the Abruzzi Expedition in 1910. They had, of course,

been given extra blankets, boots, and clothing on those occasions, but I was quite unable to do so. It was borne in upon me that my modest expedition was unfavourably compared with previous ones, which, with unlimited financial resources, and, above all, Government support, were lavishly fitted out. The longer the discussion continued, the more confidently they asserted that I should not be able to go beyond Askole, and that even the Skoro La was now out of the question.

The Skoro is a pass on the shortest and most direct route, sixty miles, leading from Shigar to Askole. The lower route, following the course of the Shigar and Braldoh River valleys, is twenty-five miles longer, and is that used generally by the natives, being much easier. Its height, according to some of the few travellers who have crossed it, is variously given by the Workmans as 16,975 feet, by the Duke of the Abruzzi as 16,716 feet, by Sir Martin Conway as 17,400 feet, and by Guillarmod as 17,716 feet, the Indian Survey Department's figure being 16,700 feet. I am unable to add to this variable list, as my thermometer for taking boiling-point observations was broken long before reaching the Skoro La.

The pass had not been crossed that year, it still being early in July, and the head villager and his friends naturally considered themselves better judges of when the pass was open than a newcomer like myself; to be quite frank, they were. I thought it time, however, for Subhana to tell them that further controversy was useless, though I felt, in fairness, that there was some justification for their attitude. A special messenger was, therefore, sent to the Rajah explaining the situation, with the result that instructions were given that the men were

to take my baggage as far as the little village of Skoro, about seven miles farther on. Here the *trampa* would be told to supply me with all the men I needed. It is characteristic of the natives that each, in turn, endeavours to put responsibility on to another pair of shoulders.

We usually started about four o'clock in the morning, to take full advantage of the cool of the day, the midday heat being very trying for heavily-laden porters. On this occasion, as our destination was only a few miles off, an early start was unnecessary, and it was after nine when we left Shigar to the accompaniment of discouraging remarks shouted at the porters by the older inhabitants of the village. Passing through the valley, one sees a general air of prosperity and well-being, which is shown in the appearance and bearing of the inhabitants. They have a well-fed look, and their clothing is much cleaner than elsewhere, and the houses in many ways are of better construction. Another noticeable difference was that the women were less guarded than in other parts, being often met with in the villages and showing no shyness. We took about three hours to reach Skoro, not on account of the bad road, but owing to the porters stopping to eat the fruit which grows in abundance and appears to be common property. Having arrived at Skoro, the Shigar porters were paid off and sent back to their own village. I was particularly anxious that they should not have time to influence adversely the Skoro men, and so possibly spoil my chance of getting further transport.

It was about one o'clock, after lunch, which consisted chiefly of *chupattis*, or coarse native pancakes, prepared and baked by my servant, followed by greengages and

apricots, that I sent for the *trampa*. He was a small man with a decided manner, and seemed anxious to please me, but his face fell when I explained my wants to him. He exclaimed dramatically that under no circumstances would he order his men to the death which, in his opinion, the crossing of the Skoro La entailed. His good humour, however, was restored when he heard me mention that well-known and magic word *backsheesh*—meaning, of course, tip or gratuity—and he smilingly promised to supply me with porters. I ordered eighteen men, including two spare, to be ready at two o'clock the following morning. The remainder of the day was spent in getting together the extra rations for the porters—no light task, as we had before us about four days' march through uninhabited country.

It seemed, at this point, that the transport problem had been solved, but I was soon to be disillusioned. About tea-time my camp was suddenly invaded by a large number of women and children. There was a great deal of talking and shouting, and it was some time before I discovered the cause; it was a protest by the women against my taking their husbands and sons away; many were in tears, and held their babies out to me, saying that I was taking their men to certain death.

Who, they asked me, would look after their crops, and save them and their children from death by starvation? It was, they assured me, a most perilous journey, for their forefathers had perished in blizzards, as a result of their foolhardiness in starting too early in the year. So many and so harrowing were the tales they told me that I really began to think the impossible was about to be attempted; but in half an hour they had all

dispersed, fully assured by Subhana that their menfolk would return safe and well paid.

It was imperative that we should start early, as our way led up the Skoro valley, necessitating the crossing and recrossing, several times, of a mountain torrent. Fed by glaciers and melting snow from the high surrounding mountains, this could only be forded at night-time, or before the heat of the sun had time to melt the snow and thus increase the volume of water. There was, therefore, little sleep that night, for at one o'clock all hands were busy loading up, and by two o'clock we were under way.

Our troubles began almost as soon as we had left the village, as a few hundred yards outside, owing to the path losing itself, we had to pick our way amongst large rocks and boulders, up a ravine. In the first six miles, which took till eight o'clock, we forded the mountain torrent six times, often with much delay. Sometimes it was necessary to make two crossings for one load, on account of the swiftness of the torrent bringing down with it rocks and boulders, liable to upset one's balance; the danger and discomfort were increased by the intense coldness of the water, numbing one's limbs to a painful degree. The going was so hard that I called a halt, and we had half an hour's rest, although every minute was of importance, as the water was rising rapidly. We started off again and crossed the torrent for the last time, about noon, the water being then dangerously high and running with tremendous force.

At this point the ravine became a narrow gorge occupied by the river, and it was impossible to follow it any farther. We were therefore compelled to make a steep ascent of 2,000 feet up the right-hand slope, and gradually

make our way along the side of the hill. The next six miles were very tiring, as the ground was covered with loose, crumbling earth and rocks, which at the slightest touch were set rolling into the torrent below. We then came to a smoother part, with occasional wild rose-bushes in bloom on either side of the path. About six o'clock in the evening we reached the head of the Skoro valley, and as we found a suitable camping-ground on a grassy patch and a small stone hut for the porters to sleep in, we halted for the night. This camping-place is 12,500 feet above sea level, and, for want of a better name, I named it Skoro Lumba Hut. We had only covered some thirteen miles in about sixteen hours, but we felt that our rest was well earned. Nearly 5,000 feet above us towered our objective, the Skoro La, with its icy slopes, and around us lay small glaciers and snowdrifts. The prospect of reaching the summit of the pass next day was not encouraging, as the porters were completely exhausted with their efforts, and the Skoro La that night appeared almost inaccessible.

The following day things looked better, the porters especially seeming much revived, in spite of a somewhat scanty meal, due to the scarcity of fuel. We loaded up, and chose what appeared to be the easiest route—up a small glacier-filled *nala* leading, apparently, to within about 1,000 feet of the summit, and to a point eminently suitable for the final ascent. Progress was slow and difficult, and it was soon found impossible to continue. At first, small rocks came rolling down upon us, but they soon developed into avalanches of snow and rocks of considerable size. The rapidity and alarming frequency with which these followed one another made it necessary to retrace our footsteps, and after three

hours we found ourselves where we had started from.

Our next attempt led us up a very steep spur covered with grass, which presented no real difficulties, although very fatiguing; throughout the ascent we could see avalanches still coming down the glacier we had just left. It was now late in the afternoon, and it was decided to make the final ascent the next morning. We were at an altitude of about 15,000 feet above sea level, on a very narrow ledge—so narrow that it was impossible to pitch a tent—but it was quite safe from avalanches.

I cleared away the snow and made preparations for the night, the porters remaining near but just below me. Fortunately, we had remembered to collect and bring with us a few sticks, and we were all able to have some hot native tea made with melted snow. There being nothing else to do, we all turned in at about seven o'clock—that is to say, the porters huddled together for warmth and I crept into my sleeping-bag.

The scene here was of great beauty, surrounded as we were by snowy peaks on all sides; the almost uncanny silence of the clear, starlight night was broken only by the occasional crashes of avalanches, making a noise not unlike the roar, as heard from a distance, of heavy breakers on a rocky shore during a storm. Rarely had I seen a more awe-inspiring spectacle, and I felt fully repaid for any hardship that had been met with. There was every prospect of good weather, and I turned over well content, with the hope of an undisturbed night's rest; this was not to be realised, and I woke a little later to find a bitterly cold wind, with driving snow. Involuntarily my thoughts turned to stories of travellers

who had lost their lives through going to sleep ; all the same, I was too tired to make active efforts to keep awake, and soon dozed again. I was, however, continually disturbed, in spite of my efforts to bury myself completely in my sleeping-bag, by snow finding its way, in all its cold wetness, to my skin. When I finally woke in the morning my bedding was covered with hard, frozen snow. I rose at the first glimmer of dawn, and went down to the seemingly lifeless porters to rouse them, several being numbed with the cold, which was not surprising in view of their comparatively scanty clothing.

It was not yet daylight, and a light haze was still clinging to the mountain-tops when we got under way. At first we climbed over large rocks and stones, but the icy slopes were soon reached, leaving us with about 1,000 feet to the summit. One of my party went ahead with an axe cutting steps diagonally across the ice. About five of us had started on the ice when a familiar roar was heard from above, followed almost simultaneously by an avalanche of snow and large rocks, which came hurtling down with increasing rapidity. There were warning shouts from the other porters who had not reached the ice ; several of us were missed by what seemed a fraction of an inch, and one porter fell, only just saving his load from following in the trail of the avalanche, which passed far below, leaving us dazed rather than hurt. The men dashed back to their comrades and sat down trembling with fear, begging and imploring me not to continue the ascent.

About half an hour later, having reassured my men, we started off again, myself leading the way, preceded only by a man with an ice-axe. Several small avalanches

crossed our path during the remainder of the ascent, but the first alarming experience was not repeated. Our path to the summit was mostly over snow and ice, though in places there were large, loose rocks, which caused considerable delay. It was not long before the porters complained of mountain sickness, one of them becoming so unwell that he was relieved of his load and practically carried up ; on this occasion I did not suffer from this most unpleasant complaint. It is an interesting fact, and one that cannot easily be accounted for, that at lower altitudes one sometimes suffers badly ; there are various theories on this subject, but none that completely fits all cases.

The summit was reached about noon, and, from about 17,000 feet, we gazed upon a most impressive scene of desolation and solitude. Before us stretched a vast snowfield, pierced by enormous jagged rocks, while beyond lay a glacier, in places brilliant in the sun. I looked back in the direction from whence we had come, and must own to a feeling of satisfaction in regard to the difficulties overcome. Meanwhile there was a remarkable scene near the flat, narrow ledge which formed the actual summit of the pass. Here all the porters had unloaded and were gathered in a circle, offering a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to Allah for having brought them safely through "hell's road," as they termed it.

It was nearly two o'clock when we commenced the descent ; the sun had been shining on the snow for some time, making it very soft, so that we sank in at times up to the waist. After struggling with great difficulty for about three hours we reached the glacier, which differed from others in the Himalayas in that, though the actual surface was rough, it was level instead of being uneven.



LOOSE ROCKS ON LOWER SLOPES OF SKORO LA



PORTERS AT 16,000 FEET NEAR SUMMIT OF SKORO LA

We crossed several large, yawning crevasses, or chasms, about forty to sixty feet deep, the porters making detours to avoid them whenever possible. I was some distance in front of my men when I suddenly saw, a hundred yards to my right, a fine snow leopard—the first I had seen in his natural surroundings. He seemed to be about seven feet in length and struck me as being whiter in appearance than is usually described. Unfortunately, not expecting to meet with any game, my rifle was some distance behind me, and I could only handle regretfully the few rounds of ammunition in my pocket; I stood and watched him until he passed out of sight. Just beyond the snout of the glacier we found a suitable camping-ground at about 13,500 feet; the night was bitterly cold, and we all appreciated the shelter afforded us by the rocks.

The following morning the porters started off on their own accord, anxious, no doubt, to reach their destination. The village of Thal Brok, through which we passed, is now deserted, and is only used by shepherds and their families when grazing their cattle in this neighbourhood. The villagers abandoned it many years ago, owing to the glacier advancing and the great difficulty of getting fuel; also, being in a narrow valley, the wind sweeps through it from over glaciers and snowfields, making the climate in winter extremely severe. We completed the remainder of the descent, which was fairly easy and uneventful, to a point just above the village of Monjong. A steep, winding descent then brought us to a twig-bridge over the Braldoh River, which is a wide mountain torrent, flowing through a gorge and fed by the waters from three large glaciers—the Biafo, the Punmah, and the Baltoro. Owing to the depth and the extreme swiftness of the current, the only method of crossing at

this point is by the *jhula*—the local name for a twig-bridge.

The span of this bridge is over 270 feet, and the strands start from each bank at about eighty to hundred feet above water level, sinking to about forty feet in the middle. The inhabitants have nothing to which to resort in the shape of iron or other metals, nor have they the timber or means for making planks and posts, for the construction of bridges. As the result of a poor natural supply of material, the construction of a *jhula* is necessarily most elementary, being made entirely from the small branches and twigs of a tree. They are twisted together, and form ropes stretching from one side of the river to the other, the whole making a rather flimsy structure.

It is composed of three large strands, the section of the bridge representing an inverted isosceles triangle; the middle or lower strand, on which one treads in crossing, is from four to five inches in diameter. Owing to its curved shape, it is not wide enough to permit both feet being securely placed side by side; it follows, therefore, that a person crossing can move only with one foot in front of the other. Consequent upon the swaying and working of the bridge, the branches and twigs have a tendency to become loose, and one finds oneself in places with barely an inch or so of secure foothold, making the passage extremely precarious. The two side strands are of approximately the same diameter, being about waist high, so that they can be used as handrails. Owing to their flexibility, it is necessary to connect each to the lower strand by smaller branches about an inch in thickness, at intervals of about two feet, similar to the webbing of a steel girder.

Furthermore, the two side strands are kept the correct distance apart by branches about an inch thick placed horizontally, at intervals of some twelve yards, acting as either ties or struts between them. The bridge is repaired and kept in order by a man called a *jhulawalla* ; remuneration for his services is a toll, paid in corn, for himself and family, by users of the bridge.

I was unable at the time to identify the actual material of which these bridges are constructed, and the specimen which I took from the bridge did not, unfortunately, survive the vicissitudes of travel. Thanks, however, to the courtesy of the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, I have since learned that the material is perhaps the twig of *Parrotia Jacquemontania*, a large, deciduous shrub or small tree of the North-West Himalayas. This wood weighs about sixty-one pounds per cubic foot, and is highly esteemed for walking-sticks, tent-pegs, *charpoys*, or native beds, rice pestles, and also for native bows for throwing pellets ; but its chief use is for basket-work and in the making of bridges over the Himalayan rivers. The twigs are very tough and flexible, and are twisted together into thick ropes, often 300 feet long. Captain F. Kingdon Ward, the well-known botanist, traveller, and explorer in Tibet, further informs me that *Parrotia Jacquemontania* grows forming dense thickets of scrub perhaps six or eight feet deep, and that both twigs and leaves closely resemble those of the hazel, though not botanically related.

I later made inquiries from the villagers as to the age of this bridge, but only learned that it had always been there. The earliest mention of this type of bridge with which I am acquainted occurs in the narrative of one of the Chinese Buddhist travellers who made

pilgrimages during the 7th and 8th centuries to the famous Buddhist shrines in Northern India. Amongst these travellers, Hiuen Tsang made this journey about A.D. 640, and he refers to difficulties encountered, such as crossing "flying bridges," in a description of the road from Kashmir to Baltistan—or Po-lu-lo, as he then called it. It may be taken that these "flying bridges" are some form of the twig-bridge of to-day.

Viewed from above, my first impression of this type of bridge was striking in the extreme; I thought for one moment of the catenary curve formed by the bridge hanging over the river. Then I noticed that the whole structure was swaying, and, knowing something of the mentality of my porters, it dawned on me that we were in for an exciting experience, as Askole, to which my men had undertaken to carry my stores and baggage, lay on the opposite bank, about half a mile off. The bridge proved, as my carriers fervently protested, an almost insuperable obstacle. My order to cross was completely ignored, the men throwing down their loads and refusing to obey, owing to a strong wind causing the frail structure to sway sideways, like a pendulum, to the extent of about three or four feet.

In justice to my porters it must, however, be remembered that, coming from a different district, they knew nothing of twig-bridges and some of them, like myself, had never crossed one before. In their own districts, skin-rafts and roughly constructed barges are used for crossing rivers, whereas in higher altitudes, such as we were now in, the rivers generally flow much faster and in gorges, necessitating some form of bridge.

After an hour's delay, trying in vain to persuade the porters to continue the journey, Subhana and I decided

to cross to the other side to see if we could get porters from Askole to take the baggage on. We started by climbing on to the large rocks piled up and kept in position by small stakes, over which rocks the ends of the three strands of the bridge are led, and secured to form an anchorage. Subhana led the way, and I followed as best I could, considering the steepness of the descent to the actual bridge.

Once clear of the anchorage the swaying became increasingly perceptible, and I soon felt that it was not only horizontal, but also vertical. Fortunately, I am not subject to vertigo, as it was necessary to look downwards in selecting one's next foothold. The sight of the swift torrent a long way below, when the swaying was at its worst, made one grip firmly the side rails, and also gave one the feeling of being carried upstream with the *jhula*. During these periods of violent swaying I had grasped the side rails—so firmly, in fact, that I ran the small thorns and pointed edges of the twigs into the palms of my hands, causing them to bleed; at the time I was unaware of this, and only discovered it after reaching the other side.

To add to our difficulties, we now came to a part of the bridge where the middle strand was badly damaged—so much so that only a few twisted twigs, not more than two inches in width, remained in position. The state of the damaged part reminded one of the system said to be in vogue among the Greek hermits living in the cliff monasteries of Thessaly, which can only be visited by being hauled up in a basket, slung on the end of a rope; these ropes are said to be never changed until they break, and all those who use them, therefore, must take their chance. We were now about one-third

of the way across, at the first of the crossbars or struts which held the two side rails in position, and this was rather awkward to get over. Up to this point, owing to the sagging of the bridge due to its own weight, our progress had been downhill, so to speak, but half way across we began to ascend. The remaining two crossbars were reached and successfully negotiated, and eventually we gained the other side, setting off at once on our mission to Askole in search of carriers.

Askole is the name given to a group of seven villages lying at an altitude of about 10,000 feet above sea level, and standing about 300 feet above the Braldoh River. It has a winter of eight months, and can readily be described as a kind of "world's end," almost surrounded by a veritable glacial sea, formed by some of the largest glaciers in the world. On reaching Askole, I was met by the head villager, who, with his partly-shaven head and long elf-locks, reminded me singularly of the Polish Jews met with on the occasion of my visit to Warsaw and Cracow.

Coming to business, I said that eighteen men were wanted to bring my baggage from the opposite bank of the river to this village, and he replied that none were to be had. During the animated discussion which followed, a large crowd collected and became most threatening in manner. It seemed to me incredible that no men should be available amongst the many in the crowd, in which were conspicuous several able-bodied men with, apparently, no urgent business on hand. Clearly they were unwilling to help us, which seems to be the attitude always adopted, as Sir Francis Younghusband, on his arrival there from Peking in 1887, also mentions the fact that the inhabitants were

hostile to him. We therefore returned to the bridge, to insist on my own men crossing, and this, of course, meant crossing the bridge twice, a prospect that left me absolutely cold. However, within two hundred yards of the river's edge we were overtaken by two men from the village, who, to our great relief, offered their services. They were naturally used to the bridge, thinking nothing of crossing over with loads, and in less than an hour all the baggage was deposited on the Askole side of the river. To my eighteen men who were still on the farther bank of the river, word was sent that they would forfeit their pay unless they fulfilled their contract by taking the baggage on to Askole ; it was not long before they were all over the bridge, loaded up and under way.

There are always experiences the recollection of which remains fixed ; some sudden peril, a glorious view witnessed from a mountain-top, or other incidents of travel—frequently the latter—that stamp themselves permanently in one's memory. I can to this day vividly recollect my feelings, when half way across the bridge, swaying in mid-air. Should anyone think that I may have made rather too much of the crossing of the twig-bridge, or rather, its effect on me, I must refer him to one of the late Lord Curzon's recent books of travel. Amongst a list of thrilling experiences which he recalled as standing out prominently in his memory after a lifetime of travel was the crossing of one of these twig-bridges, so if I have erred, it has been in good company. It remains to add that, should any reader have the good fortune to visit these parts, still undisturbed by modern progress, it is to be hoped that they will find the twig-bridges in a reasonably good state of repair, with no crossbars loose or missing, and the air disturbed by

nothing more than the lightest of zephyrs. On the other hand, should there be any with a taste for crossing primitive bridges other than Himalayan twig-bridges, they are recommended to try those made of bamboo in Burma or plaited grass in Sikkim.

The whole village turned out to meet us on our arrival, and the *trampa* announced that they were there to welcome us. I am not an authority on Tibetan etiquette, nor do I presume to doubt his words, but this welcome took the form of hindering us by all possible means. An affray soon started between my men and the villagers, but the judicious use of a stick separated them. Much time was lost in attempting to find a camping-ground that suited both the villagers and myself, as every place selected was objected to by them, for no very clear reasons. Seeing this was the case, I chose the shadiest and most comfortable camping-ground and established myself there, in spite of violent protests from the *trampa*.

All the baggage having been unloaded, and the villagers driven off to a safe distance, I lined up my eighteen porters and paid them off. I was more generous in doing so than had been my original intention, being most anxious to make a good impression on the villagers. The two men from Askole, who had come to our rescue and had actually carried the baggage across the river, were also lavishly rewarded. My porters, after having been paid, salaamed me, and set off at once on their return journey to Skoro. They were barely out of the village when they were set upon by the Askoleans, and a desultory fight was kept up all the way to the river's edge. On their return, the villagers refrained from molesting me, and fortunately, contented themselves

with simply keeping our camp under observation, merely out of curiosity, to see what we were doing.

Askole is the last inhabited place in Baltistan, and beyond lie the inhospitable Kara-koram wastes. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Askoleans have a strong objection to hiring themselves out as porters to proceed ostensibly nowhere, for the crossing of the Western Muztagh Pass meant nothing to them. They were being called upon to endure hardships and risks, with but little in return for it. Money, after all, is practically of no value to them, and that was all I could offer. Earlier travellers had supplied them with extra clothing, blankets, and boots before starting, but in my case this was out of the question.

During the evening I had several altercations and discussions with the head man, and by compromising, with great difficulty, made arrangements for transport. I wished to leave the next day, but this was found to be impossible, as there was not time to collect sufficient food to victual them for about fourteen days. I agreed to pay for their food instead of giving them blankets and clothing, as had hitherto been the case. They seemed pleased at this, and also at the fact that they would be given light loads. By the second evening everything was ready, and it was agreed that we should start at four o'clock the following morning.

CHAPTER V

MARCH TABLE

				Miles	
July 16th	..	Askole to Korophon	..	10	Crossed the Biafo glacier
„ 17th	..	Korophon to Tsok	..	17	
„ 18th	..	Tsok .. ..	..	—	Ibex hunting
„ 19th	..	Tsok .. ..	..	—
„ 20th	..	Tsok to Dumulter glacier		12	
				—	
				39	
Total distance from Srinagar, 333 miles					

THE BIAFO GLACIER

MY departure from Askole one fine morning—July 16th—caused considerable trouble and anxiety and will not readily be forgotten by me, nor, perhaps, by the inhabitants. Our baggage was packed and arranged in evenly distributed loads by four o'clock, and we were ready to move off on the appearance of the porters. An hour later there was no sign of them, so the *trampa* was sent for. After a time, he arrived, gesticulating and waving his hands in despair; he said that he had no control over his men nowadays, which sounded oddly familiar to me and showed that labour troubles were not unknown there. Dashing up to three men who were looking on, he seized hold of them and told them they would have to go with me; an exchange of words followed, but they obeyed him, and each in turn selected what he considered was the lightest load or the easiest to carry. It looked as though they meant to start, but, instead of doing so, they asked if they might go off to get their food for the journey, for which permission was

naturally given them. More porters now began to come along in twos and threes, but disappeared on some pretext or other almost as quickly. By eight o'clock, ten loads in all had been allotted, though only two men were present.

Our departure had by this time become a public event, for a large crowd, mostly women and children, had collected and were obstructing, not to say peacefully picketing, the men in every way. The attitude of these women was entirely different to that met with at the small Skoro village, where they simply begged and implored me not to take the men away, whereas here they were openly defiant. I decided, therefore, to use coercive measures, and, as each man arrived, he was loaded up, and when five were ready, they were sent off in charge of one of my servants. By this means I was able to get some out of the compound and started on the way, as I thought. All but two loads had been dispatched and eventually two more men were with difficulty obtained; one of them, being the son of the *trampa*, claimed exemption on that ground. He was persuaded to go on condition that he received extra pay, which I agreed to. At last I left, and, bidding a quick farewell to the Askoleans in the guise of a smile, Subhana and I elbowed our way through the crowd to catch up the other porters.

We had gone but a short distance when, to my annoyance, I saw my baggage strewn along the path and some of the loads unattended, several porters having returned to the village. There were perhaps three on the move, the others being seated on the ground grumbling at the weight of the loads. Patience had certainly been given a trial, and by this time mine was exhausted; the

psychological moment to show signs of exasperation seemed to have arrived, and I gave full vent to my feelings, both verbally and to the extent of summary punishment, without which nothing would have been accomplished.

The explanation of the delay was that the head porter, or trouble-maker-in-chief, as he appeared to me, had said that all the loads were too heavy and that the men were not to carry them. The only way to get them on was to lighten them, which I did, though it was quite unnecessary. The surplus baggage was piled up and left on the roadside in charge of two of my servants, with instructions to bring it along as best they could, either with two fresh porters or by carrying it themselves. I went on ahead to keep the carriers on the move, the women following me the whole time and continually urging them not to go on. By barring the way to some of the more persistent, they slowly dropped behind and were gradually shaken off. Once clear of the village we had the situation fairly well in hand though there were frequent halts.

The behaviour of the women at Askole started me speculating whether it was due to their remoteness from civilisation or not. I thought of most of the factors bearing on the subject, such as tradition, race, religion, or customs, and could not arrive at any definite conclusion, except that women all over the world will put up a fight to keep their men out of risky enterprises, concerning which they appreciated the possibilities much more than I did. Further, to live or exist at all in these isolated parts calls for great individual effort; the long dreary winter of eight months has to be prepared for, in which the women play as important a rôle

as the men. They naturally would resent their men being forced into unnecessary danger, and my point of view was something entirely outside their experience and therefore to be resisted.

Just outside Askole we passed the ruins of two forts where the Askoleans had once been surprised and many killed during the Hunza raids. Colonel Godwin-Austen, writing in 1864, says: "It is by this way (the Hispar Pass) the Nagyr men used to come into the Braldoh (valley) and loot the villages; their last raid was some twenty-four years since (about 1840), when a body of some seven hundred to eight hundred crossed over and carried off about one hundred men and women, together with all the cows, sheep, and goats they could collect."

Sir Martin Conway, in a letter written in Askole dated July 29th, 1892, says he was informed as follows: "The last time there is any memory of the pass (the Hispar) having been crossed was in the days of the father of the very old man in whose house our baggage was stored. He does not remember the event, but he remembers his father telling him about it. The leader of the band that crossed was Wazir Hollo. They came late in the year, three months later than now (October). The harvest in Nagyr had been bad and the Nagyr folk needed provisions. The band did not attempt to attack Askole, said the old man, but the Baltis gave them ibex skins and flour. The Nagyr people invited some of the Baltis to go back with them, but they refused, fearing the cold. The Nagyr men started to return by the way they had come, but all perished in the snow except Wazir Hollo, who alone reached home to tell the tale."

There is no doubt a certain amount of truth in these

accounts, but they have, like most traditions, become distorted in course of time. It is well known how the numbers of troops become exaggerated, and probably such would appear to be the case regarding the figures of seven or eight hundred, the number of raiders as given by Godwin-Austen. It is hardly possible or likely that a body of men of this size would cross the Hispar Pass and go down the Biafo glacier to the Braldoh valley; the number of raiders on these occasions was probably not more than fifty, which would be sufficient for an expedition of this nature. Travellers since then have given us stories told them by the inhabitants, but have added nothing new, and this is probably all that we shall ever know about these raids. While passing the forts I asked Subhana to inquire of the porters if they knew anything about them, and all that they could say was that many years ago the " Hunza-Nagyr robbers " used to attack their village.

Our path, leading through cultivated fields, was good, and the valley opened out as compared with the lower part of the Braldoh valley, which is a large gorge. Up to this time most of the men had appeared satisfied with their loads, but suddenly an animated discussion arose among them as to how far they were going. I was then informed that the end of their journey that day would be Korophon, which is just on the farther side of the Biafo glacier. It had been my intention to reach Dumordo rope-bridge over the Punmah valley stream that night, but I decided to say nothing for the time and to push on, and later to express my view on the subject. We soon reached a steep bit of path, involving a hard and difficult climb over the side of a cliff; the descent on the other side was worse and took some time,

as each porter separately had to be helped down with his load.

The Kara-koram area, in which we were, is a glacial region and is unique in the world ; it is not surprising, therefore, that its glaciers should exhibit features which are unknown elsewhere and are better described as valley-glaciers, rather than by the usual name of glacier. The mountains, which are of altitudes up to 28,000 feet, naturally collect on their slopes enormous masses of snow and ice, and, in course of time, these roll down into the valleys, forty to fifty miles in length. This accumulation of snow and ice becomes an immense ice-stream which forces its way down the valley for great distances. The Biafo, Baltoro, Hispar, and Siachen are not strictly individual glaciers but vast glacial systems of their own, each having many tributaries joining them ; the latter in some cases are many miles long and complete glaciers in themselves, having likewise their own tributaries. It is only when one sees on what a huge scale the physical features of the Kara-korams are that any idea can be formed as to the magnitude of these gigantic glaciers.

I must own to having felt excited at approaching the Biafo glacier, one of the largest in the world ; never before having seen a Himalayan glacier of any great size, I had been unable to form a clear idea as to the appearance it would present on close acquaintance. I had previously caught a glimpse of it when on my way down from the Skoro La to Askole, and instead of the usual blue-green or dark ice-coloured glacier, as seen from a distance, no ice of any kind was visible. We finally reached the Biafo by going up a small valley and climbing a steep bank covered with loose stones and rocks. At this point we could not see the actual snout, which was away to the

right, but we heard a constant roar of water escaping from under the ice, which extended over the valley and was some hundreds of feet deep. The surface, covered with detritus, was broken up into a tortuous collection of ridges, depressions, caves, and small running streams, and in places the ice was exposed.

Frequently we made wide detours to avoid these large irregularities on the surface, but the going was difficult. Half-way across we met a party of Baltis, returning from having taken their flocks and herds to the grazing up in the summer pastures. After an hour and a half we reached the other side, and a few hundred yards brought us to Korophon, our camping ground, marked by a large stone on a small plateau between the Biafo glacier and the Dumordo River.

My porters arrived nearly two hours later, having done only ten miles that day ; as it was early in the afternoon, I tried to persuade them to go on to Dumordo, but without success. They explained that it was impossible, as there would be no place for them to shelter until they reached Tsok, which was too far off. There seemed a possibility of all hands deserting and returning to Askole, so I thought it wiser not to press the matter and decided to camp there. Not wishing to waste time, I took the head porter with me and proceeded to reconnoitre the snout and foot of the glacier. There was considerable discontent amongst the men and I fully expected on my return to find that some of them had gone back to Askole.

The Biafo glacier, one of the largest in the Himalayas, is about thirty miles long and runs from the Hispar Pass, 17,475 feet in a south-easterly direction, to the valley of the Braldoh River. The Geological Survey of India made a preliminary survey of glaciers in the Kumaon, Lahul,



DETRITUS ON SURFACE OF BIAFO GLACIER



BALTI PORTERS WITH KHILTA OR CONE-SHAPED BASKET ON RIGHT

and Kashmir regions, as reported in the 1907 Records of the Geological Survey of India. Unfortunately, the area covered did not include either the Biafo or the Baltoro glaciers, so that we are dependent on previous travellers for their records. The reports of the former cover a period of over sixty years, and it will be of interest to recall these notes before giving the result of my own observations.

The first European to leave any record of the Biafo glacier would appear to be Godwin-Austen, in 1861, who reported that the glacier was wedged against the opposite bank or left flank of the Braldoh valley. The Braldoh River, formed by the emissary streams of the Baltoro and Punmah glaciers, was entirely covered and flowed under the Biafo glacier through a tunnel. Sir Martin Conway in 1892 took observations on July 31st and September 5th, which enable us to determine the average daily movement of the glacier between these dates. These observations clearly show that the glacier had retreated since 1861 and was in active process of doing so. The Braldoh River in 1892 flowed in open daylight, the foot of the Biafo being about a quarter of a mile short of its old position in 1861. It is reasonable to infer that in 1892 the glacier must have been shallower than in 1922, when I saw it, as he records that during the month of August, the extremity receded a further quarter of a mile, leaving uncovered a wide moraine of earth and vegetation.

By 1899, according to the Workmans on the occasion of their first visit, the Biafo glacier had so shrunk that it barely reached the outlet into the Braldoh valley at all. During the next three years this shrinkage in volume must have been arrested and an

increase set in ; for Guillardmod in 1902 reported that the glacier had again advanced as far as the right bank of the Braldoh River, driving before it a low frontal moraine. He further states that the ice was six hundred feet thick and that the Braldoh River was being squeezed into a narrow bed. Six years later, the Workmans, on their second visit in 1908, found it practically in the same position as in 1899, and it must therefore have shrunk again. In 1909, the Abruzzi expedition recorded that the steep front of the glacier showed no trace of frontal moraine, and that the river was flowing through a narrow gap between the valley wall and the steep front of the glacier ; this obviously indicates an increase in volume between 1908 and 1909.

In 1922 I made as complete a reconnaissance as possible under the circumstances. Proceeding directly from the rock at Korophon to the river's edge, I found the glacier abutting thereon, but of no great height. I climbed on to it and made my way in a westerly direction across it, keeping parallel to the river. It was impracticable to pass between the glacier and the river except in a few odd places where the river did not wash the edge of the glacier. About half-way across I reached two large pools of foaming water, some twenty feet in diameter, adjoining the river ; there was a ring of shallow water except in the actual centre, where it was impossible to judge the depth. From the middle of these pools the water rose in foam some two or three feet, like a fountain, indicating clearly the junction of two streams flowing from the body of the glacier, with the river. These two streams were the same water which I had previously crossed flowing in places on the surface, when I was making my way eastward to Korophon, some distance north of the

river. They had found their way under the surface of the glacier until they joined the river in the manner described; these holes were distinct outlets and a considerable volume of water was issuing from both of them.

When about three-quarters of the way across, I sighted the main snout and decided to make a bee line for it, the ice looking practicable. Up to this time I had been picking my way fairly near to the foot of the glacier, and had met with no difficulty, but my short cut proved a very different proposition. The surface was wholly broken up into hillocks, which were separated by deep depressions of varying shape and size, according to the intensity of the causative pressure. Now and then there would be caves with walls of dark green ice, whose size it was impossible to judge owing to darkness. The hillocks were generally covered with detritus consisting of immense boulders or rocks or sharply broken fragments of rock debris; at times it was so thick as completely to conceal from sight the ice beneath.

It has sometimes incorrectly been claimed that the formation of these hillocks is due to unevenness in the glacier-bed, but the Workmans, amongst others, have shown us that they are caused by pressure of an affluent stream of ice joining the main trunk. Once formed they are carried downward for many miles, not changing their order, and even after some fifteen to twenty miles, they are just as thickly covered as when they were newly formed. In this case particularly, owing to the widening of the Braldoh valley, the irregularities in the glacier-bed, and the pressure due to the entrance of several tributary streams, the hillocks were broken up into a confused mass without order, with deep crevasses here and there.

After climbing with difficulty over the uneven and

rough surface, I found myself on a ridge of ice about one hundred feet high, just above the main snout. At first sight it looked as though ropes would be required, but my porter went ahead and we managed to find a way down with the aid of our alpenstocks. The descent was rather dangerous, owing to loose rocks, and we did the last ten feet or more on our sides and elbows. It is curious to note how rocks have a way of remaining fast on steep icy slopes such as this, without sliding to the bottom, as one would have thought that action of the sun upon the ice would release them. It has been suggested that these rocks have been pushed up from below, but examination of those on the Biafo glacier shows this to be hardly possible. If they had been forced up from below, they should be rounded and polished by friction, but the moraine on all the glaciers I saw was of rough, uneven, and splintered rocks, obviously having undergone no friction whatsoever. They must, therefore, have been deposited on the surface of the glacier and not have been forced up thereto.

The snout or end of the glacier was a large, irregular cavity formed by the glacier on one side and a wall of rock on the other, which was part of the side of the valley. A considerable volume of foaming water dashed out and the inhabitants said that there was an excessive quantity of water that year, which might tend to show that the glacier was advancing. From this point, down to the river, stretched a moraine-like surface, over which I picked my way until the western extremity of the glacier was reached ; I then retraced my steps, past the two pools, to Korophon.

Concerning the rate at which the edge of a glacier may recede or advance from a given position, a good example

is given by Sir Martin Conway ; speaking of the Biafo glacier, he estimates that the edge receded as much as a quarter of a mile between the dates July 31st and September 5th. This works out at an average rate of $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches per hour, which is sufficiently remarkable to call for further inquiry as to whether anything like it has been observed elsewhere, though it is but fair to remember that it is only an estimate.

To sum up, at the date of my visit in 1922, the Biafo glacier was advancing, its end being right up to the Biaho River, and according to the natives, it had been so for two years. They also stated that the glacier was forcing the river to cut into the opposite bank, thereby causing great landslides ; in the event of a landslide on a sufficiently large scale temporarily to block the river, the adjacent villages in the Braldoh valley would be too high to be affected by the resulting flood, but those in the Shigar valley might suffer. I am inclined to the opinion that it is quite possible to ascribe some of the apparent variations in the observations of this glacier to their having been taken from different points. In front of the main outlet of the glacier to the river was a stretch of about three or four hundred yards of the moraine-like surface, and the remainder of the glacier abutted directly on the river.¹

On my return to camp, I was agreeably surprised to find that apparently, the porters were more contented than when I had left. There was a great deal of discussion going on as they sat huddled round their fire, and

¹ The latest report as to the state of the Biafo glacier is to be found in the *Additions and Corrections to Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, &c.*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan., 1925, published under the direction of the Surveyor General of India, and is as follows :—

“Mr. R. O. Egeberg, of Indiana, reports that in 1923 the Biafo stream could be crossed below the snout of the glacier, owing to the retreat of the latter, by two enormous boulders and along the new moraines.”

This brief report does not indicate the extent of the retreat of the glacier ; the actual condition of the stream would depend somewhat on the hour of the day when crossed.

when I passed, they stopped chattering to stare at me. I announced my intention of starting early next day, to which no objection was raised beyond a general one that the way was difficult ; by now I was used to this platitude and countered it by saying that we would go slowly. A sudden wind sprang up, accompanied by fine rain, and I turned in earlier than usual. My tent had been pitched in an exposed place, the canvas flapping freely, and although everything was fastened up as tightly as possible, the wind swept through. The porters still continued talking, but the wind grew stronger, soon drowning their voices and leaving me to my thoughts.

I felt that night, as I lay awake, that civilisation had really been left behind, for we were now in uninhabited country, which alone was a matter of satisfaction to one filled with the spirit of exploration. We had crossed the mighty Biafo glacier and were at length in the icy wilds of the Kara-korams. Though one may have read of the Kara-korams, it is only on venturing into this frozen wilderness that one begins to realise their vast extent. Peaks tower up from an intricate labyrinth of massive mountains, separated from one another by deep valleys, filled with pathless glaciers. They rise in sharp points and are guarded by precipices and slopes, the latter covered with snow and ice throughout the year. Few of these peaks can be scaled owing to the inaccessibility of their bases and their physical conformation.

I could not help recalling some of the famous explorers of all nationalities—British, American, German, Italian, and others—who travelled this way in comparatively recent times. Names to conjure with in Himalayan exploration occurred to me, amongst others the brothers Schlagintweit,

Germans in the service of the East India Company; Godwin-Austen, only recently passed away, whose name is to be found on the maps; Sir Francis Younghusband, still writing of his early travels here; Sir Martin Conway on his way to K2, or Mount Godwin-Austen, that still unconquered peak; the Workmans; and lastly, the Duke of the Abruzzi.

The wind of the night before had dropped, only to be replaced by a steady downpour; it was getting light, but in the valley, dark low-hanging clouds sank slowly instead of lifting. A hot cup of tea was all one could expect for breakfast, as fuel was scarce, and damp at that. The porters refused to start at first, and only about two hours later, when the weather cleared up, and the sun now and then diffidently filtered through the mist, could I persuade them to go on. I had great difficulty in keeping them on the move, and three times they stopped and threatened to return to Askole, but weather favoured us, and that was the deciding factor. Eventually we reached the junction of the Dumordo and Biaho rivers, which spring from the Punmah and Baltoro glaciers respectively. The valley widens here and the rivers, when joining, form a kind of delta which in winter can be forded, whereas in summer travellers must proceed up the Punmah valley and cross by the Dumordo rope-bridge. We had been going in an easterly direction and now turned north, our path leading up the right side of the Punmah valley. Straight ahead of us lay the route to the Baltoro glacier, near which rises K2, the second highest mountain in the world.

We were now treading the only traversable road leading from the south to the Western or New Muztagh Pass; since the abandonment of the pass as a route over the

Kara-koram Range it is used only occasionally by shepherds in the summer. We soon encountered a steep ascent, followed by an extremely dangerous and sharp descent. When the waters of the Dumordo are low it is practicable to walk along the river bank, but owing to the season of the year, we found this impossible—hence this steep ascent. There was no track and the descent was one of the most dangerous bits I had met with in the course of my journey; for about a mile and a half we had to make our way down the side of a cliff, in places vertical, with only the narrowest of ledges for foothold.

I was very apprehensive of danger to the porters with their loads, but I was relieved when I saw the remarkable agility and sure-footedness they displayed. Though I am supposed to have a good head for heights and to be free from vertigo, the assistance of Subhana and others was welcome in tackling some of the particularly bad spots, and I was very glad when the whole party came through in safety. Whatever may be the faults of the Balti carrier he is a fearless rock climber; I remember later, whilst ibex shooting, arriving at the top of a cliff and thinking we should have to come back as there was no way down; but without turning a hair, the porters commenced the precipitous descent.

At about one o'clock we reached a small twig-bridge which here spans the Dumordo at the spot called Ghurra by the natives. There is a small stone shelter-hut used in the summer by the shepherds on their way up to the grazing grounds. Here I met a shepherd from whom, after the usual bargaining, I bought two sheep, one small and one large, for seven and ten rupees, the equivalent of about nine and thirteen shillings respectively. My porters

had apparently decided that they were going to stay here and camp for the night, but I announced that we were going on to Tsok, which according to the map was some eight miles distant. This led to a good deal of protest, and it was only after they had been promised double the arranged rate of pay per stage that they very reluctantly continued on their way. The path to Tsok still lay on the right bank, and in spite of occasional ups and downs, was not, on the whole, bad going. I walked ahead with two of the men, leaving Subhana to urge on the carriers, as I felt that something of the kind would be necessary to ensure their arriving before dark. Near Tsok, when crossing a spur, I had a fine view of the Punmah glacier, and it had the same appearance as the Biafo, being of a dull ochre colour with rocks and stones on the surface.

We arrived about five o'clock, the march having taken considerably longer than had been anticipated. Tsok is about seven miles south of the Punmah glacier, and is the name given by the natives to a small clump of willow trees, an excellent camping ground, with a good supply of fuel and water close at hand. Two hours passed with no sign of the porters, and I climbed on to the spur to see if they were in sight. Far away in the distance was a straggling line of men, and through my field-glasses I could see Subhana bringing up the rear and acting literally as a whipper-in; they were continually halting and it was obvious that there was great discontent among them. I descended to the camp and gave instructions to those with me to light a fire. It was not long before Subhana arrived saying that the porters had, one and all, made up their minds to desert as soon as they reached Tsok. This was a most unpleasant prospect, and with a

view, possibly of mollifying them, I sent him back to tell them that the Sahib was very pleased with them and that next day they should have a complete rest.

On the arrival of the men, about thirty minutes later, it became evident that I was confronted not only with discontent but rank mutiny. They dumped down their loads and started to return to Askole; their leader endeavoured to restrain them, but they turned on him, accusing him of being responsible for their plight. I am bound to say that their suspicions of their leader were fully justified, as he had been heavily bribed. My servants and I went to the assistance of the so-called leader and took part in the scuffle, managing to intercept and chase back some of the porters. I gathered that they were aggrieved at having been made to cover two stages that day.

This was the ostensible reason for their behaviour, but I am confident that from the beginning, they had objected to going up towards the disused pass, and any excuse was good enough for the purpose. Every argument and persuasion was tried, but without effect, and ultimately I played my trump card of offering them, as a present, one of the two sheep I had with me. They naturally wanted the larger one, which I declined to give them. In the end this tempting offer was accepted and they gradually dispersed, going over to the fire, which was by this time well ablaze. The loads were scattered about, and Subhana, with my other servants, collected and stacked them together. The porters sat round the fire talking animatedly in a most threatening manner until about midnight, when sleep overtook them. I felt then that I might turn in with a reasonable certainty of finding them still in the camp next morning. Fortunately

the weather remained fine and did not tend to increase our difficulties.

The sun was shining brightly the following day and the porters had lost their stubborn look during the night ; they were sitting in twos and threes, and smiled good-naturedly as I passed. There was now no immediate danger of desertion, and after handing over the promised sheep, life took on a much brighter and more cheerful aspect. The Baltis, like all other hillmen, believe in the existence of evil spirits, and until they have been appeased, they are afraid to trespass on their domain, so to speak. When we analyse the Balti's way of looking at things we feel that after all he has great cause to think as he does. His experience is that whenever he ventures into unknown regions he suffers discomforts in varying degrees. The intense cold makes him feel miserable, and by going to higher altitudes, he gets mountain-sickness, both of which he attributes to the evil spirits. Further, he has seen his comrades fall into deep crevasses, and others have been killed by avalanches. Explorers would do well to keep these points in mind when travelling in high mountainous regions. Suspicion and the fear of some unknown force are more insuperable than the highest mountain range. In this case it occurred to me that my sheep would be sacrificed to the evil spirits, thereby appeasing their wrath, and incidentally, putting the Balti porters in a good temper.

After this sacrifice, the men's spirits were at their highest, and at this juncture I sent for the head porter and disclosed my proposed plans for the future. My idea was to cross over the New Muztagh Pass, and return by the Old Muztagh Pass, on to the Baltoro glacier. Approaching these passes from the north, the road leads to a

point, Spantok, where it divides in two, one to the eastern and one to the western pass. This was the point at which I hoped, after crossing the western pass, to branch off to the eastern and thus descend on to the Baltoro glacier. I promised a considerable sum of money to the head porter if he could only persuade the men to go on, in any case, some distance farther. He told a long story of the difficulties he had had to contend with, all of which I knew and fully appreciated. In about half an hour he returned, in a very pessimistic mood, from his consultation with the men, and the most that he would say was that I should be very lucky if they went any farther than the foot of the Punmah glacier. This was not very encouraging, but I decided to move on the next day, if possible, as far as the foot of the above-mentioned glacier and then see what could be done.

Subhana had spent some of his time making grass shoes, as we intended going ibex shooting in the afternoon; these shoes are more or less similar to the French *espadrilles* or Spanish *alpagos*, and the natives display great skill in making them. They are worn over a felt or padded sock, or sometimes a leather sock, the latter being designed so that the strings of the grass shoe fit between the big toe and the next; this arrangement keeps the shoe steady. They are invaluable to sportsmen, giving a sure footing on rocky ground or slippery grass slopes, where ordinary nailed boots would not grip at all. At first they are uncomfortable, but after becoming accustomed to them, one will not wish for anything else. These shoes do not last long, and I have worn out as many as three pairs a day; this was going over very rough ground, but ordinarily one pair will last a day.

Immediately after lunch, Subhana, a porter, and

myself set off up a steep *nala*, just behind our camp, to a place where ibex were known to graze. We spent the whole time climbing up and down steep ravines without success, not even so much as sighting an animal. Towards sunset, on our way back, it started to rain, and the rocks became very slippery. I was climbing down over the face of an overhanging ledge, followed by Subhana, who, usually so sure-footed, on this occasion slipped and knocked me over. I grabbed at him, but missed and fell heavily to the ground, sliding, after a four feet drop, into a mountain torrent. My rifle was slung over my shoulder, but as I fell, it became loose and followed me downhill, the butt end landing on my head with some little force.

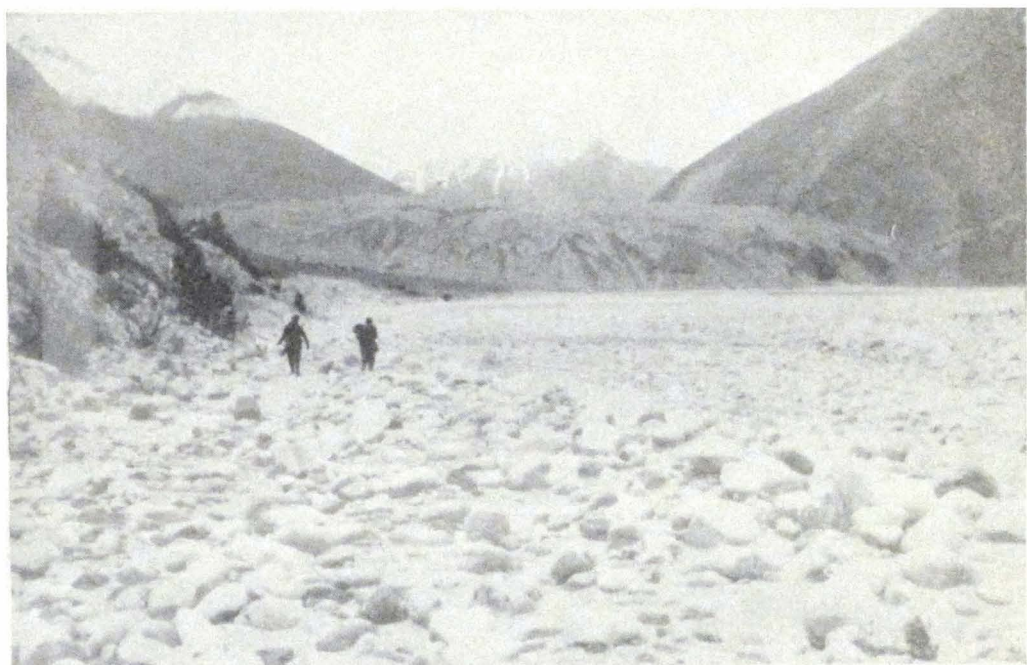
Although this, together with the fall, had left me half dazed, the icy water straight from a glacier, not to mention the moving boulders, rapidly brought me to my senses again. I half raised myself and saved the rifle, by which time Subhana had come to my assistance and was hauling me out of the torrent. My arms and knees were badly grazed, but beyond this and a rather severe shaking up, I had sustained no injuries. It might have been a nasty accident, if nothing worse, but as it happened the damage, except as above, was limited to the loss of a haversack containing a few rounds of ammunition. I was glad to get back to camp, where I could change my wet clothes and turn in at once. The porters were still in good spirits and fully content with the feast that had been provided for them.

To my relief, nothing worse than stiffness reminded me of my fall of the day before, but I thought it best to take things easy. A quiet day was spent in camp, and as the weather turned out fine, we all benefited by the

rest. The next morning the sky was very overcast, though it was not raining, and to take advantage of this, we started off as soon as possible, the porters showing no signs of resentment. Our path still lay on the right bank of the Dumordo, and it was easy going until we reached a wide mountain torrent that had to be forded.

After several narrow escapes of porters, hampered by their loads, being swept off their feet, we all got across without damage except one man, who sustained a rather badly cut leg. The last mile to the foot of the Punmah glacier was quite level over a rocky surface. Walking up towards it one was overwhelmed by the scene ; a huge wall of ice, some hundred and fifty feet in height, confronted us, filling the valley, and behind this enormous frozen mass, white peaks towered. The hills on either side boasted of a few stunted shrubs which seemed to have struggled into life in a vain effort to hide some of the rocky barrenness.

It was most unfortunate that no sooner had we arrived at the foot of the Punmah glacier than rain fell, followed by sleet. Being only noon I had made up my mind, in any event, to move a few miles farther up the glacier, possibly to the junction of the Punmah and Dumulter glaciers. Then began once more the usual wranglings, delays, and threats on my part. It is true that where we then were the porters would have had for shelter that night a small stone hut, and they pointed out that there would be nothing of the kind farther on. All the same, I judged it best to proceed, and promised to lend them some bivouac sheets and the inner lining of my tent as protection during the coming night ; later, I may say, they fought as to who should have them. We started once



VIEW APPROACHING THE FRONT OF PUNMAH GLACIER



HEAVILY LADEN PORTERS FORDING A MOUNTAIN TORRENT

more, and after fording another torrent, climbed on to the glacier over which we had to travel some two miles, due to considerable detours in avoiding crevasses and irregularities. Soon we were able to march along the side of the hill, near the edge of the glacier, making better progress in spite of continuous rain and the ground being very slippery.

The weather cleared up towards evening, and it was not till late that the Dumulter glacier was reached, the journey having taken much longer than we expected. We found, just below the junction of the two glaciers, an excellent camping ground, a small level patch of sand with grassy slopes above us. The head porter came to me and said that four porters were going back to Askole to replenish their supply of food. I could not stop them, and I correctly anticipated that they would not come back. Before turning in for the night, I told Subhana that it was my intention the next day to move up the glacier. I regret to say that these instructions, when passed on, were not received in the way that I could have wished, as I gathered that on no account would the men go any farther. There was nothing to be done but let them sleep on it, and the next day hope for fine weather, which might prove the deciding factor.

CHAPTER VI

		MARCH TABLE	Miles	
July 21st	..	Dumalter glacier to Shushing ..	4	
„ 22nd	..	Shushing	-	Ibex hunting
„ 23rd	..	Shushing	-	Explored glaciers
„ 24th	..	Shushing to point opposite Skeen- mung and back	11	
„ 25th	..	Shushing to Punmah glacier ..	8	
„ 26th	..	Punmah glacier to Korophon ..	25	
„ 27th	..	Korophon to Askole	10	
			—	
			58	
Total distance from Srinagar, 391 miles				

THE NEW MUZTAGH PASS

THERE is nothing more depressing than to wake up and hear the angry patter of rain on one's tent or bivouac sheets, and so it was with relief that I noticed a ray of sunshine filtering through the half-closed flap on to the ground. I could hear the porters talking in cheerful and contented tones, which I took to be a good omen. It was a fine day, and our small camping-ground was strewn with blankets and clothes, every minute of sunshine being utilised to dry our sodden effects. There was an air of quietness in the camp, so after fortifying myself with a modest breakfast, I sent for the leader of the porters ; I thought it best to come straight to the point, and greeted him with the word, " Muztagh." He replied by shaking his head, saying the men had refused to go any farther, and they must have a day's rest—possibly to-morrow they might go on ; but I was afraid they were merely temporising, so decided to accede to their request and spend the day there. It may be

remembered that four porters had left for Askole the day before ; suddenly two of these reappeared, with the story that they had found it impossible to cross the mountain torrent, and were still waiting for it to subside. They asked for two more porters to help them ! This story seemed to me to be rather thin, and in fact, merely bluff. It looked as if my only chance of keeping any of these men was to give way. I felt, however, that I should probably never see them again, and later found my conjecture correct. As the porters would not move on that day, I had to content myself with remaining where I was, and so decided to reconnoitre the Dumulter glacier.

This glacier is a tributary of the Punmah, running in a westerly direction, curving to the right up to a gap in a small ridge. The surface was very uneven, and there were distinct signs of movement, accompanied by continual cracking sounds. I followed it up for some two miles without seeing any signs of its waters on the surface. I came to the conclusion that the streams joined, beneath the surface, at a point three hundred yards north-east from our camping-ground, as sounds of rushing water could be heard, which would tend to indicate their junction there. At the actual junction of the two glaciers the ice was considerably displaced, due to the affluent glacier causing additional pressure on the main glacier.

I was writing up my diary when Subhana came and told me that the leader and three other porters were willing to go higher up the glacier next day. No mention was made of how far, and I asked no questions. This certainly looked hopeful, and if I could only move on another ten miles I might be able to make the ascent of the New Muztagh Pass from that point. The more I

thought of it, the wiser it appeared to make the most of this seemingly amiable disposition on the part of the men, and I therefore decided to leave camp at the very earliest opportunity. It was now about three o'clock, so the head porter was sent for, and promised *backsheesh* if the carriers would start off in an hour's time. There was an argument for a while, during which he tried to assert his authority, and eventually three consented to accompany him. The minimum amount of kit would, under the circumstances, have to be taken; besides food for ten days and as much fuel as possible, I only took two blankets, and a rifle and gun for use in meeting any chance game. I left my personal servant, who also acted as cook, in charge of the main camp and baggage, with instructions to remain there until he received further orders.

In an hour's time my party, consisting of Subhana, Lala, four porters, and myself, was ready to move off. It was still early in the afternoon, and there was every prospect of advancing some miles farther up the Punmah glacier. Our path led over the ice for about two miles, after which we were able to follow the side of the hill bordering it. We reached a spot called Shushing about eight o'clock, and halted there for the night. It was convenient for the purpose, there being the remains of a rough stone shelter, dating, presumably, from the time when the New Muztagh Pass was in use. In this matter, however, I was more or less the victim of circumstances, for on arrival the head porter told me that the men must stop to cook their food, and would go no farther that night. I thought it best to let them have a rest the next day, and though primarily not on a shooting expedition, I decided to go after ibex again.

The ibex which is found in the higher Himalayas is

exceedingly wary, and generally expects danger from below ; their habit is to come down from quite inaccessible heights at dawn and about sunset in search of food, and it is during these periods one has the best chance of a shot at them. There can be no doubt that this part of the Western Himalayas, being so rarely visited, is good ground for ibex, and very fine specimens are to be obtained. The drawbacks to shooting here are, firstly, the long distance from Srinagar—nearly four hundred miles. Secondly, the country is on such a large scale, the valleys being so extensive, that the animals are able to get away, whereas in other parts of the Himalayas the valleys are more confined, making it easier to stalk. With no desire to fix the best time to shoot here, I would recommend anyone to come earlier in the year, say in May, when the snow-line is still very low as compared with July, the snow keeping the ibex well down.

Daylight slowly gave place to twilight, and as this icy valley grew darker, the feeling of loneliness and solitude became almost oppressive. The light of day alone gave life to our surroundings ; as it gradually died away, I had an uncanny feeling of being estranged from the world, uncared for, unprotected, and at the mercy of this wilderness. Before I turned in, I climbed down on the glacier and washed in a clear pool of water, just on the point of freezing. The porters were huddling close to one another, and Subhana was levelling out the ground, on which I was going to sleep. As I came back he smiled and pointed to the shelter of the small rock. I wrapped myself up, and as is not unusual on like occasions, it came on to rain, followed by sleet, and this continued on and off through the night, to our great discomfort.

The next morning found us all very wet, and I had

no difficulty in getting up for the necessary early start after ibex. Even Subhana, who was always cheerful on such occasions, complained of stiffness and fever. As previously mentioned, my cook had been left in charge of the main camp at the Dumulter glacier, the reason being that he was the only one I could trust for that duty. His assistant, who was with me, was quite keen on his job, but unfortunately, his experience was not altogether equal to the situation. To appreciate this one must recall that we were on a hillside, at three o'clock in the morning, sheltered a little from the wind by a rock, but pitch dark, with rain falling. It is remarkable that there was any breakfast at all, but it is a fact that I commenced with porridge, followed by fried eggs; I have eaten better porridge, and should have preferred the fried eggs entirely free from bits of charred fuel and other foreign matter. Perhaps the greatest success was the beverage, which had the supreme merit of being hot, was described as tea, and by the addition of condensed milk, became quite drinkable. Not being certain about the flavour, out of curiosity I asked to be shown out of what it was made, and discovered that I had been drinking Messrs. X's Special Cocoa, "requiring only hot water in the making, no sugar or milk need be added; ideal for sportsmen."

It was still quite dark when I started off, and after an ascent of some 2,000 feet, we reached a small, grassy patch, the sun, soon rising, revealing snow-capped peaks everywhere. I longed to stay a while to admire the view, but was hurried on by the persistent Subhana. Suddenly, about a thousand yards away, we sighted through my field-glasses, three ibex grazing. Unfortunately the wind was very changeable at the time, but after a brief

consultation as to the best way to get within shooting-range, we went on, only to find, after an hour's climbing, that they had disappeared. Those who have experienced similar incidents in the Himalayas will appreciate the difficulty of covering ground and climbing in search of a wary animal. The sun was up now, and any shooting was out of the question till the cool of the evening. We therefore lay down on a grassy slope, and in spite of no protection from the sun's rays, slept to make up for our early start.

Towards three o'clock, looking through my glasses I saw what was to me a most astonishing sight, for nearly a mile away, and a little below us, a herd of ibex in single file was passing. I counted nineteen in all, those bringing up the rear being smaller and not full grown, whilst the leaders, judging by the size of their horns, were certainly males. I was so impressed by the number of these animals that I counted them again, as also did Subhana, whom I had aroused from slumber. Two very steep *nalas* separated us from the herd, and we started off at once, but the ibex were soon lost to view, disappearing behind a spur. Then ensued a very difficult two and a half hours' stalk over steep slopes covered with loose rocks and crumbling stones.

In my excitement all sense of danger and fatigue left me; we finally reached the spot where I thought they must be, but found they had moved off elsewhere. After fully half an hour, scanning the hillsides in all directions, we eventually saw them grazing, partially concealed in a hollow. Again we set off, and at last got within 400 yards, it being impossible to get any nearer without disturbing the herd. This was my first near view of ibex outside a museum, and very striking they looked, with their scimitar-shaped horns, diverging and curving backwards.

In spite of the unfavourable conditions, it was a case of now or never for a shot, and perched on a most uncomfortable rock, firing straight into the sun and downhill, I aimed at the biggest head. I missed, and in a second they were all on the run, but I had just time for another shot and another miss before they disappeared.

It had been a tiring day, and I was glad to get back to camp about seven o'clock. I was taking off my grass shoes and dressing with iodine several cuts I had sustained when the head porter came to speak to me. I had experienced very severe disappointments in connexion with the ibex, but I was soon to learn that they were nothing in comparison with what was to follow. The head porter informed me that the men would not go beyond the point at which we then were. An annoying scene ensued, and I was eventually defeated, as nothing that I could say by way of appeal or promise or even threat would alter their decision. At first they wished to return to Askole at once, but with the prospects of more *backsheesh* they agreed to stay.

There was nothing further to be said, so I turned in, as it soon became too dark to read. In the middle of the night I awoke under a glorious star-lit sky. There was not a sound save that of an occasional fall of a rock and the heavy breathing of the porters near by. After a while I dozed off again, but was soon awakened by Subhana. Stars began to fade gradually, and a glimmer of dawn painted the already greyish-blue sky; a heavy mist hanging over white peaks slowly lifted, and with the light, the valley seemed to return to life once more.

There was no change in the attitude of the men, who were just as stubborn as ever, so after a hurried and indifferent breakfast, I got under way with the head porter,

Subhana, having fever, being unable to accompany me. We followed up the western side of the Punmah glacier and over a small ravine with a sandy bottom, where I noticed quite clear, fresh footprints of a red bear. Later we reached the Chongulter glacier, a large tributary of the Punmah glacier, where we halted and turned back.

On my return, instead of coming the same way, I ascended a very steep hillside, and made my way along the crest of the ridge until I came to the head of the ravine where I had noticed the footprints. We were a little above the snow-line, and as I expected, we found the same traces of the red bear. We spent an hour or so looking for further marks of him, but without success. This animal varies in colour from pale to dark brown, and has a long, thick, soft fur. Its chief food is roots, grass, and herbs, but it will eat the flesh of other animals it has killed, and has been known to feed on carrion. Though having a good sense of smell, its sight and hearing are dull, and it is shy and harmless, rarely attacking even when wounded—very different from the black bear who cannot be trifled with on such occasions.

On my return to camp I was greeted with the news that one porter had deserted and had gone back to Askole. The other two were on the point of doing so, but Subhana told them I was going to Skeenmung the next day and they must wait till I returned; he threatened them, but what he said I do not know; the fact remains that they agreed to stay.

July 24th might have been a day of triumph for me, instead, it only brought failure. It was bright and sunny as I started off with the same porter as the day before, heading straight for Skeenmung, six miles away. The going was difficult and most tiring to the feet, shod as I was with grass shoes; ordinary boots were quite

impossible to use, giving no grip at all on the surface of the ice, in spite of the stones. As we halted for lunch about midday I saw a small brown fox, some twenty-five yards away from me ; he had not seen us, and when I clapped my hands he made off quietly. We soon arrived opposite Skeenmung, where we stopped ; on our left was the Chaktoi Gans glacier, and on our right lay the Chiragh Saldi glacier, the latter leading to the New Muztagh Pass distant only some ten miles from here.

I sat down in this great ice arena, with snowy peaks towering above us, to rest awhile and reflect on my situation. Mountains and passes always exercise the human imagination and excite curiosity, and one of the most impressive and overwhelming sights in nature is a snowy peak rising like some mighty white spire above the rest. As I contemplated these stupendous, majestic heights, I felt heartsick and weary in spirit at the balking of my ambition and the failure of my endeavour, on the eve of its accomplishment.

With a last look in the direction of the New Muztagh Pass I retraced my steps campwards. Disappointed, tired, and footsore, the journey over the rough surface seemed endless, and I fell to wondering how I had come to make such a trip, only to be baffled in the long run. It was a serious blow and disappointment for me to abandon the principal object of my journey after having walked some three hundred and fifty miles, and getting so near, as I thought, to attainment. I have many times since asked myself why I did not make a greater effort at the time, or even go on alone. These questions, after a calm review of the circumstances, have always been answered in the only way possible—I could not have gone alone. At the first moment of failure I had wished to go

on by myself, but Subhana tactfully pointed out the foolhardiness of such an attempt. Though defeated, like others, by the forces of nature—human and otherwise—I am confident that, with the experience gained on this attempt, should another opportunity occur—and I hope it may—with luck I shall be able to cross the unexplored New Muztagh Pass.

Rudolf Schlagintweit in 1856 was the first European who tried to cross the New Muztagh Pass, and he, like Godwin-Austen, was driven back by clouds. Godwin-Austen gives an excellent account of his attempt in 1861, which I quote, as it will give the reader some idea of the many difficulties to be overcome before this pass is conquered.

“ The last camping-place on the Muztagh glacier is at a spot called Chiring, which we reached about 3 p.m. ; the moraine here dwindles to a few scattered blocks on the surface of the ice. It took some time to collect enough of these to form a flooring. This serves to keep off the cold ; and as driving in pegs was impossible, they served to tie the ropes to. The smallest patch of rock on which to put a tent would have been welcome, but such was not to be found. The mountains rose from the glacier in sheer cliffs. It was a case of a night on the ice, and no help for it. After sundown the cold became very severe. The coolies were not able to sleep the whole night through for, as our fuel had to be carried with us, no fires could be afforded except for cooking.

“ We all went to rest early, and did not turn out till the sun showed over the immense cliffs above us, which was not till about nine o'clock. Leaving camp, and taking with me eight men with ropes and other appliances, we started up the glacier, which is here about a mile and a quarter broad, with a slope of about eight degrees. For

the first three miles the crevasses were broad and deep in places only, and we could avoid them by making detours. They soon became more numerous, and were ugly things to look into, much more so to cross—going down into darkness, between walls garnished with magnificent green icicles from six to twenty feet long, and of proportionate thickness, looking like rows of great teeth ready to devour one. I tried with our ropes to sound the depths of some of these fissures, but all of them tied together only made up 162 feet, which was not long enough.

“ The snow lay up to the edges of the crevasses, and travelling became so insecure that we had to take to the ropes, and so, like a long chain of criminals, we wound our way along. In this mode we moved much faster, each man taking his run and clearing even broader crevasses, if they crossed the direction we were travelling in. The snow was about one and a half feet deep, and hard when we started, but as the day advanced it became soft, and walking more laborious ; besides this, it would every now and then break and let us down to the hard ice below.

“ The larger crevasses revealed themselves, but the surface snow hid all the smaller ones, and hence a feeling of insecurity. I kept some coolies ahead, feeling the way by probing the snow with the long poles we had brought with us ; so our progress was provokingly slow. Under the pass the breadth of this ice-basin is two miles, with an undulating surface ; small glaciers bring down their tributaries to it out of every ravine, and the loud reports of the snow falling from the cliffs around were heard unceasingly. In spite of difficulties, we had got on favourably till within a mile of the pass, when the clouds, which had been gathering fast, began to look so threatening that I thought it best to take the opinions of the men

with me ; and guided by their experience, I gave up the idea of proceeding further. By the time the fire was lighted and the boiling-point ascertained (which gave 182.8, air 42, corresponding to 17,301 feet), and other observations taken, all the peaks around had become quite obscured. This pass was distant about 500 feet above our turning-point ; we had to beat a hasty retreat down towards Chiring, the snow falling fast. The glacier was making most disagreeable noises—crunching, splitting, and groaning to an awful extent—caused by the vast body of ice, two miles across, here having to force itself through a channel only a quarter of a mile broad, and with an increased slope.

“ The only other European who had tried the Muztagh Pass was M. Schlagintweit, who was equally unsuccessful, clouds having driven him back, as in my case. I had gone as far as was necessary towards the parting ridge ; still, I should have liked to have crossed the pass ; but want of time, there still being much work to be done, prevented another attempt. My great object had been to get a march along the glacier and determine the ridges on the northern side. This is quite feasible, and with a small guard the journey might be carried into the Yarkand country for a considerable distance, as from all the accounts I heard of the tribes, their numbers cannot be great, nor their matchlocks much to be dreaded. It was in a disappointed mood that I left Chiring for Punmah. We passed the night at our former camping-place, Skeenmung, and the next day made a short march to Shingchukfi. As most of those who had gone up the Muztagh glacier had sore eyes afterwards, it was advisable to keep quiet for a day.”

Sir Francis Younghusband, in his attempt in 1887,

says: " But on the third day from Askole, opposite a camping-ground called Skeenmung, we were brought to a standstill. At this point the glacier flowing down from the New Muztagh Pass joins the Punmah glacier, and we were completely ' cornered ' between the two glaciers. To reach the pass we should have had to cross the glacier flowing down from it ; but this we found impossible to do, for just at this point there had evidently been an immense ice-slip on the glacier, and gigantic blocks of ice were tumbled about on top of one another in a way which made it perfectly impossible to get any footing at all on the glacier. So we turned round and faced for Askole once more."

I made inquiries from my porters, and later from the inhabitants of Askole, as to when the pass was last crossed. They were all very vague on the subject, and I gathered that it was not in their lifetime. There is reason, however, to believe that it is now used occasionally, under favourable ice conditions, by small parties of local natives who are nevertheless unwilling to conduct Europeans across or to give any information concerning it. Formerly, when the natural trade routes were closed to traffic through war, internal troubles, or raids by gangs of robbers, the New Muztagh became an emergency pass. Godwin-Austen in 1861 met two natives who had just crossed it, and this is the last definite record of its passage that I have been able to find.

It may be remembered that I had hopes, in undertaking this journey, of being the first European to cross this pass from south to north. It is true that I had failed in this respect, after getting within about ten miles of the summit, owing to causes which I could not altogether have foreseen. I was now able to appreciate that such

an undertaking required more experience and knowledge of local conditions than was possessed by one such as myself, coming into the country for the first time. The saying that there is nothing like experience for teaching is particularly true of Himalayan travel ; it is not sufficient to read books by former travellers on the subject, though one may profit by the experience of others. If I were to tackle the New Muztagh again I should try a different method, which I have outlined in a later chapter.

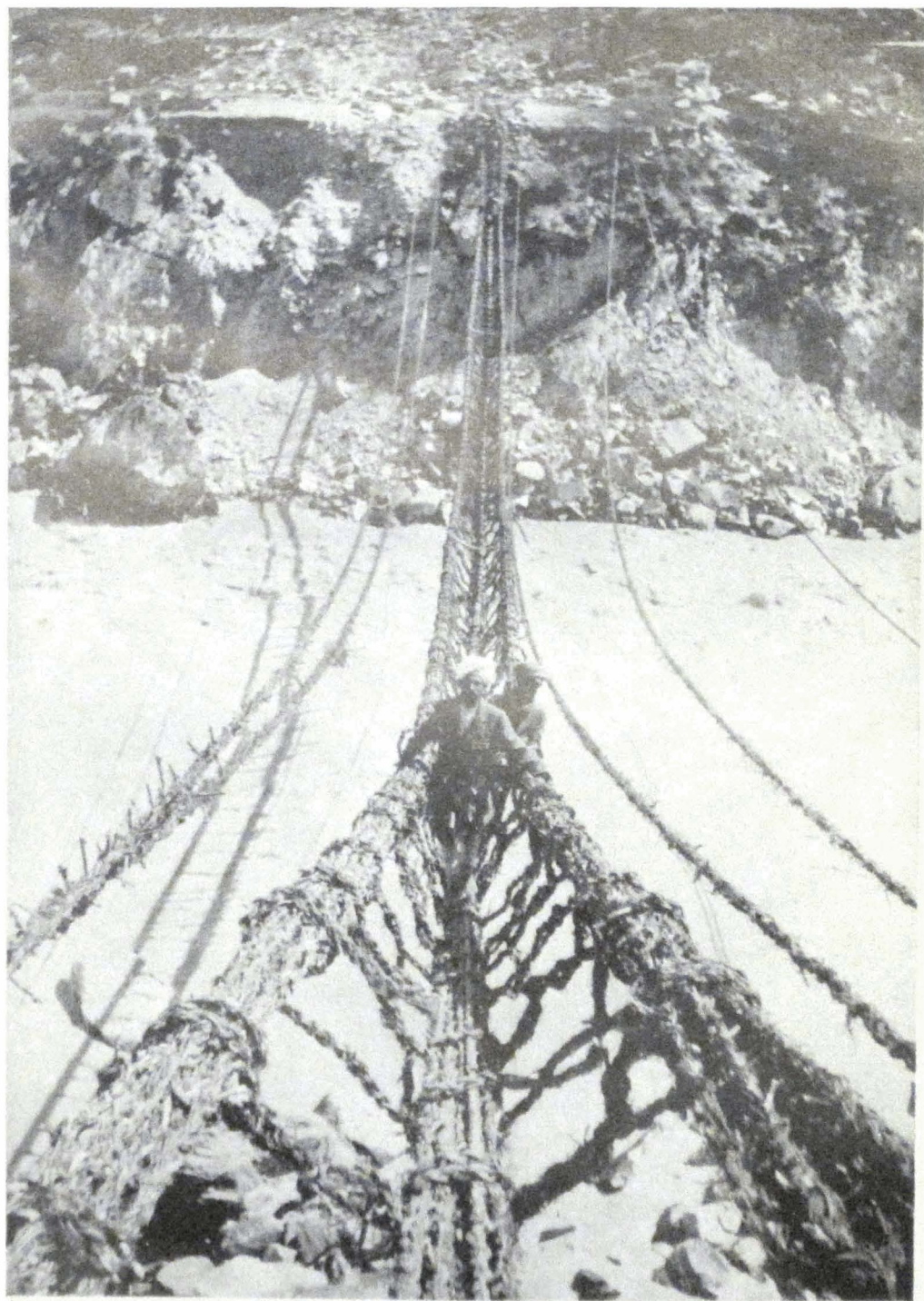
However annoying to have plans upset by the behaviour of one's porters, it is only fair to consider their point of view. The idea of exploration or going somewhere with no ostensible object cannot appeal to them, for they are superstitious about mountains, and fully conscious of the dangers. It is therefore not surprising if they are unwilling to travel through little-used parts. The Balti is a very good porter, and can be relied upon in spite of occasional failures. General Bruce has put the case for the native very fairly, and points out that experience and understanding are necessary to get the best out of them. But when all is said for them, the fact remains that it is difficult to get them to do anything that they have not done before. It is quite certain that my porters had never before been asked to go over the New Muztagh Pass. Some writers have said that the Balti has an aversion to ice, but I found that this was only to the ice that they were unacquainted with.

I reached Shushing worn out, and was told that the porters wanted to start back at once for Askole. Too tired to walk another step, I managed to persuade them to spend the night here. The following day we marched to the Dumulter glacier, where my main camp was established, and here I found that some more men had

deserted that morning. According to the leader, all of them were returning to Askole at once, to which I now raised no objection, so we packed up, and it was agreed that we should camp at the foot of the Punmah glacier, only four miles onwards. This suited me very well, as I was able to try my luck again for ibex on the way, but it proved another fruitless attempt. My camp was near the snout of the glacier in a so-called sheltered spot, and I was glad once again to be sleeping in a tent.

The next day we were getting ready the loads before it was light. I was short of porters, as those who had left, nominally to fetch food, had not returned, as I fully expected. But by rearranging the loads, we were soon under way, and being downhill, good progress was made. Tsok, the scene of the first attempt of the porters to desert, was reached in good time, and we made a slight halt there. The head porter came to me after a while and informed me that, as it was still early, the men were quite willing to go on as far as Korophon if I wished. There being no point in wasting time, we started off, and pushed on so fast that lunch-time saw most of us at the Dumordo rope-bridge. From this point there is a short cut to the Biafo glacier by way of the Laskahm Pass, and I decided to go that way, leaving the porters to continue the journey by the valley route, by which we had come.

It was not surprising that the porters had no wish to travel my way, for there was a very steep ascent of over two thousand feet ; the path zigzagged up, and the loose earth and rocks made it very tiring. The summit, which I estimated to be about 13,000 feet above sea level, was a small, flat, grassy plateau used during the summer months by the Askoleans as a grazing-ground. There was a delightful breeze, and I sat down and rested



TWIG-BRIDGE OVER BRALDOH RIVER NEAR ASKOLE

for half an hour. The sun was shining, and the view from here was most striking, sharp peaks glistening on all sides, and far away below one could see the Biafo glacier and the large rock called Korophon. I longed for the skill to describe adequately or depict with advantage this splendid scene. Very reluctantly I moved on, commencing the steep descent by a rough winding track, and once in the valley again, half a mile brought us to Korophon. It was then five o'clock, and an hour elapsed before there were any signs of the porters, but all of them were in by seven o'clock. Doubtless due to the idea of a quick return to their homes in Askole, they were all cheerful and most overwhelmingly helpful, all of them wishing to help in pitching my tent. After I turned in, Subhana came and said that one of my servants was very ill, suffering from severe abdominal pains. I got up at once, and diagnosing the case as some form of cramp, administered what appeared to me the most suitable remedy, which relieved him for the time being, and he spent a fairly restful night.

There was no delay in getting under way the next day shortly after dawn. My servant was too unwell to walk, and I detailed two men to look after him, which involved distributing their loads amongst the remaining porters. We were already short-handed, but it was noticeable that there was no grumbling at the increase of loads, and almost a wish to carry them, in strange contrast to the trouble when we had started from Askole. The porters went on ahead, and I stayed behind with the sick man. We had hardly got on to the Biafo glacier when he again became so ill that he had to be carried the whole way across—a very slow process, involving constant stoppages. When we reached the other side, he seemed to be getting worse, and begged to be allowed

to stay where he was. This was clearly not the best thing to be done, and I was determined to get him back at all costs to Askole, where he could be attended to properly, and provided for, as far as possible, with the comforts available. Eventually we arrived about two o'clock, when he was put to bed, and I am glad to say that towards evening he was distinctly better, ultimately recovering.

Our return to Askole was welcomed by the inhabitants, who were decidedly more friendly than when we had left ; the tents were pitched and fires lit by the time I arrived with the sick man. The leader of the porters came to me saying that the men wanted their money, adding that unless I paid them at once they would go no farther. It had been my intention to pay them all off at the next village, but confronted with this form of blackmail, there was nothing to do but give way. I had them lined up and paid off, but at the unanimous cry for *backsheesh* I saw a chance of getting a little of my own back, as the saying is. They had been paid their exact fare, so to speak, and I declined to give them any tip or gratuity before their agreement was carried out, which was to take my baggage to Chongo.

My ultimatum was that no tips would be given unless they were all ready punctually at four o'clock next morning, and took my baggage on as arranged. They seemed surprised at this determined attitude, and I refused to argue with them or discuss the point further. Needless to say that everything required that evening was promptly forthcoming, such as eggs, chickens, and other provisions. Several porters implored me to have mercy on them ; they were told that I was very angry, but that if they were ready the following morning they might be forgiven, and would receive their *backsheesh* as I had promised.

CHAPTER VII

MARCH TABLE

				Miles	
July 28th	..	Askole to Hoh	.. ..	23	Crossed two mud-streams
„ 29th	..	Hoh to Chogo Urdar	.. ..	10	
„ 30th	..	Chogo Urdar	.. ..	—	Bad weather
„ 31st	..	Chogo Urdar	.. ..	—	Bad weather
Aug. 1st	..	Chogo Urdar to Goyungo		20	Crossed Braldoh by twig- bridge below Bianco
„ 2nd	..	Goyungo to Maricha	.. ..	14	
„ 3rd	..	Maricha to Shigar	.. ..	25	
„ 4th	..	Shigar	.. ..	—
„ 5th	..	Shigar to Skardu	.. ..	16	Travelled by skin-raft
„ 6th	..	Skardu	.. ..	—
„ 7th	..	Skardu to Gol	.. ..	21	

—
129

Total distance from Srinagar, 520 miles

THE BRALDOH VALLEY

I HAD reached Askole a few days earlier than had been my intention, owing to my plans for crossing the New Muztagh Pass having been frustrated by the desertion of the porters and their unwillingness to proceed. I decided, therefore, to utilise the time by exploring the Hoh glacier while on my way back to Skardu. Owing to the rough country ahead, and to reduce transport difficulties to the minimum, I arranged to take with me only bedding and a small bivouac tent, together with enough food for ten days for myself, Subhana, and one Kashmiri porter who had acted as cook at Skeenmung. The remainder of the baggage I was placing in charge of my personal servant with instructions to head for Shigar and wait there till I arrived. It would have been impossible to have made good progress if all the baggage had been taken, as the way for the next twenty

miles along the right bank of the Braldoh was pathless ; as is well known, it is a bad principle to be separated from one's kit, but in this case there was no alternative.

The following morning—July 28th—the porters were loaded up and ready to start at four o'clock, some of them having arrived at half-past three. All the various village officials, to the number of ten, were there to see us off, each of them claiming to have done something and demanding tips, which, I may say were not lavishly dealt out. There were claimants in respect of supplies of chicken, firewood, and even for the porters, which I had taken with me and brought back safely from my attempt to cross the New Muztagh Pass. Incidentally I had procured, perhaps somewhat forcibly, some of these porters myself, and the greater part of the firewood and chickens were collected by my servants without any assistance, rather, one might say, with hindrance.

The head *trampa* asked for a testimonial to say that he had helped me in every possible way, adding that all *bara sahibs* who had visited Askole hitherto had given him good ones, mentioning the Duke of the Abruzzi amongst others. At the risk of not being thought a *bara sahib*, which did not worry me very much, I declined, in view of the trouble I had met with. This appeared to cause him much concern, as he said that if the *naib-tehsildar* of Skardu heard about it, he, the *trampa*, would lose his job. It is a fact that the Kashmir State officials have a strong hold over their subordinates and use any excuse for discharging them, though generally money or grain are extorted in lieu of this.

We all left Askole together as it was not till the next stage, Chongo, that my party would be divided into two ; in half an hour we were clear of the village, and

thankful to see the last of it. We passed through Surongo and Targnol, the path being level and crossing several streams which irrigate these villages. Just outside Chongo, in a basin about forty feet in diameter, lying on top of a conically shaped mound about two hundred feet high, there was a hot spring giving off an obnoxious odour. The water, of a beautiful greenish colour, was about three feet deep in the centre, with bubbles of gas or vapour escaping from the surface in three distinct groups ; on the edge there were greenish weeds, amongst which were filaments, covered with calcite, which Guillarmod in 1902 discovered to be human hairs. Filippi, however, remarks that it is most improbable that these hairs are human or the result of natives bathing there ; I saw a few washing there and doctors tell me that the effect of the sulphur water would have a tendency to cause the hair to fall out.

We soon reached Chongo, after crossing a torrent flowing in a steep gorge ; the village, though small, had a more prosperous look than Askole and the inhabitants had a stronger and better-fed appearance. I at once ordered the *trampa* to collect some new porters, which he proceeded to do without raising any objections. In the meantime the Askole porters were lined up and paid off ; they all left smiling and pleased with the tip each had received. There was delay in getting the new men together, and while this was being done, I visited an old cemetery which was most interesting and different from anything seen before. The graves, mostly those of children, were marked with wooden frames and the sides were fenced in with small sticks stuck in the ground ; some of the tombs of adults had larger frames strengthened with mud and stones.

It was ten o'clock before the new porters were loaded up and ready to start. I gave my final instructions to the main baggage party, who were camping at Pakore that night; their path crossed over to the left bank of the Braldoh River by a rope-bridge just below Chongo, whereas mine lay along the right bank. The porters being accustomed to using twig-bridges there was no delay in crossing the *jhula*, and having seen them safely on the other side, I set off with my small party. We numbered seven in all, Subhana, a cook, four porters, and myself, and our destination was Hoh, over twenty miles away, which we did not expect to reach before nightfall. Soon after leaving Chongo we scaled a perpendicular cliff, some hundred feet in height, by means of roughly constructed poplar wood ladders, having a general appearance of instability. They were simply laid or propped up against the face of the cliff and were extremely rickety, with several rungs either missing altogether or very loose; ascending these took some time as each porter with his load had to be helped up separately.

Our path now ran along the side of the hill, gradually ascending, and on the way we forded a swift mountain torrent; we continued to ascend until we were about 2,000 feet above the river, when we halted for a meal. Then came a steep descent, over rocks and stones which continually slipped from under our feet, until we reached the level of the Braldoh River, which at this point was one mass of foam. It was now level going for some distance, but our difficulties began again as we once more ascended the side of the hill, the surface of which was composed of loose sand and small rocks. In addition to the danger of losing one's foothold, we had to beware of rock avalanches which frequently crossed our path, requiring

great caution to avoid them. This lasted for a mile until we came upon a mud-stream, presenting at first sight an obstacle not easily to be overcome.

These *shwas* or mud-streams, half avalanche and half flood, are a characteristic feature of northern Baltistan and some ingenious theories have been advanced as to their origin, and the effects of the large volume of mud brought down by them. Sir Martin Conway has suggested that they have caused the filling up of the valleys with detritus to the depth of hundreds of yards, or even, in some cases, up to the crests, so as to form great tablelands such as those of Tibet and the Pamirs. Be this as it may, there can be little doubt that the clay on the sides of the valleys, saturated with snow water, gradually becomes fluid and flows down the ravines forming these streams.

The one before us was moving in a channel about three or four yards across, with perpendicular banks of soft soil, about ten feet high, and very difficult of approach, as they gave way under any pressure. The mud-stream itself, flowing below, consisted of semi-liquid mud interspersed with boulders and rocks, which were being washed down in mid-stream. It was uncanny to note the resistless way in which the soft-moving mud laid hold of, so to speak, these large rocks and moved them in a much firmer manner than running water, for instance, would have done; in the middle of the stream the rocks moved at quite an appreciable speed, but much slower nearer the banks. At times the pace of the stream would be reduced, due to the mud and rocks being temporarily blocked above; these would accumulate and then burst forth in an alarming manner.

A strong wind was blowing and sand and rock

avalanches were coming down from both banks ; I had never seen a mud-stream before and it wore a very ugly look. I followed Subhana and we gradually managed to slide down the perpendicular bank at a place which had fallen in ; on reaching the bottom we sank in over our knees in the mud and were gradually sinking further. The difficulty was in getting a secure foothold to enable one to jump across the moving boulders and rocks ; Subhana, supported by me, struggled over to the other side where he sank in as badly as before. By means of our alpenstocks I was dragged across, and with trouble, I succeeded in standing upright again, being nearly up to my waist in mud. Our position was exceedingly dangerous, as at any moment an accumulation of rocks and mud might have come down, in which case our chance of safety was small. Subhana remained below while I scaled the other bank, releasing a large amount of loose earth which nearly buried him but made a fairly stable surface for the porters to stand on. Each man then slid down the opposite bank and was pulled across, with his load, by Subhana ; he then climbed to the top of the other bank with my assistance.

It was some little time before we were all over, and I am glad to say, without any mishaps, except that some of the food supply was spoilt by the mud and had to be thrown away. The crossing of this mud-stream was one of the most unpleasant experiences that our party went through, and the Baltis were more concerned than the rest of us. Before starting again, I followed the stream to the point where it flowed into the Braldoh River and found a large fan-shaped delta of dry, caked mud, and rocks over six feet high, with the small stream running through it into the river.

This delta had been formed by the release of some great accumulation above, and the porters said that it dated from the previous year. The opposite bank of the river showed signs of scouring action, due to the inflowing mud-stream, which must have been of considerable volume at times to have thus influenced the course of the Braldoh. Another point of interest to me was what became of the boulders and rocks which were continually flowing into the Braldoh, and I concluded that they must remain at the junction of the Basha and Braldoh rivers, forming shallows, as I found later to be the case.

We continued to pick our way along the lower slope of the hill until we reached a small, open patch of sand on the edge of the river. About fifty feet above us was a warm spring, not of a very high temperature, issuing from a hollow in the mountain side and forming a pool about six feet in diameter. Around it, for five yards, vegetation flourished, in striking contrast to the bare rock, and beside the pool, many varieties of grass and flowers of striking colours were growing, mostly half submerged. The natives assert that these springs become hotter in winter, but I am unable to say whether this is due to them feeling hotter or to any actual increase in temperature.

We soon reached another mud-stream, which being smaller than the previous one, was not so difficult to cross; it was due to a temporary stoppage, about one hundred and fifty yards up, both banks having fallen in. Judging from the accumulation seen it would appear that, when this temporary dam burst, a mass of rocks and mud at least ten feet deep would be released. We were not long in getting over, and shortly afterwards we forded our last torrent; this was difficult, as it was now

late in the day and it had swollen nearly waist-high, being at least twenty feet across. We were lucky not to lose any baggage, for one porter was swept off his feet and fell with his load, which was only saved owing to it being securely fastened to the man.

A little farther on we sighted our first cultivated area since leaving Chongo ; we passed through fields of growing peas, which were most welcome after a scarcity of fresh vegetables, and on our way through the village, Gomboro, we paid the *trampa* for what we had taken. He was so delighted that he sent out several men to pick some more for us, and I was, therefore, rewarded for my honesty. Rain started to fall and the light failed, making it difficult to see our way. Hoh, our destination, on the opposite side, seemed quite near, but we had to follow up the Hoh torrent for some distance before we could cross it. This was done by a very roughly constructed log-bridge without sides or handrails; once over we still had a steep climb to the village by a winding rocky path, and arrived there in the pitch dark and pouring rain.

The villagers were naturally all asleep, and there was great difficulty in rousing anyone who would show us where to camp. Heavy rain still continued, and the village being built on the side of a hill, there were streams running down everywhere. Subhana and I came upon a tumble-down cow-shed, filthily dirty and infested with vermin, and although there were large holes in the roof and it was not more than fifteen feet square, we were all very thankful for the protection it afforded and decided to sleep there. My diary records the night spent as "uncomfortable," heavily underlined, but I still recollect my dinner being cooked. In one corner, shielded from draughts, a candle was flickering as drops of rain fell on

it; in another the Balti porters were kindling a fire. Subhana and I were undoing my bedding and trying to find a place where the rain dripped through only now and then instead of the whole time. The place was soon filled with smoke from the damp wood, which made my eyes water badly, but curiously enough, it did not affect the natives in the slightest degree, presumably owing to their being used to it. We all made a scanty meal of *chupattis* and hot tea, and then lay down to sleep for the night, or await the arrival of dawn and the hope of sunshine.

Subhana and I were up at the first glimmer of light, and looking out, I was glad to think the sun would soon be there to dry our clothes. We went off in search of the *trampa*, and found the villagers only just beginning to start their day's work. Now and then a sleepy-looking Balti would emerge from a dirty hovel and gaze at us. "*Trampa*," we would say to him, and then he would begin shouting for that gentleman, who ultimately appeared on the scene. There was a long delay in getting under way, the porters taking considerable time to collect their rations, enough for several days being required, as we should again be passing through uninhabited country.

It was about seven o'clock when we started off, going up the Hoh *nala* which runs in a northerly direction. Our route lay on the right bank of the Hoh River, here a roaring khaki-coloured torrent, issuing from the Hoh glacier. Now and then we would climb the hillside for several hundred feet and then descend to the river level again. We crossed over a snowdrift covered with black detritus under which the river flows, and after about four miles, Pirna Tapsa, a small grazing

ground is reached. After another hour's marching we arrived, towards noon, at Nanga Tapsa, a small grassy plateau, not far from the foot of the Hoh glacier; here we came upon a party of villagers, with their cattle and flocks of sheep, encamped for the summer grazing. It seemed a good opportunity to get some fresh meat, but we found a curious reluctance to supply us with a sheep, although I offered to pay liberally. It was only by a mixture of persistence and persuasion, with a dash of helping ourselves, that we overcame the difficulty and purchased a sheep. On Subhana's suggestion we arranged without trouble for a regular supply of fresh milk, as we intended camping a little higher up for a few days.

We halted here for a little while, but the weather soon grew threatening and we continued our marching. On our way we passed a great profusion of Alpine flowers, of which I counted some twenty varieties, and after a climb of nearly a thousand feet, we arrived at our camping-place, marked by a large granite boulder about fifty feet high, lying on the edge of the glacier; this place had no name, so I named it Chogo Urdar, which is the Balti for large stone.

There was a small, level patch of ground on which to put up my bivouac tent, and good shelter for the porters was afforded by the rock. It soon began to sleet, and it was with difficulty that we managed to get a cup of tea. We spent a most uncomfortable night, and the following day, being greeted with the same weather, we remained under cover until about noon, when it cleared up. I went on to the main glacier for a little way, but bad weather soon drove me back. One of the most noticeable features about the Hoh glacier was the small

amount of earth and loose rocks on the surface as compared with the Punmah and Biafo glaciers ; the ice was exposed on the surface in most places, and made a fine sight during the brief intervals the sun appeared.

During the afternoon we killed the sheep, and the porters had a royal feast, in which I joined. It was noticeable, by the way, that there was no scarcity of fuel, as had been the case the night before. The next day the weather improved slightly, though little could be seen of the surrounding country. I managed to follow up the main glacier for a mile or so and found the surface, on the whole, level and even. On my way back I went up the Zarn, a tributary glacier, at the head of which the natives say there is a pass over the mountains leading to Dusso. They call it the Dusso La and said that it was very difficult and rarely used by anyone. On one occasion I saw a large herd of ibex through my field-glasses, but too far away to go after them. Incidentally, I found on the edge of the glacier the remains of a fine ibex, the head with a good pair of horns, measuring fifty inches ; it looked as if it had been killed by a snow leopard. That evening I decided to start the return journey to Shigar the following day—August 1st.

We left early, as we wished to reach Goyungo before nightfall ; the actual distance was not far, but we had a *jhula* to cross and our porters had to be changed once. Good progress was made, the path being downhill the whole way, and we reached the twig-bridge over the Braldoh by midday. The small village of Bianco lay just above us, and a man was dispatched to bring some new porters ; they soon arrived, but a discussion arose as to who was to take the baggage across. Each said it was

the other's job, but finally the new porters from Bianco agreed to do so. During this argument, which may have been only to find time for a smoke, I watched with interest the natives' method. A tunnel or tube on the ground was made by pressing the earth over a thin curved stick, round one end of which the earth is moulded into a bowl and the stick then carefully drawn out. The tobacco or substitute is kept alive in the bowl by bits of burning wood, and each smoker in turn lies down, places his hands over the other end of the tunnel, and inhales the smoke through them. Wherever the Balti halts, one of these small tunnels is usually to be found; if not, the first thing he does is to make one.

The *jhula* was in fairly good condition, although not quite as taut as we might have wished. There was a strong breeze blowing, which caused considerable swaying of the bridge and delay in crossing, and it was an hour and a half before we had all reached the other side of the river. Once over it was fairly easy going, our path leading through fields and skirting the village of Foljo, outside which I was met by seven men, who raised their hands to their faces, and in whining voices, asked for money. In reply to my inquiry they told a long story about my personal servant having given them no pay, when they carried my baggage to Shigar. They alleged that he had kept for himself the money I had given him to pay them, and that my other three servants had beaten them, when they asked to be paid. They proceeded to illustrate with sticks how they had been struck, and some of them went so far as to point to what were, to me, invisible bruises and marks on their bodies.

One can understand natives bluffing in the hope of getting more money, and for a moment it looked as

though there might be something in their story. Subhana, whom I had found a trustworthy judge of these people, said at once that it was a "try-on," and later, after questioning my servants in Shigar, I was convinced that the men had been paid at the time and that this tale was quite untrue. I thereupon dismissed them and they followed us some way, until we had to ascend once again perpendicular cliffs by means of poplar wood ladders, which brought us to Goyungo. Here we found a good camping-ground, and the *trampa* a charming old man of a most obliging disposition. The porters, for some reason or other, wanted twice the sum they were really entitled to, which led to very heated argument, and it was only with the aid of the *trampa* that a compromise was reached. The latter did his utmost to make me comfortable, giving me large plates of fruit and some kind of turnips, which, although on the coarse side for eating, made excellent soup.

We had no difficulty the next day in getting fresh porters, who were ready as soon as we had packed up. The *trampa* accompanied me a short distance, and on parting, wished me good luck, at the same time giving me some dried apricots. Of all the head villagers met with, this man was by far the most obliging, and he had, without any apparent effort, the most absolute control of his men; his dignified bearing was most impressive and reminded me of that of the best type of Arab sheik. We climbed the whole time for the next seven miles, the path being high up on the side of the cliff, and then followed a very steep and tiring descent to the village of Bahar.

The inhabitants received us well, our party being shown into a fine orchard of mulberries and apricots in

full bearing, and an hour was spent feasting on these delicious fruits. It was a great relief to get back again where fruit and vegetables flourished, after the bare country we had been through ; the porters seemed pleased at not being hurried on as usual and pressed upon me fine selected apricots which I could not resist. It was so pleasant that we remained till four o'clock and were unable to reach Yuno, as we had hoped, camping that night at the small village of Marcha.

The Braldoh valley, through which we had by this time nearly passed, is similar in character to the Indus valley, but smaller, and for this reason, the turns round projecting spurs are sharper. There is a distinct element of danger in the landslides, which frequently destroy the path ; these occur owing to the alluvial terraces which have been formed by the torrent forcing its way through an enormous mass of detritus and clay which must, at some period, have filled the whole valley to a height of 300 to 1,000 feet. Above this level, one can see the disintegration of rocks as an active process, and the distinguished geologist, Lydekker, noted traces of glacial action as high as about 2,000 feet above the river bed.

Once again, the next day, we entered the Shigar valley, on this occasion by the north end, at the junction of the Basha and Braldoh rivers. We had made an early start, as I wanted to reach Shigar, which was some twenty miles away, that night ; the path was level and we soon arrived at Yuno, where we should have camped the night before. The village consists of twenty to thirty scattered huts among apricot trees, with poplars here and there, and lies at the foot of the Koser Gunge, which is over 20,000 feet high. We were not long in

changing our porters, and in an hour we were under way again. After crossing a sandy plateau and passing the hamlets of Alchori and Hushupa, we came to the picturesque village of Koshumal, where the women were gathering and drying apricots by placing them in the sun. From now onwards, until Shigar is reached, the path finds its way through orchards of apricots, green-gages, and nectarines; and we fed on fruit most of the day.

Always a dominant feature in the landscape, from everywhere in the valley, is Koser Gunge; clothed with green at the foot it rises by rocky slopes and extensive snowfields to a sparkling white cap. At about seven o'clock I entered Shigar and was met by my servants, who reported that all my baggage had arrived safely. The Rajah's *wazir* was there to welcome me, together with the other people, who, on my first visit, had put every obstacle in my way; they professed astonishment that I had succeeded in crossing the Skoro La and reaching the Punmah glacier. I found my tent pitched on the edge of the polo ground, and lying before it, were plates of fruit, of which I noted no less than seven different kinds. There was also a very welcome mail awaiting me, and it was here that I learned of the murder of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, an old Marlburian.

Although it had been my intention to leave early the next day for Skardu, I agreed to stay, as Subhana and the servants tactfully pointed out what a desirable place Shigar was for a day's halt. Taking everything into consideration it was so; we all deserved a rest, and the following day was spent quietly in reading my mail and writing up my diary. For our journey onwards I decided to send the porters on foot to Skardu, while Subhana and I were to make the journey by river on a

zak or skin-raft. I eagerly chose that which, in my ignorance, appeared to be an easy and comfortable way of travelling to Skardu, thus avoiding some sixteen miles over loose sand with no shade, in the heat of the day.

The porters with the baggage had been sent off and were on their way to Skardu. Subhana and I followed the crew to the river, about a mile away, the raft being carried in sections. A *zak* usually consists of about sixteen goat-skins, which are inflated and fastened to a wooden framework, about six feet square, made of branches and sticks one or two inches thick, lashed together. The crew, as a rule, numbers four men who are called *zakwallas* and are equipped with small poles for steering. Having reached the river's edge, a convenient place was chosen for launching the raft when ready, and the crew set to work to assemble it, which took about an hour and a half.

It can readily be imagined that the skins are not always easy to keep airtight; made of whole skins, air is blown in them through one leg, all other openings being tied up as tightly as possible. They are kept dry when not in use and have to be well soaked in water before inflation, after which they are lashed to the cross framework of wood; the raft is then upside down, but when afloat, has the framework uppermost, with the inflated goat-skins beneath. It presented a decidedly flimsy appearance, but was to me a novel form of travelling, and so we started on what I thought was going to be a kind of joy-ride, but which soon developed into an exciting experience.

We had to wade some distance before taking our places on the raft, owing to the necessity of protecting the skins from damage when in the shallow water, and

eventually we were all afloat. The crew stationed themselves one at each corner, while Subhana and I made ourselves as comfortable as we could, crouching on the wooden frame, having been warned not to stand on the skins for fear of damage and loss of air by leakage. There was a strong wind, and as we gradually drifted into midstream, waves of an appreciable size were encountered. Occupied in admiring the scenery and noting the skill with which the crew kept the raft steady when it might easily have acquired a revolving motion in the swift current, I had not noticed that we were gradually sinking nearer the water's edge, owing to the skins leaking and losing buoyancy.

It was soon a case of all hands to the air pumps, that is to say, the crew were down on their knees blowing as violently as possible through the tubes formed by one leg of the goat-skin, to restore the lost inflation. Two of the skins then became loosened and detached from the frame, and bobbed up to the surface on each side of the raft. These had to be put back into place and re-secured, which took some time, as the raft was still swinging along at six or seven miles an hour, or occasionally, much faster, and had to be kept on her course and under control. Once it appeared to be slowing down, and the crew found with their poles that we were scraping along the rocky bed of the river, which might have seriously damaged the goat-skins had we not managed to get clear quickly.

On looking ahead I saw what sailors call "breakers," and as we approached the rapids, sharp rocks broke the surface of the water, which was most irregular owing to huge boulders in the bed of the river. Shouts of "*Pakkaro! pakkaro!*" were heard from Subhana as

a warning to hold on, and I thought subconsciously for one moment of what might happen in the event of the raft capsizing, either by skins becoming detached or bumping against projecting rocks. Our speed rapidly increased, waves breaking over and drenching us.

At one moment we were projected violently into what appeared to be a wall of water, which submerged the raft, at the same time bending the framework upwards, and causing it to creak in a most alarming manner. We then found ourselves shooting, half submerged, at a fearful speed down the slope of a wave, holding on for dear life, so to speak, as to have been swept off meant little chance of rescue. Above the noise was heard the crew calling upon Allah, their god, to protect them and bring them safely through. We were entirely soaked over and over again, but I was thankful that the raft held together, with all hands still on board. It was noticeable that though the raft was quite clearly out of control, the crew kept their poles ready to fend off any rock which threatened danger.

Some buoyancy had been lost by leakage, owing to the severe buffeting that we had received going through the first rapids, but before anything could be done to remedy this, warning shouts were heard again. Once more we clung on, as best we could, to the framework and shot through the rapids at a great pace, and though distinctly more thrilling than before, it was soon over. It seemed that the previously loosened frame and skins could not hold together and stand the violent shocks to which they were subjected, as the strain was much more severe, owing to the greater immersion, due to leakage from the skins. Once through the second rapids we found ourselves in smoother water, but such as to cause

a considerable rolling motion. This hampered the work of making good the damage, but in spite of this, the crew were soon once more upon their hands and knees blowing hard into the skins, and re-securing the lashings and fastenings of the framework. I found myself helping with this work on no less than three occasions after we were through the second rapids, and had no time to think of being wet through.

Once, on getting into shallow water, a very animated discussion arose among the crew, as the raft began to bump on the bed of the river, which called for immediate action, as some of the skins again began to get loose from the frame. Fortunately, owing to shallow water, our speed was reduced and they decided to stop the raft to prevent further damage; so the crew jumped over the side into the water, up to their knees, and held on to it. We were startled to find that we were on a kind of quicksand which gave way one moment and piled up round us the next. Several of the skins were now quite loose on the framework, and it was decided that the best chance of safety lay in moving the raft farther on to the edge of the quicksand bank. To do this with the least damage, the rest of us went overboard, and after much hard work, due to the insecure foothold, managed to overturn the raft so that the skins were on top and the framework underneath. This protected the skins to some extent, and the raft was moved very cautiously until we reached a fairly dry place, convenient for repairs.

We were now at the confluence of the Indus and the Shigar on some sandbanks formed by these rivers, and in front of us the Skardu rock stood out prominently. The crew had soon finished their work, and once again we boarded the raft for our final trip. There was a

stretch of water about a quarter of a mile between us and Skardu, and the current took us smoothly along without further mishap to our destination, where we disembarked. The raft was then dismantled, and carried back eighteen miles along the river bank to the starting point by the crew, who received as remuneration for the journey a little over a shilling each and were quite satisfied. For my part, while thoroughly appreciating the novelty of the trip, it seemed to me that I had had enough of skin-rafts for the time.

A walk of about ten minutes, skirting the Skardu rock, brought me to the rest-house, which was clean and comfortable. Staying there were two officers who had just returned from shooting in the Rondu district, having bagged both ibex and markhor ; they were both leaving the next day, the one for Nahr to shoot, and the other for Kashmir, going over the Deosai plains. My porters, who had left Shigar in the morning, did not arrive till the evening ; the delay, according to their story, being due to the ferrymen, who had kept them waiting. The following morning I saw the two officers off on their respective journeys, and decided to spend the day here, as we should not be able to rest again for at least another two hundred miles.

I was glad the next day to have no delay in obtaining transport, as with thirty-one porters having left with the two officers, there might have been a shortage. We were rather late in getting under way, and as Gol was our destination, twenty-one miles distant, we did not arrive till six o'clock in the evening. Before turning in, I managed to shoot for the pot a few of the many pigeons to be found there, and had a good dinner, the best for some time to come.

CHAPTER VIII

MARCH TABLE

		Miles	
Aug. 8th.	Gol to Kuru	17	Crossed Indus by ferry-boat
„ 9th.	Kuru to Camp (a)	25	
„ 10th.	Camp (a) to Khapalu	3	Crossed Shyok by skin-raft
„ 11th.	Khapalu	—	
„ 12th.	Khapalu to Camp (b)	16	Crossed Shyok by skin-raft
„ 13th.	Camp (b) to Prahnu	20	
„ 14th.	Prahnu to Turtok	15	Crossed Shyok by wooden
„ 15th.	Turtok to Malakcha <i>Lungma</i>	18	bridge
„ 16th.	Malakcha <i>Lungma</i> to Kharu	18	
		—	
		132	

Total distance from Srinagar, 652 miles

ALONG THE BANKS OF THE SHYOK

MY objective on leaving Gol was Panamik, a place ninety miles south of the Kara-koram Pass, or if time permitted, the pass itself, some two hundred miles away. A traveller has the choice of three routes for this journey, as follows : (a) by the Chorbat La ; (b) by the Indus valley ; (c) by the Shyok valley. The Chorbat La route is essentially a summer one, and is open for yak transport from the end of May to the beginning of November, and for ponies from the middle of July to the end of September.

This route was formerly much frequented, but since the construction of the new road on the left bank of the Shyok River, travellers prefer to use the latter as being more level and easier for ponies, if kept in repair. The Indus valley route is for the winter, as in summer it is too hot, having practically no grazing ; in addition, the river being then in flood, the path often becomes quite impassable for pack animals in places. The Shyok route,

on the other hand, is practicable in both summer and winter, and I chose it as appearing to be the least used at that time, although it will be seen later that, given certain conditions, it should become the recognised route.

We made an early start from Gol, and a short march brought us to the Indus, which we had to cross at its junction with the Shyok River. Formerly, skin-rafts were used at this point, but a wooden ferry-boat, similar to that at Skardu, was now available, and happened to be on the opposite bank of the Indus on our arrival. We hailed the *khistiwallas* or ferrymen, for over an hour; they made various signs which at first we could not understand, but later took to mean that we must wait till some other people, then about a mile away, had arrived. This delay entirely defeated the object of my early start, and eventually, after a three hours' wait, we boarded the ferry; the actual crossing took some considerable time, as the current was so rapid that we reached the opposite bank about a thousand yards below our starting-point. Fortunately, it was a good landing-place, instead of, as sometimes happens, one where it is quite impossible to get ashore on account of steep cliffs.

On disembarking, I at once pushed on ahead to the small village of Kiris, where we had to change porters again for Kuru, the next stage; I arrived there about midday, and as the *trampa* was very willing and helpful, the new lot were ready to take the baggage on by the time my porters had arrived. This is, of course, how the ideal transport system should work, but very often it is impossible, because the hamlet, whose *rais*, or turn, it is to supply porters, is sometimes as much as three or four miles away; in that case the traveller



AUTHOR'S PARTY AND BAGGAGE CROSSING INDUS RIVER



THE BAND OF THE RAJAH OF KHAPULU

may have to wait at least three hours. The path was good but the heat was trying, for in places there were long, shadeless stretches of sand, very fatiguing and hard going for the porters. We plodded on slowly, resting now and then, and reached Kuru that evening, without further incident.

Owing to the great heat during the day, which was worse than when passing through the Indus valley, I decided to do the next stage of fourteen miles to Doghani by moonlight. In order to ensure the porters being on the spot in time to start at one in the morning, I arranged with the *trampa* that they should sleep outside the rest-house with the baggage. They were roused at a quarter to one, getting under way in fifteen minutes, thereby making Doghani about five in the morning, which was all according to plan. The night before I had sent on a man to arrange for porters to be ready in Doghani when we arrived, so as to continue marching straight away before the sun got up. Unfortunately, the porters I had counted on were not ready, and our plans fell to pieces. I sent for the *trampa*, and after rating him for some time to relieve my feelings, I settled down in the shade and reflected on the vanity of human wishes! It was a case of waiting, for the would-be porters were in a hamlet some two and a half miles away; they turned up one by one, and by midday the number was nearly complete.

Seeing that we should be unable to march off much before one o'clock that afternoon, my servants cooked their food before starting, and I had a hot lunch. The prospect of having to do the next fifteen miles or so in the heat of the day was not looked forward to by any of us, especially after having started soon after midnight

to avoid this. According to my original plans, we should have arrived opposite Khapalu at about one or two o'clock, and the afternoon would have been spent in getting the baggage over the Shyok, which had to be crossed on a skin-raft. As it had turned out, all possibility of reaching our destination that night was out of the question, and we should have to camp on this side of the river.

When all the porters were present the *trampa* apologised for the delay, saying he had not been warned ; he, however, emphasised the fact that a skin-raft would be ready to take us over as soon as we arrived opposite Khapalu. We started off, our path leading through cultivated areas for a mile or so until we came to a long, shadeless stretch of loose sand. We arrived at our crossing-place about seven o'clock, and found, as arranged, a raft ready to take us over, but it was only a small one of about twelve skins ; I estimated that it would require over eight hours to get all the porters and baggage across. It was clearly out of the question to cross that night, so I told the *zakwalla* to provide a second raft and to be ready at four o'clock the next morning.

We camped here for the night, and the following morning the first lot of porters were under way by four o'clock, each journey by skin-raft carrying six or seven porters, taking about two hours. I went over with the last of the porters, and by ten o'clock we were the other side of the Shyok. An hour's climbing up a gradual ascent brought us to Khapalu, picturesquely situated about two miles from the river. The village consists of a group of hamlets scattered among irrigated terraces on a slope shaped like an amphitheatre and rising to some seven hundred feet above the river. The Rajah's

house lies to the west, and near it is the polo-ground surrounded by trees, the whole with a striking background of remarkable mountain-peaks.

On arrival we were given an excellent camping-ground in an apricot orchard, and I was met by the Rajah's brother-in-law on behalf of the Rajah, who was in Srinagar, paying his respects to the Maharajah of Kashmir. Dishes of fruit were brought to me, and what was still more welcome, supplies of English vegetables, such as carrots, turnips, cauliflowers, beans and cabbages. This change in diet was much appreciated, as for the previous six weeks our food supply had been very monotonous. I was told that the seeds for these vegetables had been given to the Rajah by some English Missionaries who had once passed this way.

The relations of the Rajah wished to pay me their respects, as is usually the custom, and their visit was arranged for five o'clock. There was little rest that afternoon, as I was discussing our future route along the Shyok and which was the better bank to follow. The *trampa* offered the most satisfactory solution, which involved two crossings of the river, one by skin-raft at Surmo and the other by a wooden bridge at Prahnu. This would avoid a bad bit of road, which had quite recently delayed the Rajah's son, along that bank, and it was well worth the extra time taken by the skin-raft passage. Every arrangement was to be made for me so that delay should be reduced to a minimum; and I was to be lent a skin-raft belonging to the Rajah, which promised a speedy crossing.

The relations of the Rajah arrived after tea, and, there being no chairs to offer them, we formed a circle, seated on the ground. Their visit lasted about an hour,

and commenced with the usual expression of good wishes. I then served them with some Lipton's tea, which was much appreciated—so much so that they asked for a supply, and my scanty stock became seriously reduced ; in return for this they gave me some Balti tea and a large quantity of English vegetables.

The conversation later turned to the question of the crops, and this I am glad to say, developed into quite an animated discussion, most of them holding different opinions. Mine was sought about the crops in England that year, and I made the best reply I could under the circumstances, knowing absolutely nothing about the subject beyond the fact that the food supply of the British Isles came largely from overseas. Not having reached a very high proficiency in Hindustani, I did not pursue the matter more than was necessary. To change the subject I, however, incautiously inquired what relation each visitor was to the Rajah. All in turn gave their relationship, and I endeavoured to make some suitable remark. I soon felt that this question would better not have been asked, as I had not sufficiently mastered the language to be able to cope with such phrases as my aunt's sister's brother-in-law, but I displayed the greatest interest.

I then made a short speech thanking them for the hospitality they had shown me, and requesting them to express my regret to the Rajah on his return that I had not seen him. They appeared to be most impressed, and in consequence, dispatched at once a special messenger to the Rajah's son in Hundar, about a hundred miles distant, informing him of my arrival. They persuaded me to stay on another day so as to give them time to make all arrangements about the skin-rafts. This was

easily done, as none of my party or myself were looking forward to the next hundred miles or so through practically barren country, where the inhabitants might possibly be disobliging in the matter of transport.

August 11th I spent quietly, reading most of the time, under the shade of the trees, and going for a stroll in the evening, noted that the inhabitants seemed greatly interested in me and my movements. The women, in spite of their being Mahomedans, were unveiled, and some of the younger ones were almost good-looking; the poor wear dirty white garments, but the better classes have coloured clothes—purple, blue, yellow, or green, sometimes striped with white. I visited the mosque, which resembled those of Kashmir, being surmounted by a kind of belfry, without the usual dome or minarets.

A ruined castle on a hill at the back of the polo-ground did not tempt me to climb to it, although there was a good view as a reward for doing so. On my return, I was again visited by one of the Rajah's relations, and the conversation turned on race origins, particularly of the Baltis, a complicated subject. He spoke of the olden times when the Rajahs were small despots, and sighed when referring to the present day. The Rajahs are, however, treated with much respect by the natives, as if they were still in power, and this helps to make them forget their former days of despotic rule. Later that evening I took farewell of the leading inhabitants, and thanked them once more for all they had done for me.

Early next morning, when still dark, we were all under way without any trouble; the extra skin-rafts had been sent on ahead overnight to be ready at the crossing-place. We made a slight ascent on to a plateau outside

the village, and then a steep descent to Surmo. Here the village officials met and presented me with large quantities of fruit, white rugs and blankets having been laid out for me to rest on. There was no time to waste, but I sat down and discussed our way ahead with the *trampa*, who said that everything was complete for the crossing of the Shyok River. The porters arrived in about half an hour, and after a short rest, we moved on about a mile and a half to the place where we had to cross. There was a very steep descent to cliffs at the water's edge; on the left was the only small patch of beach where it would be possible to load up.

There were two skin-rafts of about sixteen skins each, inflated and ready to start. After a discussion with the crew, it was decided to lash both rafts together to form a larger one. The Shyok here is broad and fairly smooth, but with a rapid current flowing. The first party to embark consisted of six porters with their loads, in addition to the four *zakwallas*, making ten in all. Through my field-glasses I watched them being gradually carried down the river by the current until they landed on the opposite side, about a thousand yards below the point from which they started. It can easily be seen that to return to the original starting-point the raft must be carried upstream some two thousand yards before recrossing. On the return journey of the rafts the current swept them about four hundred yards past us, and they only succeeded in landing at a very difficult place, from whence the rafts had to be carried back along the side of the cliff to the original starting-point, where we awaited them. Each complete journey took at least two hours by the time the skins were reassembled and inflated ready for a fresh trip. Such primitive methods of travel

bring forcibly to one's mind the enormous resistance to civilisation that vast mountain ranges offer; the transport difficulties are so many and varied that modern ideas make headway but slowly before these great fastnesses.

A little before five o'clock the last party, consisting of three porters, Subhana, and myself, boarded the raft, and after an uneventful trip, landed on the opposite bank nearly three-quarters of a mile below our starting-point. The porters, who had gone over earlier in the day, had been given orders to push on ahead to Marcha, our destination that night.

I paid the crew and started off at once. The path along the edge of the river was level, but most of it was composed of sand and stones, making it very hard going. It became dark earlier than usual, as the sun disappeared behind the perpendicular cliffs overhanging us on either side of the river. When there is a path or track, marching in the dark is difficult, but without one it becomes impossible; we found it hard to keep to the so-called track, as the porters did not know the road, and we had soon lost ourselves among gigantic rocks, only being able to see a few yards in front of us. Suddenly, about a hundred yards ahead, I saw a light; I found that the first lot of porters had also lost their way. My servants suggested camping here for the night, but as the moon was getting up, I knew that by one o'clock we should be able to resume our march by moonlight.

A hundred yards away, we could hear the Shyok dashing along, and we slowly advanced to the river's edge. Finding a small, level patch of sand a few yards from the river, we all lay down; nothing was to be heard except the river splashing and roaring over the

boulders in this desolate rift in the land. As the melon-coloured moon rose from behind the overshadowing cliff, the valley gradually emerged from its gloom, and just after one o'clock we were on the move again.

We arrived at Marcha by daylight, and I at once gave orders to the *trampa*, who was roused from his sleep, that I wanted porters to take my baggage on to Prahnu, about sixteen miles distant. We had a hot meal, after which we were much revived and ready to do a day's march, in spite of the few hours' sleep. There was no difficulty in getting transport, and after the good breakfast we were all under way again by half-past seven.

I had hoped to reach Prahnu in the middle of the afternoon, but my calculations proved inaccurate. It took us fourteen hours to do the sixteen miles, the chief reason being the disinclination of the porters to do the trip in one day. It is true that part of the path lay over loose sand, which, although level, was very hard going indeed, and after lunch we covered a mile an hour, with difficulty, there being no shade of any description. Had I known this, I would certainly have attempted only a short march. It was bad enough for the porters who had a full night's rest before starting; but none of my party had slept at all, and had been on the move since four o'clock on the morning of the previous day, except for the few hours' halt on the sand patch.

We arrived at Prahnu worn out, just as it was getting dark, and very thankful we were to get there; but it turned out a restless night for us. The village lies in the hollow of a deep ravine, and it soon became pitch dark, for the moon had not yet risen. Subhana and I wandered through the village trying to find the *trampa* or his representative; but we found the inhabitants were

all extremely hostile, and said they neither knew nor cared where he was. I accordingly chose a camping-ground on a small patch of grass, and the porters started to unload. They were told that they would be paid the next morning, to which, at the time, they raised no objection.

Suddenly an affray started between my servants, four in all, and the porters, who numbered eighteen. It was very dark, and for the first five minutes we held our ground, but they attacked us in the rear. Things began to look rather serious, as one of my servants was now out of action, leaving only four of us. Some of the porters by this time were looting my kit. I had my gun with me, but as no ammunition was available, I did vigorous work with the butt-end; eventually we drove them off and quickly collected our belongings, making them into a small pile, over which watch was kept. Each of my servants was given a loaded rifle or gun, with orders to fire over the heads of anyone who attempted to attack us; everything remained quiet for some time, except for a few odd rocks and stones hurled at us.

A little later we captured one of our assailants and held him as a hostage, tying him up to a tree. It was getting lighter by this time, as a full moon was rising, and I told my servants to make a slip-knot on a rope and select a good branch whereon, apparently, to hang the victim. The other porters saw and were impressed by these preparations, as I had hoped they would be, and sent a representative over, asking for permission to speak to me. A temporary armistice was arranged, but the porters cleared off without waiting for their pay the next day. Judging by the amount of

money missing, they had taken several times more than they were entitled to. The result of this incident was that some clothes and about four pounds' worth of silver had been stolen. Taking it altogether, we were lucky to come out of it as we did, and needless to say, we saw nothing more of the porters who had attacked us.

Towards dawn Subhana and I went down to the mosque to see if we could make any arrangements for fresh porters to carry our baggage. The natives were assembled there, standing or kneeling in prayer. Each man as we spoke to him knelt down, apparently to avoid answering us ; I foresaw trouble, which was not long in coming, and we both had to beat a retreat to our camp amidst a shower of sticks and stones. Ultimately, to my relief, a man from the village came and said that he would supply me with porters to take me as far as Takski, the next village, about four miles on. This I agreed to, as obviously the best thing was to get clear of the village as soon as possible, before an organised attack was made upon us.

It was about nine o'clock when twelve porters had assembled, and with these, we managed to leave Prahnu. The stores and kit they could not take we carried ourselves, and by ten o'clock I had crossed over to the left bank of the Shyok River by a wooden bridge, and was well on the way to Takski. We arrived there about one o'clock, and found, happily, that the *trampa* was a very willing man. In less than an hour we had changed porters and were under way again for Turtok, which was the last village in Baltistan before the province of Ladakh was entered. The path was fairly good, following the bank of the river, with, however, one steep ascent outside Turtok, which caused some delay.

We reached this place at about six o'clock, and the *trampa* was found to be a most charming old man, who had complete control over his men and was willing to help me in every possible way. We camped in a nice, shady garden, and were given a good supply of fuel and milk. Whilst I was writing up my diary the *trampa* came up and asked leave to bring along a small boy who was badly injured. After a little while a lad of about six years old was shown to me ; he had a fracture of the right leg, caused by a falling rock, the two pieces of bone protruding. Over this open wound, which looked very septic, was a patch of mud, this being the native way of dressing a sore. I was rather at a loss what to do, as to straighten out and set the leg was quite beyond my capacity. I therefore had the wound properly washed and dressed, and advised them to take the boy to Khapalu, where he could be attended to by a native doctor. This they did not wish to do, and I am afraid there was little hope of recovery for the lad.

It was very fortunate for us that the *trampa* was so willing to assist, because for the next thirty-six miles we had to march through uninhabited country ; no supplies being available, the porters would have to carry food for the whole journey. Besides furnishing these men with their rations, he gave me a good supply of chickens, sufficient to last several days. As I was entering Turtok I had noticed some ponies grazing, and at once thought of using them for transport. Though the *trampa* wished to help me in every possible way, he flatly declined to supply me with ponies, which naturally seemed to me better ; as it turned out, with the porters lightly laden, we arrived at our destination just as soon as would have the ponies, if not quicker.

Before leaving I told the *trampa* about the incident at Prahnu, and he was apparently very concerned over the matter. He proposed that I should go along with him and about twenty men and raid the village, adding jokingly that we should be able to carry off some of their women. I must admit that feeling rather sore at our treatment, the idea of getting some of my own back appealed to me rather strongly. The more I reflected, however, the less I liked the prospect of myself, as a bearer of the King's commission, making the explanations that would inevitably follow to the Government of India, perhaps with a bias, to say the least of it, in favour of the native ; so any rosy visions I might have entertained faded away in the cold light of common sense. I am unable to say whether I fell in the opinion of the *trampa* by declining his offer, or whether he concluded I was too shrewd to be used by him in any private scheme of his own. It is a fact that raids of this kind used to be made, and hostages such as young women, and if possible, village priests, carried off, only to be released or ransomed by payment of corn and free labour.

The many references to transport difficulties and the frequent indifference of *tehsildars* and other State officials may possibly have prepared the reader for the following remarks, which are made after having travelled hundreds of miles through Baltistan and Ladakh, and with a full sense of their connexion with current politics. I do not wish to suggest that the difficulty of obtaining porters in the Himalayas is due to the causes mentioned below, because such is not the case. One has only to read any book on the Himalayas to see that ever since travellers penetrated into the heart of these mountains they have had difficulty with their transport. Nowadays

the traveller is not up against this alone, but the native has developed an even greater spirit of independence than before, a disregard for authority, and indifference to the sahib.

It is true that in some cases I met with courtesy and respect, but it is undeniable that there is a general undercurrent of anti-British sentiment to be found in these remote, outlying parts of India. At first I was inclined and willing to ascribe it to the natural reticence of dwellers in isolated mountain regions, and to the comparative rarity of the visits of individual travellers. Of all the districts passed through, this manifestation was strongest in the hundred and fifty miles of the Shyok valley. Although I was in possession of a *parwana* enjoining all those in authority to help me as much as possible, the greatest difficulty was at times met with in obtaining transport, supplies, and fuel, and at Prahnu it took the form of active hostility. Inquiry showed this state of affairs to be due to various causes, amongst which the principle are the following.

Every year from both Baltistan and Ladakh—particularly the former—a number of natives migrate to Kashmir, Simla, and other places, in search of work. In the case of Baltistan, this migration is said to result from polygamy and concubinage, causing an increase of the population beyond the productivity of the soil, the cultivated area being limited. In their new surroundings, these men find themselves comparatively well paid, and they come under the influence of the non-co-operators and other anti-British agitators. They imbibe, perhaps, the doctrines of the Bolshevik, and on their return speak to the stay-at-homes of the new ideas, which probably lose nothing in the telling.

Another source of trouble is the presence of foreign agents, who can easily pass through both provinces with the caravans to and from Central Asia and Kashmir during the summer months. It is well known that the Bolshevists of Russia have been, and are still, carrying on an active propaganda in these regions, on behalf of the world revolution and the so-called freeing from the British yoke of, amongst others, the downtrodden millions of India. As regards foreign agents, I cannot say that I met any, though I heard of some. The greater number of the caravan traders in Leh are Yarkandis, who have never shared the attitude towards the British that formerly obtained in India, and they might well be enlisted as propagandists by Bolshevist agitators, working from Russian-Turkestan and elsewhere.

The next cause, and an important one, is the neglect of duty, if nothing more, of the *tehsildars*, who are Indians, generally of some little education and not infrequently in sympathy with the most advanced ideas of the day. An example of this is shown in the manner and attitude of the *tehsildar* of Kargil towards me, though I was in possession of a *parwana*, signed by a British official. It can be readily understood that if the *tehsildar* shows himself indifferent to the instructions given in the *parwana* his subordinates are only too ready to follow his example, and similarly, down to the porters, over whom, in many cases, control is now difficult—certainly more so than in the past.

Adverting to the returned native—probably the most important factor in the case—if he be intelligent, he has noted the conditions of labour in India, which though bad enough, possibly, to excite the sympathy of the not

altogether disinterested European Socialist, are far and away superior to those in his native province. He is apt to overlook that the standard of living is entirely different, and to ignore, in his comparison, many other economic factors. However, by his sojourn in India he has acquired considerable prestige, and become a kind of leading light in his village. I met a number of these men, and their scornful manner when the word *Sirkar* or Government, was mentioned was quite sufficient to show that they had already been converts to non-co-operation and other advanced ideas. They were invariably the ringleaders in the event of any trouble with the porters.

It may be asked whether all this is not known to the Government and dealt with as necessary; if we consider the sources from which such knowledge might come to them, it will be apparent that it is not a simple matter to get an unbiased report. To begin with, it would be too much to expect the *tehsildars*, holding the views that many of them do, to report that their subordinates had in many cases failed to comply with the instructions of the *parwana*, amounting, in effect, to treating the traveller openly with disrespect. On the other hand, any British official who might have occasion to travel here would obviously meet with every attention, and naturally come to the conclusion that everything was as it should be. If we assume for a moment that such information came from native sources, it would be very hazardous to accept it without corroboration, as is well known to those who have any experience of intelligence or secret service work, more particularly in the East.

Finally, if one complains, it is very difficult to know

what action, if any, could be, or has been taken to prevent a recurrence of such treatment to individual travellers. Far be it from me to think our Political Officers are in any way to blame, which is the last thing I wish to suggest. On the contrary, only when one has met them and seen them at work in their outposts does one realise the importance of their duties, and the admirable manner in which they are carried out in the face of many difficulties. With men such as we have had in the past, and have now, there is nothing to fear ; and the prestige of the British, though it may be temporarily lowered by current politics beyond the control of our Political Officers, stands firm and fast on foundations that cannot easily be upset.

Resuming our journey from Turtok, we were under way by moonlight, about three o'clock ; our path, which lay along the banks of the Shyok, was level but sandy and stony for the first five miles. Then came a steep ascent followed by a descent, the track being very narrow in places, and crossing the Tebe *Lungma* by a small wooden bridge. As the sun rose higher, marching became very fatiguing for the men, owing to there being little circulation of air in the Shyok valley, lying nearly east and west. We halted several times, and late in the afternoon, forded the Malakcha *Lungma* with some difficulty ; we camped that night near the river at a point a mile beyond the torrent. There was a good spring for water, but we could find no fuel, and had to content ourselves with a very poor and meagre meal that night. We had done eighteen miles out of the thirty-six to Kharu, but I had intended camping farther on. As the porters were so tired, I thought it best to camp earlier and have a good night's rest ; we should



INFLATING AND LOADING SKIN-RAFTS NEAR SURMO



SKIN-RAFT CROSSING SHYOK RIVER WITH BAGGAGE

then, all being well, be able to reach Kharu next day.

I felt, on getting under way early the following morning, that my interest in the journey quickened at the thought of arriving in Western Tibet or Ladakh, in spite of starting without any breakfast. At about eight o'clock I saw a small party of men in the distance, waiting by the roadside; and after my recent experiences, it crossed my mind that there might be trouble ahead; on approaching them, instead of a band of robbers, they turned out to be a band of musicians. They belonged to His Highness the Rajah of Khapulu, whose son had recently married the daughter of a rich Mahomedan trader in Hundar, a place near the Yarkand road. This band had formed part of the retinue accompanying the Rajah for the marriage ceremonies and festivities. They greeted me by playing a tune in my honour while I ate a late breakfast, which had been delayed on account of the scarcity of fuel. I rewarded them with a present of money, and they fraternised with my porters.

The band numbered eight, and I examined with interest their musical instruments, particularly the six feet high trumpets. There were also cymbals, and wind instruments which looked like bass clarinets, also a large drum and a pair of kettle-drums. The music struck me as being crude—something between that of savage tribes with tom-toms and that played by the Chinese. This similarity may perhaps be accounted for by China having made in the past frequent inroads into this country. Tibetan music has features of interest to students, owing to the intervals employed, which, I am told, appeal to some of the ultra-modern composers, though easily beyond my musical knowledge.

Refreshed by the stop and the belated breakfast, we started again, still along the bank of the river. Towards noon, finding the heat very trying, we halted for a bathe, and found the water delightfully cool and refreshing, though none of us could go far from the bank owing to the current. My porters were Baltis of Mahomedan faith, and as regards ablutions, compared favourably with the Ladakhis. These latter have the reputation of never washing their clothes, and their bodies only when fording a river. The reason given is that it is far too cold for washing in winter, and in summer they appear to think it unnecessary.

The valley gradually opened out and the path became almost level, crossing the Pachathang *Lungma* by a wooden bridge. During the afternoon our route led us over a hot, sandy plateau, and we eventually saw in the distance the village of Kharu, to which we were bound. As we plodded on, the village seemed to get no nearer, and the heat told upon us all, in spite of frequent halts and our bathe. Yet in the back of my mind was the idea of being in a new country, and the most hardened traveller is apt to respond to this, even if he be not absolutely thrilled. In my case it helped me to forget fatigue, and keyed me up, so to speak, for new impressions. Our long tramp at length came to an end, and towards sunset we reached Kharu, our first village in Western Tibet.

CHAPTER IX

		MARCH TABLE	Miles	
Aug. 17th ..	Kharu to Deskit ..	.. ..	19	
„ 18th ..	Deskit to Tegur ..	.. ..	22	Crossed Shyok by — suspension bridge
			41	
Total distance from Srinagar,				693 miles

OUR FIRST BUDDHIST VILLAGE

My entry into Western Tibet, or Ladakh, was not being made by one of the four principal routes, which have been in use for trade and traffic for hundreds, if not for thousands, of years. These four highways converge at Leh, the capital city of Ladakh, and come approximately from the north, south, east, and west directions. I had come along the Shyok valley from the north-west, and intended to join the northern main route—that coming from Yarkand and Kashgar—at the junction of the Shyok and Nubra rivers. It was curious to note that the thirty-six miles of country which we had just traversed, between the last village in Baltistan and the first in Ladakh, was a kind of no-man's-land, absolutely barren. There was nothing to mark the border between the two provinces—no physical features of any description—yet the inhabitants were entirely distinct in race, in religion, and in customs. We had left behind Mahomedanism and were in the land of Lamaism, the name given to the form of Buddhism prevalent in Tibet.

Kharu, the small village at which I had arrived, owes what little importance it has to its being the first village over the border from Baltistan. After a fatiguing

day, it was a relief to find the head villager, or *goa*, ready to meet us.

He was a man of middle height, presenting a fine, upstanding appearance in spite of his somewhat mean-looking garments. He wore a rather full, long-sleeved gown, reaching about to the knees, made of coarse native cloth of a dirty hue, tied round the waist with a woollen girdle. Beneath this gown were loose trousers, and boots made of sheep- or goat-skin ; the headgear was a woollen cap, with ear-flaps, worn turned up in summer and down in winter, and its shape was faintly suggestive of the Phrygian cap of the classics ; a small pigtail of black wool was worn plaited on to the hair. A brass bracelet on the *goa's* wrist looked odd ; and hanging from a girdle was a small leather tinder-and-flint pouch, about four or five inches wide, ornamented with pierced and chased brass, carrying on its lower edge an iron blade nearly a quarter of an inch thick ; inside the pouch were a few rock crystals and dry tinder, the latter looking to be very fine hemp or some kind of coarse thistledown.

After the usual greetings, the *goa* expressed his annoyance that the Balti porters had not warned him of our intended arrival ; I refrained from saying that it seemed a great deal to have expected that a man should have been sent over thirty-six miles of barren country for this purpose. The porters soon arrived, and we were all led to a small enclosure in the middle of the village, where we camped for the night. While unloading, the *goa* told Subhana to tell me that I should pay off my Balti porters, so that they could leave Kharu and get back to their own country.

There appeared to be very little love lost between

the two races, for the Ladakhis were continually making disparaging remarks about the qualities of the Baltis. My sympathies were with the men who had helped me to travel hundreds of miles, in spite of occasional failures ; and I was determined not to leave these men entirely stranded in a foreign country amongst unfriendly people. I paid them off, and succeeded in persuading the Ladakhis to give them food and shelter for the night, in view of the long journey before them. The Ladakhi compares very favourably with the Balti in many ways, and is by nature a generous fellow, for in a short time we had all been supplied with rugs to sleep on, those for myself being specially selected coloured ones. Although travellers are here ordered by the Indian Government to make their own arrangements for food and supplies, without demanding any from the inhabitants, there is rarely any difficulty on this score. I was given two chickens and some kind of native vegetables, which of course were paid for, as usual.

By this time I had surrendered to the complete enjoyment of the unexpectedly picturesque appearance presented by our first Buddhist village. The small houses, mostly of one story, were irregularly spaced, with here and there a tree ; most of them were flying prayer flags of coloured cotton, and women gathered on the flat roofs, some to pray and others to watch our movements. After two days' march through barren country any signs of life were welcome, but by the light of the setting sun this village appeared to me to possess almost a romantic glamour. When the little excitement caused by our arrival had subsided, an occasional voice was heard, and then silence fell for the night.

Since leaving Skardu we had been gradually ascending,

and Kharu lies at an altitude of nearly 10,000 feet above sea level, in Ladakh. The latter is the most westerly province of the high, mountainous country spoken of as Tibet, and covers an area of 30,000 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the Kara-koram and Kuenlun mountains, by India on the south, and Baltistan and Tibet on the east and west respectively. Ladakh contains within its boundaries the loftiest inhabited regions in the world; no part is below 8,000 feet, and a great number of the inhabitants live at heights of 12,000 feet to 15,000 feet, the mountain ranges being from 17,000 to 21,000 feet, and some peaks 25,000 feet high. The barren aspect of the country that we saw in Baltistan is here repeated, though many fertile tracts along rivers and valleys show luxuriant crops, dependent on irrigation. The villages in some of these irrigated patches have in many cases a most attractive appearance, particularly in summer; but to some extent this is enhanced by comparison with the barren mountains, though these have a fantastic grandeur of their own.

My baggage had been carried for the last five hundred miles by porters, and I was looking forward again to pack transport. I had arranged overnight with the *goa* to have as many ponies as possible ready for me on the following morning, and I found some women porters had been provided as well, as there were not enough ponies available. The small amount of porter transport there is in Ladakh is done by the women; and it was remarkable later to see them cheerfully carry full loads without complaint, and keeping up with the ponies.

A pony with a hard-looking saddle on its back was given me to ride, but I passed it on to my servants, as I preferred walking to jogging along on a hard Tibetan

saddle. We were soon under way, our path lying over flat, sandy country, and before long we came to the villages of Spantok and Thoise. To each of these, notice of my arrival had been sent on ahead, and as I entered, the inhabitants were gathered to greet me. The usual *numnahs*, or felt rugs of many colours, were placed on the ground for me to sit upon, and I partook of dried fruits. The entire population of the village assembled and asked various questions, through Subhana, which I generally answered with the few Tibetan phrases one learns especially for such occasions. This appeared to amuse them, probably on account of my accent, but it created a good feeling.

On one of these occasions the women offered me native tea, and food in the form of a brown paste. This also caused great mirth, particularly when I showed signs of appreciation. The usual food of the people is barley-cake eaten with various vegetables, such as turnips, cabbages, and peas, according to the season of the year, made into broth flavoured with salt and pepper. Meat appears to be rarely eaten, even by the better classes, and then only at marriage and birth ceremonies. The general drink is tea, which is mixed with soda, salt, and butter, and is dark brown in colour. The upper classes drink it three times a day with barley-cakes, butter, and sugar; in the middle of the day it is often taken with dried apricots, and sometimes rice. There is no prohibition, nor so far as I could ascertain, any excise, or licensing laws, everybody being partial to any form of alcohol going. That generally available is a native beer called *chang*, made from fermented barley and wheat. There is a specially strong form, corresponding probably to our old ale, which produces intoxication, and is brought

out at wedding feasts. I once drank some *chang*, which tasted like bad bitter stout, and resembled it in colour ; this seemed to be the usual cocktail, but it is rare to see a drunken man, though often they " had drink taken," as the Irish say.

Here I took an early opportunity of observing the costume of the women, the headdress especially being of an unusual nature. They wear a black skirt of coarse cloth and a rather tight-fitting jacket, surmounted by a sheepskin cape, sometimes lined with scarlet cloth. Their boots are of rough leather, with gaiters up to the knee. The great feature is the headdress, a kind of hood called a *pirak*, made of a broad strip of leather, worn from the forehead, falling backwards over the crown of the head and nearly down to the waist ; on this strip are sewn, by way of ornament, large turquoises in horizontal rows, gradually tapering in width to a single stone at the lower end. Curious ear flaps are worn with the *pirak* for protection against cold winds. Other travellers have noted that beneath the black skirts the women wear red and blue petticoats, and so far as these undergarments are concerned, I can only accept their statements. As may be imagined, my curiosity as to their costume was the cause of much merriment, and in turn, they displayed great interest in my own clothes, particularly my sun-helmet.

The most unobservant traveller, more especially one coming from a Mahomedan country, could scarcely fail to notice the difference between the status of women in Baltistan and Ladakh. In the former, a Mahomedan country, the women were at times extremely shy on being seen, and frequently ran away and hid themselves. Here it was entirely different in this respect, the women

being always very much to the fore, greeting one and talking freely with a frank and open gaze. There can be no reasonable doubt that the difference is due to the custom of polyandry, which permits a woman to have more than one husband. One must be careful to distinguish between this form and that of communal marriage, in which the woman is the property of every male member of the tribe. Polyandry exists in many parts of the world, such as Tibet, India, Ceylon, New Zealand, Aleutian Islands, and Central America. There are two kinds, one in which the husbands are unrelated, whilst the other is called fraternal polyandry, and is found in Tibet.

There are many reasons given for this custom in Ladakh, but presumably, the necessity of limiting the increase in population, owing to the comparative scarcity of food, is the principal factor. This scarcity of food results from the mountainous nature of the country, Ladakh being one of the highest inhabited regions in the world. The area under cultivation is naturally limited, and the difficulty in ripening the scanty crops is considerable, owing to the weather and altitude; further, owing to the topographical isolation, the import of food on any adequate scale is impossible. It is alleged that polyandry results in the birth of an excess of males, as compared with polygamy causing an excess of female births. Some writers have noticed that polyandry flourished in the uplands and polygamy in the valleys. This is not always correct of the former, as some of the nomadic tribes, such as the Changpa, who are shepherds, desire families to look after their live stock. Whatever the origin of the custom, it is a fact that the women of Ladakh

have great freedom, and the men are said to show little jealousy.

Polyandry is closely connected with the law of entail in Ladakh. The most important fact to note is that the eldest married son of a family is in a better position than his own father. The former is, in fact, for all purposes the head of the family, and when he marries, he takes possession of the estate, the father retaining only a small portion to support his family and any unmarried daughters. Fathers have only a life interest and the property reverts to the son on their death or on the marriage of any of the daughters. The eldest son, however, when he takes possession, is by law obliged to support his brothers. The Kashmir state look upon the former as the sole owner and he is held responsible for the payment of taxes.

The marriage customs, it would appear, permit almost anything, for it is always Leap Year—it being just as becoming for a woman to choose a husband as for a man to choose a wife. It usually happens, however, that the eldest brother chooses a wife and his brothers automatically become minor husbands, so to speak, and cohabit with the wife in turn. The property in each case belongs to the active partner irrespective of sex. Before the Ladakhis were conquered by the Dogras, the Rajah, or ruler, had the power of giving to a man, as a reward, the right to choose in marriage any girl he liked, but this practice has since died out. The ordinary or orthodox marriage is such a complicated and costly affair that it is not surprising to learn that a much simpler and inexpensive method has come into use for those who cannot afford it, though they may later have the full ceremony. Briefly stated, this method

is to steal or abduct the chosen one ; and besides the financial reason given, the method is used if the person desired happens to be betrothed to another.

Once this method is decided upon, only relatives are informed, and the marriage is celebrated by a small feast—beer, however, being unlimited. There are no religious rites, the ceremony simply consisting of the bride and bridegroom each putting on a very small white head-cloth called a *go ras*, and saying *ju* (a word of greeting like *salaam*) to everybody. The next day a visit is paid to the house of the parents of the abducted one to say *ju* and to give them presents, the deputation being accompanied by a speechmaker. If the parents decide to make the best of it, the presents are accepted, but if they object, the party is sent away ; and the parents and their friends go to the temporary home of their child and try to wreck it and recover the lost one. The other complicated and orthodox marriage ceremony, which is not so frequently met with, will be described in a later chapter.

We have mentioned above that a woman may choose a husband, but if she be an heiress, special rules exist for her. According to the law of entail, if there is no son in the family, the eldest daughter inherits the land. Ordinarily speaking, she would have to choose an eldest brother for a husband, but since she is an heiress, she may choose anyone she wishes. Generally a younger brother with no lands is selected and she makes him her *magpa*, as this kind of husband is termed. This sort of marriage is looked upon as quite respectable, but carries with it no strong ties. The *magpa* is the property of his wife and the latter can be rid of him without any excuse, this making her free to marry again.

We could not afford the time to stay long here, so after a short halt, I left for Hundar. Just outside the village we passed through cultivated fields, which were somewhat conspicuous in such a barren country. Practically all the inhabitants, like the Baltis, are engaged in agriculture, though there is a class of Ladakhis called Changpas, or nomads, who follow pastoral pursuits in the uplands which are too high for cultivation; but these are in the minority. Agriculture depends entirely upon irrigation for the successful production of crops, and the greater part of the land cultivated lies along the banks of the larger rivers, particularly the Indus, below Leh. Sometimes on the slopes of small *nalas* patches of cultivation may be seen on artificially constructed terraces. Irrigation is provided by a system of small canals, from one to three feet wide, sometimes lined with clay to keep them watertight. Hollow trunks of willow trees are used to lead the water in the direction desired, and I saw at least one rock-hewn passage for the same purpose.

These canals are often fed from sources several hundred feet above the villages, and their maintenance in a state of repair calls for continuous attention and work. I have seen natives in Egypt, India, and China engaged in irrigation work and the Ladakhis struck me as displaying more ingenuity and skill than any others I had noticed before. Ploughing is done with wooden ploughs, occasionally iron tipped, which are drawn by the hybrid of the yak bull and the common cow, called the *zho* (male) and *zomo* (female).

Cunningham mentions that in his time many fields were dug by hand with a peculiarly shaped mattock of which the handle forms a very acute angle with the

blade ; the Breton peasants in France use to this day a very similar tool, particularly in the cultivation of potatoes. Sowing takes place generally in the middle of May and the crops are harvested in September, the object being to avoid the first fall of snow. Barley, wheat, peas, and beans in spring, and buckwheat and turnips in the autumn are the principal crops, being found at an altitude of from 13,000 to 15,000 feet above sea level. Sometimes the sickle is used, but frequently one sees the crops pulled up by the roots, and other primitive methods are in vogue.

Hundar, a large village and now the residence of a Rajah, was reached after about two hours. I was met at the outskirts of the place by a great concourse of people, amongst whom, conspicuous by his dress, was the Rajah, wearing a white turban and baggy white trousers, with whom I shook hands. He invited me to his palace and to take tea with him, but the reader must not allow his imagination to run riot as regards this dwelling, although it was quite a fine building, all things considered. I was conducted to a large low-pitched room on the first floor, which was beautifully decorated, the walls being hung with bright-coloured carpets and rugs from Yarkand and Lhasa, while on the floor were spread *numnahs*, or felt rugs of gay colours.

I was given the seat of honour on a dais in front of the Rajah, between us being a low table, his retinue taking seats round us. Balti tea was served which I found very sweet, likewise some kind of native cakes. Conversation proceeded quite freely in Hindustani, and I was questioned about my travels, in which the Rajah expressed the greatest interest. Had I been sent by the Government ?—was I on a political mission or a surveying

tour?—these and other queries were put in a perfectly courteous manner, but with a keen sense of the possibilities in connexion with the rare visit of a traveller. By answering quite frankly, I was able to clear his mind, apparently, of everything but the fact that I was a private individual with a taste for wandering off the beaten track. I mentioned the unpleasant incident at Prahnu and he promised me that those guilty would be punished.

It was getting late and at the end of an hour I thought we had better be moving on. I thanked the Rajah for his kindness and asked him, when he returned to Khapalu, to tell his relatives how speedily I had been able to cross the Shyok, through having the extra skin-raft. Word was sent to my servants to load up the ponies ready for starting, and my host accompanied me downstairs, where I took leave of him and his retinue, exchanging the usual compliments.

Among the ponies I noticed a fine animal with a special saddle and harness, decorated with brass, which I was told was intended for my use in riding to Deskit. With misgivings I mounted the pony and, finding the saddle more ornamental than comfortable, I took an early opportunity, as soon as we were clear of the village and out of sight, of dismounting, preferring to walk.

The Shyok valley gradually broadened out as we proceeded and we could see ahead of us the junction of the Nubra and Shyok rivers. Some six miles from Hundar, and just before reaching Deskit, we met two lamas, dressed in their characteristic dull red gowns, who dismounted and greeted me ; as they spoke nothing but Tibetan our conversation was carried on through the medium of Subhana. They were the bearers of an

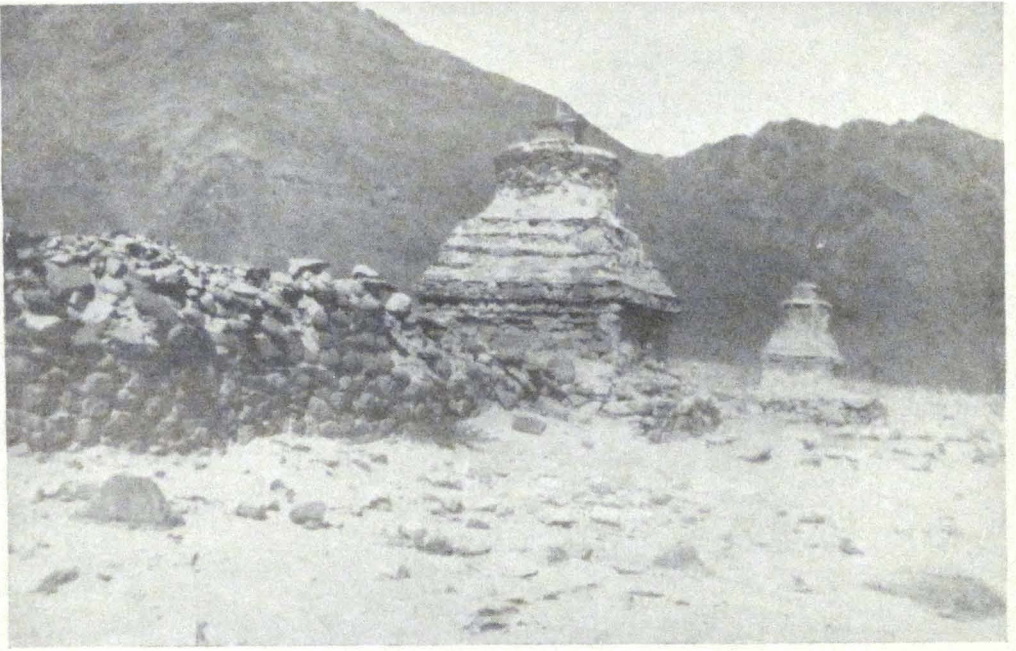
invitation to me, from the head lama, to camp in the compound of their monastery or lamasery ; I accepted their kind offer and we walked to the village together. The red costume of these lamas consisted of a sleeved coat with long skirts, worn with a girdle. Most lamas have their heads shaved and all wear red boots, but this red, as also of the costumes, was of a rather dingy hue.

The older and more devout of the lamas invariably carry a hand prayer-wheel which contains a tightly packed roll of written prayers. The cylinder, often made of copper, is free to revolve about the handle, and a small weight hangs from a chain attached to the side of the cylinder, to keep it in motion longer when revolving, each turn being equivalent to an invocation to Buddha. There are, besides these hand prayer-wheels, larger ones from six inches to six feet high, the latter being found outside the monasteries. An amusing incident is told by an earlier traveller about these prayer-wheels. A lama, while passing one, set it in motion and before it had ceased revolving, another lama coming from the opposite direction stopped it. He then set it revolving in the reverse direction, which would naturally deprive the first lama of the full benefit of his own spin. A heated argument followed, which led to blows, though the Buddhist is not a quarrelsome fellow and only resorts to it in extreme cases such as this.

On entering the village we passed an unusually long *mani* wall. The devout Tibetan always walks to the left and passes these walls on his right hand, which these lamas did, pointing out jokingly to me that the other side was wrong. *Manis* are met with throughout Ladakh, there being no village which has not built

them ; these religious structures are long broad walls standing generally about four feet high and varying in length from fifty to two hundred yards. They are covered with flat stones, upon each of which is inscribed, in one of two different Tibetan characters, the sacred words "*Om mani padmi hong,*" as to the meaning of which there is considerable diversity of opinion. The majority of commentators translate it, as addressed to Buddha, thus : " O thou who dwellest in the lotus leaf," or " O jewel in the lotus, thus may he be, Amen " ; but there are many who state that it is untranslatable. These four sacred words can also be seen inscribed on the walls of houses and monasteries, and on large statues roughly hewn out of the bare rock. There are cases known of brotherhoods being formed to carve these large inscriptions on the sides of the hills to enable travellers to view the sacred words.

One thing that adds to the interest of Ladakh is the great number of monumental edifices dotted about everywhere, adding to the picturesqueness of the country. At the ends of a *mani* wall there are frequently structures called *chortens*, though at times the latter are seen quite alone. They are built on a large square pedestal, which is surmounted by white-washed stones resembling an inverted tea-pot. On the top is generally a small wooden globe, supported by a pole from ten to twenty feet high, and these *chortens* contain the remains of sainted lamas. On one side, about a foot above the ground, is a small pigeonhole which is filled with a large number of medallions, or small ornaments made of clay, moulded into curious shapes and figures ; the material is composed of clay, mixed with the ashes of dead lamas. Another custom is that of



MANI WALL AND CHORTEN MONUMENTS



CARVED STONES ON SIDE OF MANI WALL

building cairns, called *hlato*, or God's place, on the summit of mountain passes. These are crowned with the horns of wild sheep, ibex, and other animals, and in the centre is placed a small bough or boughs of a tree on which is fastened a prayer flag, bearing inscribed thereon a holy text.

On our arrival at Deskit I was led to the monastery, where we were met by more monks, some standing about, while others peered from the windows. I greeted the head lama, and was shown a small compound under the walls of the monastery where I was to pitch my tent; it was very dirty, but not wishing to hurt the head lama's feelings, I gave orders to occupy it. One lama had noticed that I was interested in the sounds of revelry coming from a house in the village, and asked Subhana if he thought I would like to witness a birth-feast, which was in full swing at the moment. Now Subhana happened to be a strict Mahomedan who never by any chance touched any alcohol and frowned on its uses by others. So he thought, at first, it was inadvisable that the Sahib should countenance any function at which it was clearly evident that something stronger than water was being drunk. However, the lama sent a man on ahead to say that I was coming, and when we arrived we found the company all looking very cheerful.

The Ladakhi is a very sociable person and takes advantage of any opportunity, such as a birth-feast, as in this case, for a function into which a good consumption of *chang*, or native beer, enters largely. The birth-feast was being held about ten days after the child was born, and relatives had made presents to her of pieces of cloth and money, as they were fairly well off, after which had followed the feast accompanied by the

flowing bowls of *chang*. On my arrival I was welcomed and also offered some *chang* which, not wishing to refuse entirely, I made a show of tasting, though Subhana explained that I was like the Mahomedans and took no strong drink. All the relatives of the family were present, and so far as I could judge, appeared to have done themselves very well indeed, as the saying is. After a little while, as my presence seemed to have rather checked the merriment, I left with Subhana and returned to the monastery compound. The feast which I had witnessed does not finish the celebrations, and when the child is a year old a naming feast is held, corresponding to our christening. The child is then taken before a lama, who is given either money, wheat, or barley, and then proceeds to name the child.

After I had dined, the lamas came to know whether I would visit their monastery the following morning before leaving, but I excused myself on the grounds of shortness of time, not wishing to hurt their feelings. In point of fact, I hoped to see others more interesting later on. As soon as it became dark, in order to ensure our safety during the night, three large dogs, rather like Alsatian wolfhounds in appearance, were let loose in the garden. I thought of the stories of the monks of St. Bernard and the special breed of dogs that they kept and trained to rescue travellers in danger on the Alps. In our case, the animals did their work so thoroughly that none of us dared move, as to do so was the signal for prolonged barking and blood-curdling growls.

An early start was made the next morning, my departure being witnessed by a large crowd. Before leaving I contributed liberally to the monastery funds in recognition of having been the guest of the lamas who,

I must say, made excellent transport arrangements. Soon after leaving Deskit we had to wade over large stretches of flooded land, caused by the overflow of the Shyok and Nubra rivers at their junction. The valley at this point broadens out and consists of a level plain, bordered by gentle slopes of cultivated alluvial deposit. The plain itself is composed of gravel, and being scarcely above the river's edge, is frequently flooded. Devoid of vegetation, with the exception of small bushes of tamarisk and another shrub, it compares sharply with the neighbouring Nubra valley which is, as we shall see, densely wooded. The explanation is that the floods in the Shyok valley, caused by the sudden release of waters held up by glaciers in the upper course of the river, are much more severe and destructive than in the Nubra valley.

Cunningham, who wrote in 1854, gives details of several of these floods or inundations which had happened in the then recent years of 1826, 1833, and 1841. Whole villages were swept away by a wave in places thirty feet in height and acres of alluvial flats in the bed of the river, irrigated with laborious care, were washed away. Every tree was uprooted and the loss of human life, as well as the flocks and herds, was considerable. So far as I am aware, these tremendous cataclysms of long ago have not, fortunately, recurred in recent years.

A little farther on, the track skirts a cliff and we then cross the Shyok River by a suspension bridge, built some years ago by the Indian Government, which brings us to the oldest caravan route to Central Asia, the famous Yarkand road with its history of thousands of years of traffic.

CHAPTER X

MARCH TABLE

			Miles
Aug. 19th	..	Tegur to Panamik ..	.. 16
.. 20th	..	Panamik to Thirit ..	.. 27
.. 21st	..	Thirit to Khardung ..	.. 16
.. 22nd	..	Khardung to Leh ..	.. 25
		Crossed Khardung La	—
			17,600 ft.
			84
		Total distance from Srinagar,	777 miles

THE YARKAND ROAD

WE were now fairly on the Yarkand road and the effect on my servants was very marked—Subhana, who knew Central Asia and its cities, spoke of its importance and looked pleased with himself. He and the other servants stepped out with an air of confidence, born of leaving, at length, the lesser known tracks and being in the full tide of traffic once more. They apparently thought that, however interesting to the Sahib had been the Baltis and Ladakhis, the Turcoman traders made much more appeal to them. Truth to tell, I shared their feelings, as one of the dream-visions of my youth that had persisted had been a caravan route, though always with camels. I had already seen them, laden with merchandise, passing through the Khyber Pass, but the Yarkand road seemed to be in a class of its own, there being none at the part where I then was. One associates the so-called ship of the desert with a more or less dignified and stately procession, and their average rate of travel is not very high. By contrast, ponies and mules were here the beasts of burden, and the sound of the bells on

their harness, as they jostled and tried to pass one another gave an air of bustle not usual with camels. Besides being hung with bells, the harness of both mules and ponies was decorated with many coloured streamers and ribbons.

Pliny, who flourished in the early years of the Christian era, mentions this road, and the same kind of merchandise amongst others, is being carried over it to-day as in his time. The custom of barter or exchange of the products of one country for those of another still obtains, the city of Leh being a great centre where goods are sold or exchanged. It was not so much on account of any particularly striking or picturesque feature at this point that the highway came up to expectation, as for the general interest it evoked, apart from the air of good-humoured bustle and cheerfulness on all sides. So far as we could judge by appearances, such a thing as labour troubles were unknown, and had not my own experiences taught me to the contrary, I could have imagined them not to exist here. But the difference between myself and the Turcoman trader as employer would doubtless account for this.

As we marched along the road I found myself musing on the glamour that attaches to roads and their appeal to the imagination. To begin with, the fellow traveller and wayfarer we met with must have come from somewhere and be going elsewhere. He is a dull dog indeed who does not find himself thinking at times of where the way leads to or has come from. The literature of the open road is extensive, and writers transform any track into something for each man's heart's desire or otherwise. There is a good deal to be said for Hazlitt's idea that it is better, when walking, to be without a

companion, and there was no one to interrupt me or to say me nay, as thoughts of famous roads came uppermost in my mind.

I have already said that the Yarkand road came up to my expectations, but it occurred to me that this was more than could be said for some others. I remembered the descriptions I had read of the scene in which is laid so much of A. E. W. Mason's fine novel *The Broken Road*, on the North-West Frontier, but I had to admit being disappointed later, when I found myself on the spot. Perhaps the jingle of harness bells near me suggested the ringing of temple bells—anyway, I thought of the road to Mandalay, but I did not know then that some time later it would not quite come up to the expectations that I had unconsciously formed of it from Kipling's lyric and the melody to which it was set. I remember feeling at that time that there was something lacking when a not-too-clean train bore me slowly one Christmas Eve towards that interesting city. If I may digress a moment, I am inclined to think that Flecker's lines on "The Golden Road to Samarkand" in the play *Hassan*, beautiful in themselves, without the fine setting they had on the London stage, must have raised many a stay-at-home imagination to a pitch that could not be sustained by contact with reality. He is a happy man whose imagination either does not run too far ahead, or is not disturbed by contact with things as they are.

To resume our journey, towards noon we reached the Thirit *Lungma*, a mountain torrent running into the Nubra River, and being late in the day, there was a large volume of water flowing. My party had some difficulty in crossing, as it was impossible to ford it on foot, so we went over on ponies, the water coming up to our knees.

There were no accidents though some of my stores got wet, but nothing of importance. A little way on was the hamlet of Thirit where we changed ponies ; everybody had turned out to greet us, any work in hand being dropped. In point of fact, the passing through of caravans and attention to their wants is the principal industry of villages along the Yarkand road, and they correspond, to some extent, to the posting stations on our main roads before the era of railways. On this occasion four young women were able to earn something by posing for my camera. At first they treated the matter as a great joke and clung to each other when it was suggested ; but eventually, being satisfied of its harmlessness, and encouraged by my offer to pay them, they consented, though one damsel covered her face at the critical moment.

I had arrived on foot, much to the astonishment of the *goa*, who rebuked Subhana for allowing me to do so. It was all in vain to explain that it was my own choice, and in the end the *goa* said I must ride, as to walk on the Yarkand road was one of the things that was " not done," or words to that effect. It is true that one rarely or never sees anyone walking, so after some seven hundred miles, I found myself obliged to ride once more. Ponies being provided for all hands, I mounted on the hard wooden saddle and endured discomfort for the next mile, when I again dismounted and walked. I fear, however, that the prestige of the British on the Yarkand road that day may have been lowered on this account. Late in the afternoon we arrived at the village of Tegur where we halted and camped for the night.

We were now in the Nubra valley, which was of considerable width, for the most part sandy and shingly

and partly covered with a low growth of tamarisk. On each side the mountains rose sharply to a great height, giving an air of grandeur, and whereas some of the valleys we had passed through had, in places, an uncanny and sinister look, we found here an almost cheerful aspect. It was curious to note that all the villages have sprung up where side ravines join the valley and are built on the fan-shaped alluvial deposit brought down and accumulated there. A distinguishing feature of the Nubra valley was that the cultivated area around the villages was divided into fields or plots, each surrounded by hedges of dry thorns. These hedges give some protection from the numerous pack animals passing through on their way to and from Chinese-Turkestan and India. A source of income to the natives is letting out pastures to the traders for grazing.

Towards seven o'clock, when I was anticipating my dinner, a strong gale sprang up suddenly, accompanied by clouds of dust. In less than ten minutes there was a violent hurricane raging and it was impossible to see anything; fires had to be rapidly extinguished as sparks and bits of lighted wood were being scattered everywhere, and before long there was chaos in the camp. All tents were down and everybody had to sit on things to prevent them being swept away, and the howling of the wind made it impossible to hear oneself speak. I remember, when the storm was at its height, peering out from the blanket under which I lay huddled up on the ground and seeing a saucepan blown past me at a great rate.

The discomfort caused by the sand and dust, which seemed to penetrate everything, and the necessity of having to crouch under cover as best we could, to say nothing of the absence of food, made up a most dismal

night. As it was getting light the storm abated, and daylight revealed the utmost disorder, the tents being scattered about, while blankets, kit, pots, pans, and stores were lying in all directions. To this day there are pages of my diary missing, blown to the winds on the Yarkand road. It took us till about ten o'clock to recover the gear and put it in something like order. Only once before had I experienced a similar dust storm, when, at Tel-el-Kebir, in Egypt, a *khamzin* raged for over forty-eight hours.

These sudden storms are characteristic of the Nubra valley and frequently cause considerable damage. The climate of Ladakh is one of extremes, being very arid, with an average rainfall of probably not more than three inches per annum, which falls mostly in the early spring and late autumn. In the summer, the sky is either bright and clear or at times overcast with very light, high clouds of the cirrus type—cumulus clouds being rarely seen. The temperature is frequently high, more particularly in the valleys, the shade temperature being dependent on factors such as bare rocks, while nights and mornings are generally cool.

Surrounded by mountains of great altitudes, the current of air which passes over them contains but a small amount of moisture, and constant strong winds blow mostly in the direction of the valleys, due probably to their great depth. The wind rises in the early part of the afternoon and increases gradually until sunset, when it dies down. Owing to the great dryness of the air, the well-known phenomena of the issue of sparks from human hair, woollen clothing, and blankets can be seen, under suitable conditions. Cunningham, an authority of considerable standing, makes out a good

case in support of his belief that the climate was formerly much milder and less dry.

We continued our journey up the valley towards Panamik, and once again I was seated on an uncomfortable saddle. Most of the traders to be seen came from Central Asia, particularly from Chinese-Turkestan, and they were entitled to look cheerful. Those southward bound to Leh would be pleased at the near prospect of reaching the end of a six hundred mile journey, and selling their goods. Those on the return journey to their own country, laden with money and new goods in exchange, were equally pleased. Before long we overtook a caravan bound for Kashgar, with which I rode as far as Panamik. The owner was a handsome man with a friendly manner, but our first attempt at talking in Hindustani was a failure.

Later we discovered that each possessed a slight knowledge of Persian and it was not long before we carried on a conversation, though perhaps somewhat disjointedly. I gathered that he had been in Peking and most parts of Central Asia; he related many incidents of an interesting character, of which, I regret to say, I could not understand all the details. My companion, like the majority of the traders on this route, was a Turcoman, a native of Chinese-Turkestan. History shows that race to be of a very warlike nature, but this is not apparent in the course of conversation with individuals, who are cheery, good fellows, taking a joke and talking freely without overstepping the mark, or becoming familiar in any way. In this respect I was reminded of the Pathans in the Khyber Pass, with their air of natural good breeding. Apropos of this, Sir Francis Younghusband notes that he met in his

travels natives of such high breeding that they made, by contrast, the ordinary Englishman look almost uncouth.

The Turcoman is generally described as having an Aryan look and he is certainly not of pure Tartar descent. His complexion is scarcely darker than that of Europeans and he has red lips, florid cheeks, and sometimes a long beard. Their dress is most impressive, consisting of a long outer robe reaching nearly to the ground, open in front and showing a shorter undercoat girt at the waist ; frequently a white turban is worn and I noticed fine black leather boots. The precise origin of the Turcomans does not appear to be known and it is only traced to a country not farther west than the shores of the Caspian sea. They claim to be the founders of the Ottoman Empire and have a tradition of descent from garrisons dating from the time of Alexander the Great ; as may be expected, the subject of their origin has given rise to a good deal of speculation.

We were in the heart of the densely wooded Nubra valley, and one could not fail to notice the difference between it and the bare Shyok valley. As we have said before, the destruction caused by floods in the latter is very much more severe than in the Nubra valley, in which vegetation flourishes more easily. The trees of Ladakh are few and far between and the chief are the willow and the poplar. The former grows near the watercourses and is used extensively for basket-making ; the latter is the most valuable wood in the country, as with its straight stem, it is especially suitable for bridges and beams of houses. Besides these there are the *elaegnus* and the pencil cedar which are indigenous ; and also the tamarisk and a Tibetan furze, the latter being the principal fuel in the country. Fruit trees

grow, but sometimes not well, the chief being apple, apricot, walnut, mulberry, and occasionally, the grape-vine.

After several miles, we crossed the Chamsing *Lungma* flowing from a broad *nala*, the stream being split up into rivulets, some of which were quite deep. A little farther on we came to a fine stretch of flooded grass and then entered Panamik, where I camped in the compound with the caravan of my Turcoman fellow-traveller, with whom I took tea. I sat outside his tent and found the tea very good, much more like that which one gets at home, and a welcome change after the Tibetan variety, with its mixture of rancid butter and other ingredients. I was treated with the greatest courtesy, and we discussed the route northward over the Kara-koram mountains, which was very much in my mind. I noticed some of the caravan party at a meal, eating a kind of stew. Their food generally is simple, being chiefly milk, and when at home, flesh from their herds, while on the march they buy provisions at the villages through which they travel.

Panamik is the last village in Ladakh, on the Yarkand road, at which supplies can be obtained before Chinese-Turkestan is reached. It may be called the "railhead" of this trade route and there is a good supply of grain and other native provisions. All the same, I would strongly recommend European travellers, going to Chinese-Turkestan by this route, to be entirely independent of this local supply and to bring all grain and forage from Leh. One finds oneself, to some extent, up against a kind of combine or monopoly, and meeting difficulties which the regular users certainly do not. I found that the exceptional position on the route was the cause, in my case, for extortionate prices being demanded.

From Panamik to the top of the Kara-koram Pass was about six days' march northward. My idea had been to take a few ponies, and leave the bulk of my baggage here, but for various reasons, I abandoned this plan.

To begin with, I was rather pressed for time, as indeed I was throughout the whole of my trip. Then as soon as the local authorities were told that I wanted a few ponies for the journey to the Kara-koram Pass and back, they with one accord began to make excuses. I was told that there were none available, all being required for a British Foreign Office personage who was travelling down from Central Asia. He was someone of importance, official instructions having been given in such a way as to make a deep impression on those concerned, and all was ready for him.

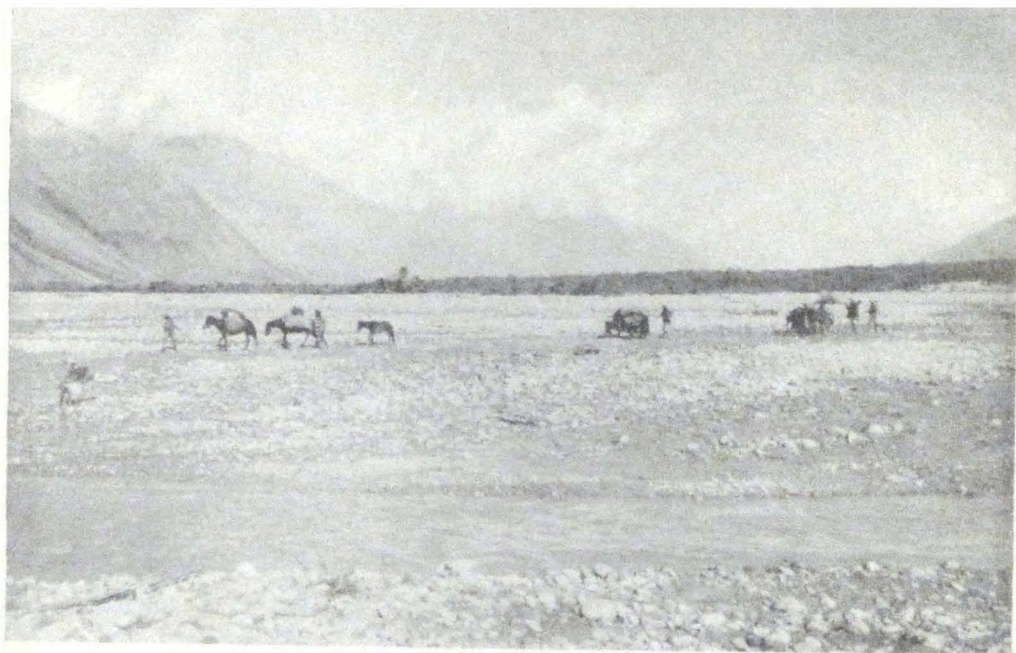
Later it was agreed to let me have three ponies, but they demanded for them an extortionate price which I was disinclined to pay, at the time, my funds having been somewhat depleted by robbery at Prahnu. This being the case, I changed my plans and decided to go south to Leh. Only those with an ardent desire for travel can appreciate the regret with which one turns back on such occasions. The consolation, if any, left to me was that, had I gone to the top of the pass, I should have been consumed with a desire to go still farther! In that event, however, I was morally bound to stop, having signed an undertaking to the Indian Government not to enter Chinese-Turkestan.

Some time later I met the unknown one of the Foreign Office, much bronzed and sunburnt. He proved to be quite one of the most interesting men I ever remember meeting. Though not at liberty to mention either his name or the nature of his work, I have rarely listened

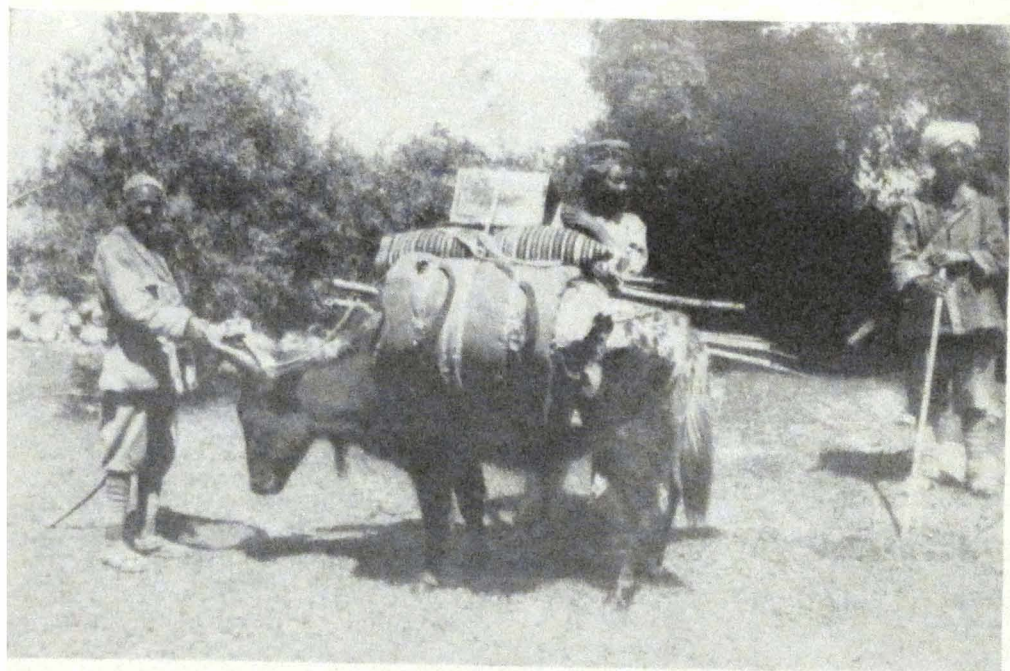
with more attention to anyone than when he gave me a brief account of his travels. He had left Peking in 1916 and it was then 1922, the interval having been occupied by travelling through Central Asia, during which I understood he had covered over 10,000 miles. I confess that, in the back of my mind, I was beginning to entertain the possibility of rather fancying myself a little as a walker, having by then done over a thousand miles in under three months.

It can be imagined that I speedily banished the idea on hearing of this man's thousands of miles. He now holds an important post in the Far East and I suggested to him that he should write an account of his experiences, but so far as I am aware, he has not done so. Even after the Foreign Office blue pencil, if there be such a thing, had done its best or worst, according to the point of view, there should be many publishers for such a work. We are told that to the making of books there is no end, to which the cynic adds the remark that, not infrequently, those who know most of a subject write upon it least. So far as the political side of affairs in Central Asia goes, this official would appear to furnish an illustration of the truth of the latter remark.

The following morning, August 20th, the caravan was astir before daylight, making ready and loading up. The night before, I had noticed a finely decorated Turkestan saddle on one of their mounts. It was beautifully coloured, with a vermilion seat bordered by a delicately outlined pattern in yellow and green. The edges were lined with chased ivory, the peak standing high and the back well raised. My offer to buy this saddle was met with a refusal, but in the morning I told Subhana to renew the attack and he eventually



AUTHOR'S CARAVANS IN NUBRA VALLEY ON YARKAND ROAD



LOADING UP A ZHO

succeeded in purchasing it for thirty-five rupees. After seeing the caravan start I set off for Tegur on my way south to Leh. Word had been sent on in advance to the village to have transport ready by the time I arrived. However, no preparations had been made, and it was some hours before a mixed lot of ponies, supplemented by a zho and an ass, were assembled and loaded up.

I had not left Tegur far behind before I overtook another caravan bound for Leh. One could not help noticing the fine horses, for which the Turcoman is well known, as also for the care they take of them. The horse stands high in the Turcoman legends and in some parts of Chinese-Turkestan, I am told that claim is made that their horses are descended from the famous Ruksh of Roostum, the horse of the Persian Hercules. Though on the thin side, these animals have large bodies and plenty of stamina. Seeing that I was walking, the leader offered me the use of one of his spare horses, and thinking it might be more dignified, I accepted. It was a fiery little animal and on it was placed the saddle purchased in Panamik; I foresaw some fun with its polished slippery seat and the short stirrup leathers which could not be adjusted. The pony may, perhaps, have been startled by my white helmet, but after some trouble, I succeeded in mounting. I was able to manage him, though he had a hard mouth, and we went away at a canter which soon developed into a gallop, heading straight for a *mani* wall.

By this time I found that my control of the animal was somewhat imperfect; about five yards from the wall, fortunately for both of us, he stumbled in a hole and came down with a crash—a regular purler for me. Neither of us luckily were any the worse for the fall,

and I remounted. The caravan soon arrived, apparently relieved to find no damage done, but I felt that I had made no particular contribution to the prestige of British horsemanship. After this incident I rode on ahead, my pony being quite tractable and apparently used to me. Subhana joined me and was very pleased with himself as he had also been given a pony to ride. He told me we should not be able to reach Khalsar that night so it was decided to camp at Thirit instead.

On our way there we met three men, each of whom carried a clarinet, and they were at once identified by Subhana as of the tribe of Mons. In nearly every village in Ladakh are to be found one or more families of these people, who are treated by the remainder of the inhabitants as being of an inferior class. They are generally musicians and follow the trade of either carpenter or blacksmith. The origin of this more or less lowly race is rather obscure, but it is fairly well established that they are descendants of an Indian tribe of colonists associated with early Buddhist missionaries ; and their humble position is thought to result from having been, as a nation, conquered by the Tibetans.

In the district of Zanskar, which was never occupied by Dards, the rock sculptures and inscriptions are almost entirely of a Buddhist character and the ruins of castles are called Mon-castles. Another very curious fact in support of their Indian origin is that there is an order of lamas, whose dress is yellow, the colour of the original Buddhist clerical robe ; to this day all Indians, Kashmiris, and Dogras in the district of Zanskar are called Mons. One of the clarinets that these musicians carried was rather handsomely mounted with silver bands and fittings, and I offered, without success, to buy it. They

played some of their music for me, which I appreciated as best I could, and I am told that their songs, when translated, show some degree of poetry.

Thirit was reached without further incident and we camped for the night, during which rain fell—rather unusual for August. I conversed with the caravan people and learned that the Yarkand ponies are fed and cared for somewhat differently than with us. Grazing is allowed at stated times—during the forenoon, the evening, and at midnight, for an hour at a time; they are watered sparingly when hot, and if the animals drink freely, they are said to become too fat and are given more exercise until the symptom disappears. One early traveller says that in Chinese-Turkestan the stables have only a small opening in the roof, with the supposed object of making the occupant look up, but this lacks confirmation.

It was still raining when we left Thirit the next day, and there was a good muster at our departure, perhaps in expectation of a repetition of my performance of the day before. The pony, however, was quiet enough, and after fording the Thirit *Lungma*, we soon re-crossed the Shyok suspension bridge, and traversing a stretch of loose sand and stones, we came to Khalsar. Our new transport was ready, and in less than an hour, we were on our way to the village of Khardung, lying at an altitude of over 15,000 feet above sea level. The path led up a narrow gorge, and about two miles outside, we made a steep ascent of some 2,500 feet; we reached Khardung, one of the highest villages in Western Tibet, at five o'clock, and camped in a shady willow compound.

The following morning we had before us a twenty-five mile stretch, with the crossing of the Khardung Pass,

over 17,600 feet above sea level, before reaching Leh. Our transport was made up of ponies, zhos, and yaks, all my servants being mounted on the former, as it was a long march. The zho is a hybrid between the ordinary cow and the wild horse ; it is the Tibetan ox and inhabits the higher plateaux and tablelands. It is one of the finest and largest oxen, being a species nearly allied to the bison group. It has a fine appearance, with long shaggy black hair on its flanks and the under parts of its body. The bushy tail is used in India as a *chowri*, or fly-whisk, and the long hair hanging from below the knees give it a peculiar petticoated effect. It is most useful for crossing difficult passes where there is ice, upon which it is sure-footed ; and it will carry a heavy load, going almost anywhere that a man can go.

There are two kinds of yaks, the domesticated or grunting ox, and the wild. In Europe a false impression is frequently gained, for most specimens imported, so far, have belonged to a small domesticated kind from Darjeeling, usually black and white in colour, instead of the totally black of the pure breed. The domesticated yaks cannot be compared to the wild ones, which are confined to the central plateau of Tibet, and are found especially in the Chang-chenmo in Western Tibet. They inhabit higher regions than any other animal, but can neither eat corn nor live at low altitudes.

Just as we started off, my servant's pony took it into his head to bolt, and in rounding the corner, threw its rider on to the track, which was perhaps fortunate, as it led along the edge of a small precipice. He was not hurt and the incident caused intense merriment amongst our party. We ascended gradually for the first eight miles, and I could hear Subhana telling my

servants of the awful headaches from which they would suffer as we went higher up the pass. They were so impressed by his account of the trouble ahead of us that they came to me for medicine to counteract any ills and I promised to give them aspirin when necessary.

We came at length to a steep bit, just before reaching the summit, made more difficult by its being over a small glacier, and different from the usual Himalayan type in that its surface was free from stones. Just ahead of us was a caravan of Turcoman traders and I saw two of their ponies, heavily laden, slip and fall, sliding down the icy incline until brought to a standstill by a projecting rock. The load had to be freed to allow the pony to get on his feet again. Many ponies had not had the good luck to be thus saved, as at one point, there was a deep ravine filled with their carcasses. Just above hovered a number of grim-looking birds of prey—probably kites—fresh, doubtless, from feeding on the remains; altogether rather a horrible sight, but a reminder of the fate awaiting those injured by slipping or falling on the ice.

It was not long before all of us except Subhana were suffering from mountain sickness, intense headache, and vertigo. The drivers, being used to crossing the pass, did not suffer, but the ponies were affected, as they were breathing heavily and their bodies were swaying from side to side. Owing to our giddiness, we had dismounted and the animals were led carefully over the icy slopes of the small glacier, the last hundred yards being on the steep side. My servants, to whom I now gave aspirin, were by this time feeling so bad that they took no interest in my baggage, and I had to attend to some of the loads which had become loose and were in

danger of slipping off. Although the ponies were in difficulties, it was curious to notice that the other pack animals, the zhos and a yak, appeared quite at home, being perfectly steady on the steepest icy inclines. Just before reaching the summit, my men said they were too ill to continue, but I urged them on and gained the top—17,600 feet above sea level—where they immediately lay down.

The Ladakhi drivers, who usually live at over 14,000 feet, made some little show of being unwell, but I think it was done perhaps to excite sympathy for possible extra pay. Subhana, having been most cheerful on the way up, became aggressively so after reaching the summit and challenged me to a shooting match, with the birds of prey as targets. I had to decline this, as apart from throbbing pains in my head and a strong feeling of nausea, I never was a first-class shot. In point of fact I think that Subhana himself was slightly affected by the altitude, though his pride would not allow him to show it, possibly after the way he had chaffed the servants on the way up.

Before us lay the Indus winding its way along the valley, and in the distance the highest peaks of the Kara-korams showed up clearly. But for a violent headache I could have stayed some time enjoying the prospect; so I decided to start the descent, which was fairly easy going compared to some parts of the ascent. We had already got into our stride when one of the ponies, laden with *yakdans*, slipped and rolled some distance down a slight slope. Happily both animal and load were recovered and neither seemed the worse for the accident. I was still feeling very ill and pushed on as fast as possible. It seemed to us an endless descent, and at one time I almost decided to camp at Polu, a

place used by traders going in the opposite direction, but I resisted the temptation and determined to sleep in Leh that night.

Halting at the foot of the pass I waited for my servants, who soon arrived leading their ponies, saying they were too ill to ride; I sympathised with them but pushed on, and we at last came in sight of Leh. Unfortunately, the town appeared to get no nearer in spite of our walking; night was falling, and being ahead of my transport and uncertain of the road, I sat down and waited for my Ladakhi guide. The transport was a long time in coming, and while waiting, I was entertained by two young Ladakhi girls who seemed very amused at my presence; both were industriously spinning wool as they looked at me and chattered. At length my party arrived and we came to the outskirts of Leh, from which I went straight to the rest-house where I found a comfortable *charpoy* or native bed. We were all somewhat recovered by this time from the mountain sickness, but the headaches remained and we were glad of the prospect of a good night's rest after our hard day. We had marched twenty-five miles and crossed a pass nearly 18,000 feet high.

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, I paid off my transport men of the previous day; they had mustered in front of the rest-house, some of them holding their heads and had even brought with them the leanest pony, as evidence of the evil effects of the pass and of yesterday's march. It had proved a tiring journey and perhaps it would have been better—certainly more comfortable—if we had taken longer over it. None of us, however, were any the worse for it and we appreciated all the more the day's rest in Leh.

CHAPTER XI

MARCH TABLE

Aug. 23rd .. Leh

Total distance from Srinagar, 777 miles

WHERE FOUR ROADS MEET

LEH is the chief town of the province of Ladakh or Western Tibet and is one of the highest capitals in the world, having an altitude of 11,500 feet above sea level. It is built on a sandy plateau ten miles broad, situated four miles from the right bank of the Indus, and has a population of several thousand. The centre of the town is the market place, to which the narrow tortuous streets lead. The houses are all flat-roofed and built contiguously of large sun-dried bricks with the walls sloping in considerably to the roof ; they are generally two-storied and frequently have wooden balconies. The walls are covered with bright red and white stucco and some of the roofs are piled up with mounds composed of the horns of wild animals, domestic sheep, or goats, forming a religious symbol ; they are also decorated with small flags and strips of coloured cotton known as *hlatos*.

The inside of these houses has been aptly described by Moorcroft, who said that " the floor serves for chair, table, bed, and is not infrequently shared with sheep and goats, and swarms with more objectionable tenants." A rough shutter takes the place of both door and window, and chimneys are unknown. Plantations of poplars surround the town, which is enclosed by a wall with conical and square towers at intervals, and is dominated

by a spur upon which are situated the old palace, the monastery, and other buildings.

It is of interest to recall, by way of comparison, the descriptions of Leh given by early European travellers. Father Wessels records, in his admirable account of the early Jesuit travellers in Central Asia (recently published), that Francesco de Azevedo, with a companion, entered Leh on October 25th, 1631, being the first European to do so. When they came near the town, etiquette required them to alight from their horses and await permission to enter ; on receiving it, they were, by the King's orders, assigned a residence and provided with the necessary fuel, water, and some measures of barley. Azevedo gives only a few lines of description of Leh as follows : " It is built on the slope of a small mountain and numbers about 800 families. Half a mile lower down, but still quite visible, flows the river that goes to Lahore. By the town itself passes a mountain stream which works a large number of mills ; a few trees are found here." Wessels observes that if Azevedo's figures are correct, the population has rather diminished than increased ; Thomson in 1847 was informed that it was 5,000, while at present there are about 2,500 inhabitants.

Leh was not visited again until 1715, when Hippolito Desideri spent nearly two months there, from June 26th to August 17th. He started from Srinagar and went along the main trade route, halting at various places, including Dras, and described Leh as follows : " Situated in a wide plain, entirely surrounded by mountains and studded with villages, it is built up the slope of a mountain up to the residence of the chief Lama and the palace of the King, large and fine buildings. The whole is crowned with a big fort. Below, and on the flank, the town is

surrounded by walls and defended by gates." The above are the first descriptions of Leh given by the early European travellers that I have been able to trace. During the last century, we have the visits of Moorcroft, Thomson, Cunningham, and others. In this connexion, the Ladakh chronicles, reporting the arrival of Moorcroft and his companion in 1820-1822, speak of them as being the first Europeans to visit Leh, the writer, presumably, being unaware of the earlier Jesuit travellers.

Leh is to the Yarkand road what Hong Kong is to the Far East. The former derives its present importance as much from being the centre of the Yarkand and Tibetan trade as from being the Western capital of Lamaism and the old seat of Government. It is very probable that the traffic through here, on which customs or tolls were doubtless levied, was the reason for its becoming the principal city. It would also appear fair to assume the possibility of Leh existing, from the earliest times, as a trading centre, due to its topographical position at the intersection of the main trading routes. Four of these converge here, coming respectively from Yarkand to the north, Lhasa to the east, India to the south, and Kashmir to the west. Along these routes are carried imports and exports of merchandise in considerable quantities for through transit, sale, or exchange by barter in Leh. Most of the goods from India come through Kashmir, but a small percentage by way of Kulu. The Central Asian trade comes principally from Yarkand and Kashgar, only about twenty per cent. coming from Tibet.

The statistics of Ladakh trade for the last ten years show a great relative increase in value, a feature common to most trade reports of to-day. The actual weight of

goods over this period has not varied much, but the value has fluctuated considerably. A maximum increase of one hundred and fifty per cent. is recorded for the years 1918-1919 to 1920-1921, while for the last year shown in these reports, 1922-1923, the increase is nearly double that of the year 1913-1914. The situation in Russia, with the break up of her trade, and the variations in the economic conditions, are shown in these statistics. During the three years from 1917-1918 to 1919-1920, there were large imports into India of Russian money—paper, silver, and gold. The value of this paper money had fallen so much in Yarkand that traders sent it to India to dispose of it. As regards gold and silver, the scarcity of these metals in India, owing to the war, caused a great demand and a consequent rise in price. The Bolshevists having at one time placed an embargo on British and Chinese goods, a certain amount of trade by smuggling arose between Chinese-Turkestan and Russia. This led to a temporary increase of trade supplies from Ladakh, but it is understood that detection and confiscation of goods caused this to die down.

Among the principal items of merchandise imported from India into Kashgar are Indian brocades, Java products, such as sugar and spices, and British cotton goods, longcloths, and dyes. Russia used to be a buyer of indigo, black tea, paints, dyes, and European and Indian cotton goods, but this trade is at present suspended. Khotan silks and Yarkand *numnahs*, or felt rugs, are exported from Kashgar into India, as also considerable quantities of *charas*, or hemp drug, the *hashish* of Arabia.

While I was strolling through the town I came across the hospital of the Moravian Mission and made a call

on the doctor and his wife ; in the course of conversation I mentioned my wish to visit Himis monastery the next day. I learned that there would probably be considerable difficulty in getting transport, ponies being scarce at the height of the trading season. Owing, however, to a personal introduction to the *tehsildar*, I had no difficulty in obtaining transport, and a messenger was sent to inform the head abbot of my intended visit. I should like to take this opportunity of acknowledging the good offices of the Moravian Mission in this matter, as well as on other occasions. The *tehsildar* complied, as usual, with the instructions, but not with very good grace—the usual echo of the political situation in India.

While on the subject of transport, an unusual form occasionally used is that of carrying loads by means of sheep, which is called the *changpa* method. It is not often met with or described, and the best account of it is that by Captain Biddulph, who gives details of its use with success in 1873, on the occasion of the second Forsyth Mission to Yarkand. The Tartars, who employ this method, put thirty-two pounds on each sheep and march about seven or eight miles a day, but Biddulph limited the loads to twenty pounds and had them secured by breast and breech ropes. By this means the loads were kept fairly steady, not being so liable to shift as they sank into the fleece. One man can look after a considerable number of animals—say, thirty—and two men could probably manage a hundred ; and over fair ground and on a broad front, about a mile and three-quarters can be covered in an hour. There is great difficulty in crossing streams, due to the weight of water absorbed by the fleece.

The fact that a flock of sheep, each animal carrying

twenty pounds, can march three hundred and thirty miles in a month with only one casualty is remarkable, particularly so when, as was the case, there was a scarcity of forage and a very low temperature. A sheep can carry on without grass or water where a pack pony cannot, and under certain conditions, this method should be suitable for sportsmen; explorers also would find a flock of sheep a useful addition to supplies in camp. Individual travellers, however, might have trouble in purchasing sheep, except at an exorbitant price, and still more difficulty in disposing of those not consumed. In the case of large expeditions with Government support or financial backing, this method over suitable routes would be well worth consideration.

There are few places in the world, even in Central Asia, where a greater number of Oriental types are to be seen than in Leh during the summer. The size of the bazaar, which is now and then used as a polo ground, appears out of all proportion to the rest of the town, being very broad and long. It is lined on either side with shops which are closed during the winter, but in summer, at the height of the trading season, they are full of Eastern wares and crowded with buyers. Before the war one met Pathans, Tibetans, Chinese, Persians, Arabs, Tajiks from Bokhara, besides Baltis, Kashmiris, Indians of all creeds, and Turcomans. At present, owing to the unsettled post-war conditions in Central Asia, trade is not so brisk as it was, although it is rapidly reaching its pre-war state. Even now one meets Mahomedans, Sikhs, Tibetans, Kashmiris, Turcomans, Ladakhis, and Argoons mingled together; some of the Turcomans stalk about in an authoritative manner, and others are seated in silent rows. They form an interesting

contrast to the other people, having an imposing air and a dignified bearing, free from both the cringing of the Indians and the buffoonery of the Ladakhis.

One cannot fail to admire the Turcomans, whose weather-beaten faces testify to the hardships they habitually undergo. Most of the traders one saw in Leh had come from Kashgar and Yarkand; after leaving Karghalik in Chinese-Turkestan, they had crossed five passes of over 16,000 feet, three of which can be said to be dangerous. For at least ten consecutive marches, caravans have to take their own supplies, none of any kind being obtainable on the way. The traders suffer hardships from blizzards, which are frequent on the high passes, and a large number of ponies are lost annually when crossing torrents and glaciers in places. They will start off with their caravans on long journeys of over six hundred miles, in the wilds of Central Asia, with as little concern as a clerk making his daily journey to the city.

I sometimes wondered whether they really leave their homes for love of adventure or for monetary gain; there can be little doubt, in my mind, that they possess a natural wandering spirit and a desire for adventure. These children of the desert, as they have often been called, have for thousands of years crossed the mighty Kara-koram Range, not from a lust for war or to conquer the riches of their neighbours, but for the spirit of trading, exploration, and adventure that animates them, as without this they would not endure the fatigue and hardships they inevitably encounter during these long journeys. Their own lands are fertile enough to supply every need, and allow them to live in perfect comfort did they so desire.

The Argoons are the result of a cross between a Turkestan father and a Ladakhi mother, and like most half-breeds, they appear to possess the least admirable characteristics of each race. They have a kind of monopoly of the transport of goods between Leh and Yarkand, and in this respect are excellent at their work. They are said to be increasing in numbers, which is doubtless correct, as they have a home both in Yarkand and Leh, with a wife or two in each place. The fact of a Ladakhi woman pairing with a Turcoman trader during the trading season appears to carry with it no stigma. This comparative looseness of the marriage tie is shown more particularly in the system of fraternal polyandry which prevails, the marriage ceremony in Ladakh being generally a simple affair, and as before mentioned, there are no religious rites.

There is, however, an orthodox marriage, which is a complicated and costly affair, not often met with; it brings much stronger ties, which cannot be broken so easily. It takes place in the childhood of the bride and bridegroom and is not consummated until after they are twelve years of age. To begin with, the *onpo*, a kind of oracle or wise man, must be given the name and date of birth of the prospective mate; he looks up his books, and unless the year and person are auspicious, the project is dropped. In the event of the *onpo* reporting favourably, he appoints a day, and a third party—not empty-handed by the way—visits the parents of the proposed mate and makes the first overture, everything being then arranged.

On the marriage day, a great feature is the fetching of the bride (or bridegroom) by some five or more people called *nyopas*, clad in beautiful silk dresses and high-crowned

hats; they enter the house and perform three dances, during which a boy and girl burn incense. By this time, there is a crowd of onlookers, and the *nyopas* then come out and dance round a large pile of provisions—meat, bread, and beer. After this an incense-burning girl puts on the bride's costume and shows the trousseau, which is displayed hanging over a rope, the domestic pots and pans to be given being shown on the floor.

Wedding gifts are next presented, and various dances are performed until the hour foretold by the *onpo* arrives, and the bride appears for the actual wedding. She usually wears a ceremonial dress lent for the occasion and now puts on a white head-dress, the donning of which constitutes the actual wedding rite. The bride is seated on a carpet, and on the arrival of the lamas, the blessing ceremonies are performed, in return for which the *nyopas* give to each lama a piece of cloth, to the parents scarves, and to the relatives small bits of white cloth. The lamas then leave and the bride is finally presented with salutation scarves by her parents and friends. Just before going away the father and uncle of the bridegroom enter the house and thank the parents for the gift of the bride. The latter now praises all that has been done for her by her parents, which generally causes floods of tears; and she is then taken into a small chapel of the house to take a final farewell before her departure at midnight, the *nyopas* accompanying her to her new home.

On the way the bride and her escort are met by lamas who perform a service, the effect of which is to drive away any evil spirits which may have accompanied the bride; for this purpose the bridegroom provides a new pot filled with dregs, which, after incantation, the lamas break and throw away as a symbol of dispersal. On



GROUP OF LADAKHI WOMEN



BACK VIEW OF LADAKHI WOMEN SHOWING HEAD DRESS
AND SHEEPSKIN CLOAK

arrival at the bridegroom's house more ceremonies take place; and everybody down to the servants is entertained, the cost being noted, as this point becomes of importance in the event of a divorce. If a man or woman marries an additional husband or wife, as the case may be, there are no more wedding festivities, merely the unorthodox method being used.

Divorce may be obtained by the payment of money or goods, each party receiving back his or her own property. Among the lower classes marriage and divorce are frequent, but the Ladakhi is a practical-minded husband, and in many cases will compound the matter by a present of some sheep or other cattle.

A Ladakhi wife, on the death of her husband—an eldest brother—may find herself still with minor husbands; if there are no children, she can rid herself of her husband's brothers by a very simple ceremony. She attaches one of her fingers with a thread to a finger of her dead husband. The breaking of the thread constitutes the divorce from the corpse, and at the same time, from the surviving brothers, and she is therefore free to marry again.

The burial of the dead is also of interest, for it shows us how the lamas are present on all occasions. Cremation is very frequently practised, but owing to the scarcity of fuel, it is often imperfectly carried out. The lamas, who preside at the ceremony and deal with the charred bones which may remain, offer sacrifices, the principal of which is liquid butter. Curiously enough, the larger bones are sometimes used to make musical instruments, while the smaller ones are ground into powder and made into medallions, which may either be placed in the *chortens*, or religious monuments, or perhaps kept as souvenirs by the friends and relatives of the deceased.

Ladakh has since earliest times proved a bone of contention in Central Asia. We have mentioned before that the history of Baltistan and that of Ladakh were bound up together till about A.D. 1400, probably on account of their isolation. The Baltis then became Mahomedans, possibly owing to political considerations, and at that date the separation between the two countries becomes more marked. There were two kings reigning in Ladakh at that time and civil war broke out ; a bad period for the country would appear to have followed. Owing to its inaccessibility it had hitherto escaped invasion from Chinese-Turkestan and it was not till 1531 that Sultan Said of Kashgar, a Mahomedan ruler, crossed the Kara-koram Pass with an army, said to have numbered 14,000, and conquered the country. Later, a war ensued with Baltistan lasting from 1560-1640, during which Ladakh was again overrun. Then about 1646, Central Tibet, at that time a vassal state of China, invaded Ladakh, this being followed by a succession quarrel lasting from 1680-1780. The last two kings reigned from 1780-1834, when the Dogra wars caused the fall of the Western Tibetan Empire.

It is here of interest to review the political situation in Northern India in the early part of the nineteenth century. Apart from the East India Company, the Sikh Empire, led by Ranjit Singh, "The Lion of the Punjab," was likewise of paramount importance and a power to be considered. The Dogra tribe under Gulab Singh, the Maharajah of Jammu, was also by no means to be ignored, and he gradually became a friend of the British. When Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir in 1819, he was assisted by his ally Gulab Singh, but after the death of the former, differences arose between the Sikhs and the

East India Company ; and Gulab Singh felt more and more inclined to side with the British. By 1834 he had arrived at the stage of sounding the East India Company as to whether they would object to the campaign he had in mind against the kingdom of Ladakh. Because the British saw no reason to interfere, some writers considered that they incurred responsibility for the atrocities of the Ladakhi wars. It is extremely doubtful if Gulab Singh would have refrained from carrying out his plan, even if the British had objected, and in any case the latter were fully occupied with their own affairs. Apparently, a hundred years ago, as at the present time, there were people holding the view that the British should do " policeman " everywhere.

The Dogra chief, having sounded the British and finding them impartial, with no objection to his proposed campaign, decided to carry it out. The final conquest of Ladakh is a military feat to be proud of, for the risks involved were many. The severe cold in winter, and the lack of knowledge of the roads, would seriously handicap the Dogras ; and further, the barrenness of the country made it impossible to advance with a large army. But taking it on the whole, the Dogras were far superior to the Ladakhis, as the former had recently taken part in several wars in India. They had learnt elementary tactics, and above all, were disciplined ; their equipment was up-to-date, while that of their enemies was far behind the times ; but the greatest advantage they possessed was that the Dogras had a born leader and the Ladakhis none.

It was in 1834, after Gulab Singh had consolidated his power in Kishtwar, that he sent 10,000 men under Zorawar, a most able general, to conquer Ladakh. This

force entered the country by the Bhothkol Pass, at the head of the Suru valley, and met with little opposition then. It was not till August 16th that Zorawar was opposed for the first time by a Ladakhi force of any size; and this had been hastily mobilized and was commanded by a boy of eighteen. The Ladakhis were expecting reinforcements, and had it not been for the fact that their leader was killed, the invaders might have suffered; as it was the former were badly defeated. Desultory fighting continued until the winter, and Zorawar wished to return to Kishtwar, but without a present of money for Gulab Singh, this was impossible. Taxes were therefore levied on the inhabitants and an envoy sent to Leh to open negotiations. He suggested a sum of 15,000 rupees, which would have been paid had it not been for the interference of the Queen.

The Ladakhis did not make use of the winter, and on the approach of spring, the Dogras renewed the attack, eventually routing their enemy. Zorawar met King Tsepal and opened negotiations for peace; he restored the latter to his throne and ordered him to pay 50,000 rupees, which there was now no difficulty in raising. During the winter that followed the Ladakhis revolted and tried to throw off the Dogra yoke, but it only resulted in another invasion by Zorawar. Leh was invaded, the King was deposed, and Zorawar built the present fort, leaving a garrison of some three hundred men. There were several years of unrest and again in the winter of 1840-41 the Ladakhis rebelled, but were easily subdued. Realizing the state of the country, and the necessity for giving his conquered subjects something to do, Zorawar decided on a war against Baltistan, which was described in an earlier chapter.

The remainder of Zorawar's career will interest historians as it shows that, like other great generals, he refused to realise the possibility of being defeated. This is exemplified by his war against Central Tibet in the winter of 1841. One of the primary reasons for this campaign was to provide employment for the inhabitants of the newly conquered states, a difficulty which he had previously had to contend with. The campaign was doomed to failure from the outset, owing to its being undertaken in winter in a country where even during the summer the cold is intense, and Zorawar did not profit from his previous winter experiences in 1834. His failure recalls Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and the results in both cases were the same—absolute defeat. Zorawar was killed and his army gave up the struggle, retreat eventually turning to flight. Many prisoners were taken and even more died of exposure on their way back to Ladakh. A revolution broke out here, as in the case of Napoleon's conquered states, but it was easily quelled. Trade relations were then re-established and Ladakh became part of the Jammu and Kashmir State, as it is to-day.

The administration of Ladakh is in charge of a Wazir Wazarat, who is also responsible for Baltistan and the *tehsils* of Ladakh, Kargil, and Skardu. He has little to do, for crime is rare, the chief complaints being over plots of land and stealing of fuel and trees. His main function is supervision of trade in the summer months and he is assisted by subordinates in various districts who are responsible for helping caravaners and furnishing animals and grain. A British official, known as the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh, who resides in Leh during part of the summer months, looks after the

interest of traders, and all matters of importance are placed before him.

The reader may remember how, when I was passing through Turtok, I was tempted by the suggestion of getting a little of my own back by raiding a village, the people of which had treated me rather badly. For obvious reasons I had to forgo the adventure, much as it appealed to me. While in Leh a fascinating proposal was made, which stirred me deeply, as it opened up the prospect of literally a dream journey, with more than a spice of risk. I had been strolling through the bazaar and had visited an old curio shop, having fallen a victim to a Tibetan bow and arrow with sheath, amongst other things. I was walking back to the rest-house when a trader, from whom I had purchased some curios, came towards me in the company of Subhana. He expressed a wish to speak to me privately and my first thought was that he had decided as a great favour to let me have an antique teapot for the amount I had offered him, on condition that I kept such price a dead secret. It turned out to be nothing so commonplace as that.

I had been discussing with Subhana, who was entirely trustworthy and in my confidence, the possibility of going to Lhasa and had said, jokingly, that I would not mind going if a suitable opportunity offered. Some years before, he himself had made the attempt from Ladakh with an English party, only to be turned back when they had reached a point a few days' journey from their destination. I think he must have told the trader in confidence that I might go, if it could be arranged. Well, here was a definite proposal by a man whom he considered trustworthy, and who would not require an exorbitant remuneration for his services. Briefly, he

was prepared to get me to Lhasa in disguise and afterwards to see me back over the Indian frontier.

I could only reply at the moment that I would consider the proposal, but it seemed to be the chance of a lifetime and my imagination ran riot when I thought of its possibilities. As for the disguise, I was naturally dark in appearance, being very sunburnt, and I spoke some Persian and Hindustani. The time for the journey of 1,200 miles, a stay in Lhasa, and then back to India would, however, require some adjustment as regards leave from my Colonel. One serious objection was that, before being granted a permit to travel in Baltistan and Ladakh, I had signed an undertaking not to cross the frontier into either Chinese-Turkestan or Greater Tibet. As an officer, even if I could have arranged an extension of leave, to break this promise would probably have carried very serious consequences with it.

It can easily be seen that incidents of this kind would make it difficult for the Indian Government to give permits to other travellers, to say nothing of being put into an invidious position with the Tibetan Government. The more I thought of the plan, in spite of the serious drawbacks, the more I was thrilled, and the stronger became the appeal of Lhasa, the forbidden city. In the end, however, situated as I was, common sense prevailed and I was most reluctantly compelled to decline the most tempting offer that had ever been made to me. I have referred somewhat fully to this incident, as while these lines were being written, an account was published of a traveller who, having previously failed to obtain official permission to visit Lhasa, subsequently made the journey disguised as a servant.

It was much too hot in the middle of the day for seeing

the environs of Leh, as it involves much climbing or walking over loose sand ; to do so later, in the evening light, adds considerably to the charm of the prospect. Standing at the top of any of the surrounding hills one realizes the extreme clearness of the atmosphere, there being rarely a cloudy day ; and at sunset the whole country assumes a different aspect. Far away, yet appearing close, the distant snowy peaks gradually change colour, eventually fading to a soft purple hue, whilst the sandy plateau becomes a deep yellow ochre, turning finally to a very dark brick-coloured brown ; the whole is most awe-inspiring and the vastness of the mountains is brought home to one. The dark shadows and the variety of colour form a sharp contrast, due, it has been said, to the lack of oxygen in the atmosphere ; though there are not so many colours as one sees in Egyptian sunsets, for instance, they are equally impressive.

Perched on the top of the Namgyal Tsemo hill, just outside the town, are the ruins of the first royal palace, with the small hamlet of Chubi nestling below it. When the present monastery was built some of the old walls of the palace were used ; the latter was erected about A.D. 1520 by Trashi Namgyal, who was a younger brother and wanted the throne. He was extremely crafty and clever, while his elder brother was strong, and good at any kind of sport. Trashi Namgyal, to achieve his end, had his brother's eyes plucked out, and then sent him away. There was great danger that the throne would die out, as Trashi had no children, which was looked upon by the Ladakhis as a bad sign and a punishment. Trashi therefore gave his blind brother a wife, who bore him a son ; but the elder brother outlived Trashi and was eventually restored to the throne.

High above the town and crowning everything is the famous nine-storied palace of Sengge Namgyal ; its construction occupied three years and it was the favourite residence of the later Kings of Ladakh. Dating from about the beginning of the nineteenth century we have the palace of the Crown Prince, built by old King Tsepal for his eldest son, who was on the point of marrying a princess of one of the Central Tibetan provinces ; the marriage did not take place, for reasons unknown. The descendants of the royal family live in this palace during the winter months ; in the summer they go to a small village called Stog on the banks of the Indus. It is cooler there and the people say " it is one dress cooler than Leh," difference of temperature being expressed by the greater or smaller number of clothes which are worn one over the other.

There are many other palaces, monasteries, and places in the neighbourhood of Leh, which are well worth a visit if time permits. Just outside is the longest *mani* wall in the country, some thousand yards long with a *chorten* at each end ; it was built by the popular King Deldan, who reigned between 1620 and 1640. Then at the far end of the bazaar is a large mosque dating from the time of the great Mongol war, in the middle of the seventeenth century. But to appreciate the sights fully one must have studied at length the complicated history of Ladakh, and those who wish to pursue this matter are recommended to read the learned Dr. Francke's *History of Western Tibet*.

CHAPTER XII

MARCH TABLE							Miles
Aug.	24th	..	Leh to Himis	..	..	..	25
	25th	..	Himis to Leh	..	..	..	25
	26th	..	Leh .. ..	..	..	..	—
	27th	..	Leh to Spitok	..	..	..	5
	28th	..	Spitok .. ..	..	..	..	—
							55
Total distance from Srinagar, 832 miles							

LAMAISM AND HIMIS MONASTERY

LAMAISM, as the religion of Western Tibet is termed, is of sufficient interest to call for some explanation, although it is difficult, without overloading an account of a journey, to satisfy all specialists, such as the folklorist, the ethnologist, the sportsman, not to mention the geologist or the botanist, and many others. The serious student of Lamaism who desires to add to his knowledge, has many works with which to study further the subject, Waddell's *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* being one of the best. The writer of this book bought a monastery, and succeeded in getting the lamas to explain in detail the rites they performed and their symbolism; starting in this way, he was enabled to visit and enter other monasteries and ended in procuring, perhaps, the fullest account extant of Lamaism.

A few words about lamas themselves before dealing with the religion. "Lama" is a Tibetan word meaning "superior one"; its use was formerly restricted to the head of the lamasery, and strictly speaking, it is applicable only to abbots and the highest monks, though

out of courtesy it is now used for almost all monks and priests. The least observant traveller in Ladakh cannot fail to notice their power and influence in every possible phase and walk of life, with the result that it is the most priest-ridden country in the world. The lamas are good-natured men, popularly addressed as "Father," as with the Roman Catholics, and their education consists chiefly in committing to memory the sacred words and prayers of Buddha, which are in many cases unintelligible to themselves.

To become a lama is a long and tedious process extending over a period of many years. The child who is selected with this object remains at home till he is eight years old before going to a monastery. There he is educated as at a boarding-school, passing through various stages. First he is a probationer and is nothing more than a school-boy being permitted to wear his ordinary clothes; he is taught to read and write and also to recite by heart some of the sacred books. After two or three years, if his progress has been satisfactory, he is admitted as a novitiate. He now receives most of the privileges of a monk and in three years he is entitled to a small cell, but is still called a student. He undergoes a severe course of training, mostly in ritual, but painting and other arts are often taught to those who show any aptitude. In twelve years he becomes eligible for ordination, which may not take place before he has reached the age of twenty.

According to the last census, out of a population of 180,000 in Ladakh, there are some 13,000 lamas, and they keep a tight hand on the people, their presence being necessary at birth-feasts, marriage ceremonies, cremation of the dead, and all social functions. In

former times, the parents of more than one or two male children were obliged to give up the younger to become a lama ; but this is no longer compulsory, with the result of a falling off in their numbers. They are also the money-lenders of the country, and there is hardly a peasant nowadays who is free of debt to them ; they are not harsh creditors, for when the debtor becomes hopelessly involved, half his lands are seized by the monastery for a term of three years. If after three years the debt is not liquidated, the land is restored and the debt written off. The monastery will never sue a debtor and neither will the latter's land ever be permanently alienated for a debt.

To form a clear idea of Lamaism as a religion it will be necessary first to refer briefly to the two earlier religions which flourished in this country—Bonchos and Buddhism—many features of both of these being embodied in the present day Lamaism. The Bon religion dates from time immemorial in Tibet and the neighbouring territory, and is described by Waddell as “animistic, devil-dancing, or Shamanist, resembling in many ways the Taoism of China.” It flourished in Western Tibet from the earliest times down to A.D. 1300, when it practically died out, though much of its ritual and demonology was absorbed by Buddhism and later by Lamaism.

Buddhism was introduced into Western Tibet as early as 200 B.C. according to the first records. At the third legendary Buddhist Council, which, accepting tradition, was held by King Asoka, the Constantine of Buddhism (272–231 B.C.), it was decided to send Buddhist missionaries to Kashmir and Yarkand. By the date of the next legendary Council, A.D. 125–152,

Buddhism had acquired a firm hold in Kashmir ; assuming this to be the case, one can therefore agree with the Rev. A. H. Francke, who says that, as Western Tibet lies between Kashmir and Yarkand, it is a reasonable assumption that Buddhism must also have reached there. The history of the Mons tribe, who came from India, tells us that this mission was not only religious, but of a colonising character as well. The inhabitants being mostly nomads, it became essential to provide centres of Buddhist teaching by founding monasteries. More colonists came, and around these religious settlements, villages sprang up which in course of time became towns. There are many Buddhist remains to this day, especially near Zangskar, of life-size figures of Buddha, the workmanship of which is far better than any other ancient sculptures in Ladakh. Besides the introduction of Buddhism from India by the Mons tribe, it was also brought from the West by the tribe of Dards from Gilgit.

The two religions existed in Western Tibet side by side, either influencing or absorbing features of the other, with changing fortunes. Langdarma, King of Leh, put up a good fight for the Bon religion in A.D. 900, and the Buddhist faith was much strengthened by emigration of monks from Kashmir over a period lasting from A.D. 600-1000. These monks first started their missionary work in Zangskar and built the Kanika monastery, painting a large number of pictures of Buddhist saints on the walls. Their monasteries can easily be distinguished from others on account of their genuine Kashmir style ; and the one at Alchi should be visited by interested travellers, if possible, on the way back to Srinagar.

Towards the beginning of the eleventh century, the

religion known as Lamaism had come from Central Tibet and was favoured by a line of Kings of Ladakh, who did everything to promote it. One of them built the first real lamasery in the neighbourhood of Saspul and ordered a brotherhood of lamas to settle there. According to tradition in Ladakh, this is always looked upon as the oldest monastery, although those erected by the Buddhist monks from Kashmir are, of course, much older. Lamaism continued to flourish, owing to the favourable attitude of the reigning monarchs who followed, and in about 1275, we have King Lahargyal, who ordered some Lamaist works to be copied in gold on indigo tinted paper ; this would appear to be the first record of the introduction of Lamaist literature into Western Tibet.

We have at this period the three religious systems prevailing, and they appear to continue side by side for about two hundred years, when the Bon and Buddhist faiths gave way at the same time, about A.D. 1300-1325, to Lamaism which had come from Central Tibet, largely owing, doubtless, to Ladakh being at that time a vassal state of the former.

Lamaism was founded in Central Tibet as early as about A.D. 747, by an Indian monk named Padma-Sambhava, who, with others, had been sent for from India by King Thi-Sron-Detsan ; this founder, called the "lotus-born one," has been deified, and is as celebrated in Lamaism as Buddha himself. We have already stated that, in Western Tibet, the Bon and Buddhist religions borrowed features and ritual from each other, and a similar thing had happened in Central Tibet, so that St. Padma-Sambhava started his primitive Lamaism with what Waddell terms a "priestly mixture of Sivaite mysticism, magic, and Indo-Tibetan demonolatry,

overlaid by a thin varnish of Mahayand Buddhism." In this form Lamaism soon became popular, and practically ousted Buddhism and the original native Bon religion, though not without some opposition. By A.D. 900 it was well established, and four hundred years later, novices from Western Tibet—then a vassal state of Central Tibet—were ordered to go for instruction to Lhasa, which had then become a literary centre and seat of authority. Under these circumstances it is easy to see that the original Bon and the Indian Buddhist religions died out in Western Tibet and Lamaism became firmly established.

Early in the fifteenth century a reformer called Tsongkapa arose, sometimes called the Martin Luther of Tibet; he was born about 1357 at Kum-bum, in the province of Amdo in China, and died in 1417, though he is popularly believed to have ascended to heaven. He was then canonised as an incarnation of Amitabha, and is considered superior even to St. Padma, the founder of Lamaism, being given the chief place in most temples. This monk, who is said to have been influenced by Roman Catholic priests, settled near his birth-place, and finding the Lamaism of the day in a rotten state, determined to reform it. After studying the writings of the founder, he satisfied himself that there were many discrepancies between what was correct and everyday practice.

Tsongkapa was an ardent proselytiser and spent a considerable amount of time in organisation; the fact that his sect, the *Gelugpa*, or virtuous ones, which he founded, eclipsed all others and in five generations obtained the priest-kingship of Tibet, speaks for itself. He set out to raise the moral standard of the monks to that of the early Indian Buddhist monks. In this he

was only partially successful, finding, as most reformers do, that the limit in such matters is that of public opinion. Apart from this he found also that the early Buddhists' dress was yellow, and attempted to substitute this colour for the red worn in Western Tibet. Here again he was in conflict with public opinion, and had to content himself with a compromise to the extent of yellow caps and scarves, which were worn by his sect, the older sect remaining faithful to the red caps or bonnets.

To introduce his sect into Western Tibet, Tsongkapa sent an embassy about A.D. 1400. At that time there were two kings reigning, due to the fact that a younger brother took possession of part of the kingdom and would not give it up. The elder brother, King Lde, was most religiously inclined and built several monasteries, doing everything to encourage Lamaism. Then came the embassy from Tsongkapa, and its arrival is described by the chronicles as follows: "At that time it came to pass that the Omniscient of the period of degeneration, the great Tsongkapa, having in his possession a *Tse pag med* (literally, eternal life) about as long as a finger joint, which originated from the blood of his nose (Francke believes that this was a short summary of his doctrines, perhaps written with his own blood), entrusted the same to two ascetics and said: 'Give it either to the one called Dragspa, or to the one called Lde.' When the two arrived in Western Tibet, the one called Dragspa was in Nubra. They went into his presence, but he did not deign to look at it with so much as one eye. So they went on to Leh. On the morrow the King gave command: 'At to-day's council, whoever attends, be it ascetic or a low caste man, Bheda, Mon, or shoemaker, he should not be

refused admittance.' Now, when the two ascetics came into his presence, the King rose and went to meet them. They made over the present and the King was delighted with it." This further encouragement made the King build several more monasteries ; these followed the new doctrine, in consequence of which many existing monasteries exchanged the old doctrine for the new.

Tsongkapa's sect eventually became the established church of Lamaism, which by this time was developing into a political as well as a religious institution. Later on, it tended to dominate both rulers and people, and at this day is a system of doctrine, partly religious, partly political. Simply by way of comparison, Lamaism is said to stand in relation to pure Buddhism as Roman Catholicism to Christianity in general, but this must not be taken too literally.

A monastery in Tibet is called a *gompo*, which means a solitary place or hermitage. Isolation from the outer world has always played an important part among the lamas, not so much as a penance but to escape temptations and to give ample time for meditation. Nearly all monasteries have been built, if not in solitary places, some distances away from the villages, though there are cases where villages have sprung up round them. We have parallels of this extreme isolation in Europe, in the Alpine monasteries and the cliff monasteries of Thessaly ; some of the former are surrounded by snow for a large part of the year, and some of the latter can only be visited if hauled up in a basket. The actual site of a *gompo* is very important ; it should face east to catch the first rays of the sun, and if this is impossible, the next best direction is south-east and then south. There should be a lake in front, because

a site that is drained by a stream is considered bad, as all good escapes by it ; but a waterfall is an excellent omen if visible from the neighbourhood. Once the site has been chosen, it is consecrated, and this is always a great function ; during the ceremony of laying the first stone, prayers are recited so that the building will be protected from all injury of men and demons ; a similar rite is conducted when the monastery has to undergo repairs.

There is hardly a single village in Ladakh without one of these institutions, which vary in size, some having only four lamas ; the largest one, which is at Himis, having eight hundred. They are generally dependent on the population for contributions, thus laying a heavy burden on the people. Some are, however, richly endowed with property from which they derive a considerable amount of revenue, but all have to rely on more or less voluntary contributions from the villagers. These gifts are frequently in kind—butter, salt, meat, and livestock—this being much preferred to money. During the harvesting season, lamas are told off to go round and collect grain for their monasteries. Besides these methods of raising money, the lamas manufacture images and charms which are sold at a good profit, and large fees are charged by them for supplying horoscopes for marriages and many other occasions. Thus by some form of trading and usury the donations of the people are supplemented and wealth sometimes accumulated.

It was August 24th, on a fine clear morning, that I started off for Himis monastery, a distance of twenty-five miles. The journey is more conveniently done in two stages, halting at Shushot, but as I had only a

small party, the ponies were lightly laden and I decided to do it in a day. Leaving Leh, our path gradually descended to the Indus River over loose sand for four miles, making rather heavy going. We crossed the river by a wooden bridge at Chaglamair, and reached the village of Shushot about noon, where we halted for lunch. The country was very fertile and the inhabitants had a particularly healthy look. We resumed our journey, getting farther away from the left bank of the Indus and leading over rather sandy desert, with a few green patches here and there. Ahead of us was the hamlet of Marsalang, but just before we reached it, we turned up a ravine on our right hand, leading to Himis.

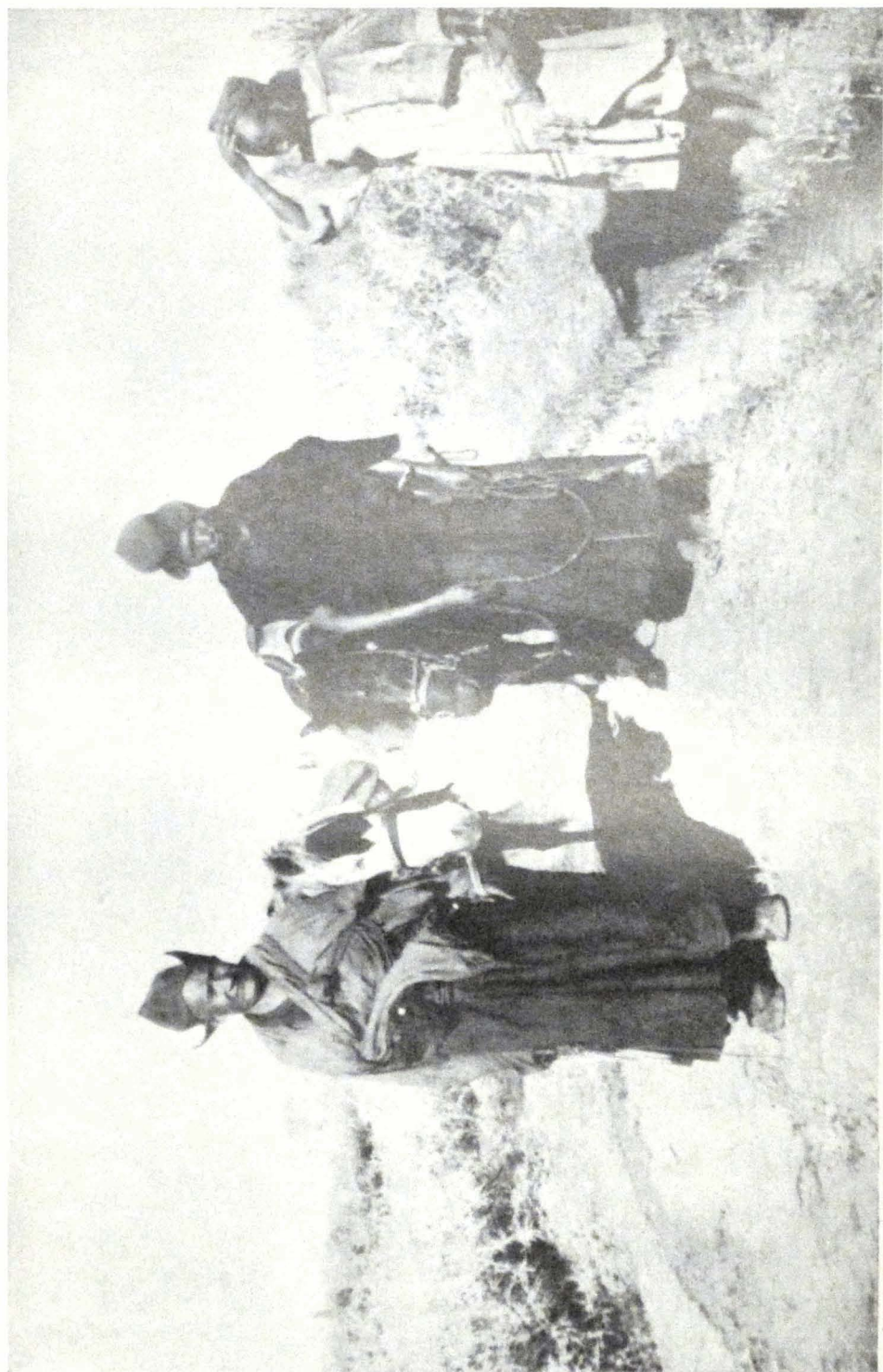
Once again we passed some well-cultivated ground with fruit trees, and a system of irrigation in good order ; this land belonged to the monastery, the lamas being large landowners in the district. Their lands are said to be let to tenants on the condition that one half of the proceeds is paid to them as rent, which is the *metayer* system described by Arthur Young as obtaining in France at the time of the French Revolution. Proceeding up the ravine, we found a torrent dashing down its bed, bordered by trees on either side, which relieved the appearance of the rocky walls. Signs that we were in a religious neighbourhood were not wanting, as *mani* walls and other Buddhist monuments were dotted about everywhere.

Arriving at the top, the monastery, built on a rock, came into view ; as I ascended the small rock-hewn path I was met by a lama, who led me along what appeared to be outer walls to a compound, through which ran a brook. A delightful little summer-house, with a

fresh green lawn in front of it, was shown me as being my quarters for the night ; the cleanliness of the place appealed to me after meeting with so much dirt elsewhere. Several lamas then came and spread carpets on the ground and hung some on the walls, giving the summer-house quite a furnished appearance. Tibetan food and refreshment in the form of currants or small dried grapes and tea were then served. By this time my transport with the baggage had arrived, and after arranging for the return journey to Leh the following day, I went for a stroll outside.

The small town of Himis consists of houses, perched on rocks round the monastery, and their dull mud colours contrasted strongly with the painted walls of the latter. I did not notice any of the tame ibex, which some writers observed on the neighbouring cliffs ; these animals are protected by the lamas, with the result that they are much bolder than in a natural state. Himis is at a greater altitude than Leh, and being in a comparatively secluded district, it escaped the destruction which overtook so many of the monasteries at the time of the Dogra conquest. It is said that this freedom from molestation was purchased by the monks supplying the enemy with food and provisions ; be that as it may, they are still in possession of many treasures. On my return to the compound I met the lama who was to show me the monastery, and we arranged that he should call for me as soon as it became light. I turned in soon, and after our long day, slept soundly on a native bed, similar to the Indian *charpoy*, which had been placed at my disposal.

It was barely daylight the next morning when the lama arrived to take me round, with Subhana, who accompanied me, to interpret. We entered through a



LAMAS BRINGING INVITATION TO STAY IN MONASTERY

massive door leading into a large courtyard, perhaps thirty-five yards square, on the left of which was a gigantic prayer-wheel, and many smaller ones were also to be seen. On one side of the courtyard was the porch of the temple and steps leading to it, with brightly painted columns, and on the other was a gallery or balcony overlooking the quadrangle. I was led through passages and smaller courtyards to the Idol room, decorated with remarkable figures and hideous gods with horrible faces, very different from the calm expression on the figures of Buddha. There were numbers of ornaments and vessels of gold and silver, some inlaid with precious stones, and in the dim light could be noted wood carvings and hangings of silk, finely worked.

The monastery is said to be three hundred years old, and the monks have been busy most of the time laying up treasure. Collections of religious books and other manuscripts, some of which were illuminated, were shown, and gave one the impression of antiquity ; these books are kept in small recesses and the loose sheets are long and narrow-shaped ; they have no covers, but are placed between two heavy wooden blocks for protection. When being read they are held across the knees, the leaves being lifted towards the reader and refilled in order, on his lap. We were shown through several more places of worship and rooms used for various purposes, and eventually came out into the main courtyard again. I should mention that, while being taken over the monastery, in places where the light was poor, I was often obliged to give gratuities to lamas for the lighting of wax tapers to see some special feature, which appears to prove that human nature in show places is much the same all the world over, at any rate among Orientals.

I was too late to see the religious ceremonies, which take place in the courtyard annually and last two days. The culminating feature of these is the devil dance, performed by men and boys in hideous masks, and the festival is witnessed by crowds of people from afar. Curiously enough the performance finishes with a comic burlesque of the religious ceremonies or mysteries, by clowns and others, causing great laughter in which the lamas join. People from all parts attend this function which is a kind of fair, a certain amount of business being done.

I was back in Leh about five o'clock after a hot and tiring march. I went and thanked the missionaries for their kindness in facilitating my visit to Himis, which had been most successful, and above all, without transport delays. Whatever one's opinions may be as regards the value of missions one cannot help admiring the people who undertake this thankless work, which is always of an uphill nature. Everything that is bad in the Ladakhi is attributed by the missionaries to Lamaism, but they are just in saying that the people have to be grateful to Buddhism for one important thing, and that is the art of writing. I was told later that after many years' hard work, at the end of 1923 there were seventy-seven converts to Christianity of whom forty-four were communicants, showing an increase of seven over the previous year. It is, however, particularly the medical work which is worthy of praise. There is a small hospital here, and as annually over 10,000 patients are attended to, one realises the enormous amount of suffering that is relieved, and respects the devotion of these pioneers to duty.

The next day I spent writing up my diary in the shady

compound of the rest-house. In the cool of the evening I walked through the bazaar and took a last look at the Turcoman traders. I could not help thinking how for thousands of years the same kind of goods had changed hands and would probably continue to do so as long as the world existed, time playing no rôle there. I went round and bade farewell to the missionaries, who tried to persuade me to stay on a few days longer, but I had decided to leave the following afternoon. They kindly asked me to dine with them and we passed a very pleasant evening together.

Early the next afternoon I started as arranged, and after about an hour's riding downhill over the loose sandy ground I reached Spitok. It was a remarkable change to find such a large clump of trees in this barren country. From Leh this little oasis appears to be only about half a mile off, but this is due to the extreme clearness of the atmosphere, in which it is difficult to judge distances, even when one has become accustomed to it.

The small monastery outside the village, erected on an isolated hill, is one of the most interesting in the country, for it has an incarnated lama. It is the first lamasery of the "virtuous sect," founded by Tsongkapa, that King Lde built; though according to the story, it came into existence by a miracle. Subhana and I climbed up a winding path of loose sand until we reached the outer walls of the monastery and the stables where travellers keep their ponies. A lama met us here who showed us round, and we were just in time to attend one of the daily services.

The lamas perform religious services three times a day—at sunrise, noon and sunset—consisting of recitations and chantings accompanied by solemn and

melancholy music. The chief instruments are the holy trumpets, some five or six feet in length, cymbals, and big drums. The ritual varies in different monasteries, but here one monk stood in front of the altar and recited in a loud voice what I was told were portions of the Do (precepts), and the Dulna (rules of discipline); the other monks joined in the chanting of the hymns. During the service incense was kept burning regularly, and offerings of flour, meat and other food were made to the gods, which are represented by images; musicians broke in at intervals with weird music.

Subhana and I, sitting on a wooden bench, thought, by the expression on their faces, that the lamas were performing their duties perfunctorily, and throughout the service they displayed the keenest interest in my presence. They were continually joking and making remarks among themselves, and, at the end of the service, one of the head lamas came up and asked me if I wished for more, as if so, they would continue. I declined their offer with thanks and the lamas then rose and filed out of the monastery, gathering outside to watch me pass. Before leaving I was given to understand that the funds were low and in consequence contributed a rupee, at which they seemed very pleased. Subhana and I then walked slowly back to the rest-house discussing the excessive ritual in connexion with the Lamaist ceremonies.

A very striking feature to the European mind is the extent of the belief in evil spirits and devils; herein lies mostly the source of the power of the lamas, who alone are able to exorcise these demons, in terror of which the native spends his life. He wears charms, amulets, and relics of holy lamas as protection against

malignant gods and devils, but as they turn out to be of little use, the priests are always being called upon to make good their deficiencies. The people are ready to believe anything the lamas tell them and are always on the look out for omens, lucky days, and unlucky days. These latter are discovered by consulting professed astrologers, who give special divinations for the most important events in life, but in everyday life, the ordinary native generally judges for himself the omens and auguries.

If I had known, at the time when the Askoleans failed me near the foot of the New Muztagh Pass, as much of the subject in question as I know now, I should have seriously put forward some simple scheme of apparent magic. This could have been used to give a previously determined result in favour of an immediate advance. Although the Askoleans are Mahomedans, any attempt I might have made to enlist the fates in my service could not possibly have been less successful than that which happened. One traveller records that, confronted with a disinclination of his porters to start on a so-called unlucky day, he brought out a pack of cards to be used for divining purposes, and having previously withdrawn the unlucky cards, he succeeded in getting them to start off.

The natives are very superstitious, perhaps not more so than those of Western countries, given the same isolation from the civilised world, but the fact remains that the lamas themselves are the real supporters of the devil worship which flourishes everywhere and provides one of their chief means of livelihood. We have already seen that the lamas collect, in kind, a species of tithe, but a great source of revenue is for prescriptions issued

to a constant flow of people calling at the monasteries, as to what devils, evil gods, or demons are to be appeased, and what remedies are necessary to counteract the threatened ills. Each large monastery has an astrologer-lama, not infrequently one of the cleverest of the monks, who, besides giving the prescriptions mentioned, will cast the horoscopes of any who are willing to pay and have it recorded on paper, or silk if the client is wealthy enough. A most elaborate document will explain why ill-luck has followed the applicant ; also what remedies should be applied to counteract the misfortune of his birth-date, for example, or some other cause. As may be imagined, all forms of magic, wizardry, and sorcery flourish, and bring in a good income to the lamas, or the monastery to which they are attached.

So much has been said on the bad features of Lamaism that it will be only fair to call attention to some of the good points, which are almost entirely due to the influence of Buddhism as incorporated into the cult. This has softened much of the pagan feature and put the Tibetan in possession of higher aims, and ideals of universal charity and kindness to all living things ; cattle and dumb animals are humanely treated and it is very rarely that life is wantonly taken by those professing Lamaism. Owing perhaps to a cold climate, flesh is eaten, though sparingly, but the butchers are a despised class, being professional sinners.

The influence of Buddhism is also seen in the spirit of consideration and politeness—the latter genuine—that one often meets with. The doctrine of Karma, or re-incarnation, taken from Buddhism, is widely held and believed in. A dishonest trader has been heard to excuse his cheating on the ground that the person so cheated

must have, in some previous existence, cheated the trader and is only being justly punished. It is even said that blindness and accidents are retributions, due to the individual having in a previous life abused, or sinned with, the limb or organ so affected. A point worth noting is that the lamas make no attempt to educate the people or communicate their so-called learning to them, being, in this respect, like the Brahmins and unlike the Burmese Buddhist priests.

It was so cool and peaceful that I decided to have one more day's rest and make up for lost time by doing double marches later. As I turned in on the second night at Spitok, I confess to a feeling of regret that I was to start the following morning on the journey back to Kashmir. I could not disguise from myself that I was not at all keen about it; I had walked over eight hundred miles and there remained some two hundred and forty miles to do. One might say perhaps that there was nothing much to complain of in having to return to Srinagar, a very pleasant place indeed, and one of which it is not easy to tire. But I was leaving farther behind me every day the Yarkand road and getting back to civilisation once again, which did not appeal to me. My mind was on the Himalayas and my eyes had grown accustomed to seeing nature in a less sophisticated state; I was to leave it all behind, and there remained nothing but a long, dreary, and hot march back to Srinagar.

CHAPTER XIII

MARCH TABLE				Miles
Aug. 29th	..	Spitok to Saspul	.. ..	28
„ 30th	..	Saspul to Khalatse	.. ..	23
„ 31st	..	Khalatse to Bod Kharbu	.. ..	24
Sept. 1st	..	Bod Kharbu to Mulbekh	.. ..	14
„ 2nd	..	Mulbekh to Kargil	.. ..	23
„ 3rd	..	Kargil to Shimsa Kharbu	15
„ 4th	..	Shimsa Kharbu to Dras	21
„ 5th	..	Dras to Mechoi	18
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				166

Total distance from Srinagar, 998 miles

THE RETURN JOURNEY

It was half-past three when Subhana called me, and after a quick breakfast, we were all under way by four o'clock. The heat during the midday hours of the last few days had been so intense that I decided again to do most of the marching either early in the morning or late in the afternoon and evening. It was still dark when we started, being delightfully cool and fresh, but it soon became light, and after three miles, we passed the village of Phayang Dokpo. Here the country became absolutely barren, and we crossed a sandy plateau descending some 1,000 feet by a steep *nala*; the valley then opened out, and we arrived at Nimu some fifteen miles from Spitok, about ten o'clock and found a good rest-house. All the drivers were paid off and fresh ponies ordered to take us as far as Saspul, though I only intended going to Basgo that day.

I was breakfasting under the pleasant shade of the trees outside the rest-house, and I had no sooner started

the ponies off to Basgo, than I began to think how much more agreeable it would have been to stay where I was for the rest of the day. But the transport was on its way, and when I had finished breakfast I reluctantly followed, with the pony which I had kept back to carry the kitchen utensils. I was not long in overtaking my party, and in spite of the road being sandy and stony, and the heat of the sun very trying, we covered the seven or eight miles between Nimu and Basgo in about three hours, arriving at two o'clock. I had been told that there was a good rest-house in Basgo, but found that it had been destroyed and the one at Nimu erected in place of it. Basgo is a pleasant spot and is picturesque in appearance, the cliffs surrounding it being covered with ruins; there is a historical monastery and a castle, stated to have been besieged by Mongols in the time of Gyalpo Delegs (A.D. 1640-1680).

I had lunch in a delightful garden, and after resting a while, decided to go to Saspul. We started off again in the middle of the afternoon and soon crossed the Indus by a bridge; about two miles distant from there was the Alchi monastery, which is of interest by reason of its traces of Kashmir workmanship, and worth a visit should time permit. In three hours we reached Saspul, where the land is well cultivated, affording relief to the eye. The rest-house I found indifferent and in an extremely dirty condition; and I should have camped outside the village had it not been for the fact that I did not wish to trouble my servants, who were very fatigued.

The next day, August 30th, after preparing a cup of tea for me, on which to make an early start, my servant went on ahead to get breakfast ready in the bungalow at

Nurla, fourteen and a half miles from Saspul. I correctly anticipated that, by the time I had covered this distance, I should have worked up a good appetite. It was just after four o'clock when I left the place without any regrets, but not until we had bribed the *goa* to let us have some ponies.

The road followed the right bank of the Indus the whole way and was for the most part good ; the country presented the usual barren appearance and we met with only one patch of cultivation. The going was pleasant in the cool of the early morning, with the rising sun lighting up the scene. Such good progress was made that Nurla was reached about nine o'clock, and on the verandah of the bungalow I found, ready for me, a breakfast to which I did full justice after my fourteen and a half mile march. Nurla seemed to have a thriving population, and its altitude is lower than many other Ladakh villages. It occupies a sheltered position and has an abundance of fruit trees, besides plantations of willows and poplars. Instead of staying here for the day I felt fit enough to do another eight miles to Khalatse, in spite of the midday heat.

I had no difficulty in changing transport, and by the time the breakfast utensils were packed, the ponies had turned up and we started off about half-past ten for Khalatse on what proved to be one of the hottest marches of my journey. The road ran the whole way along the banks of the Indus, which is shut in on both sides by lofty cliffs of red clay, there being barely a sign of vegetation. Just before reaching Khalatse, we crossed a dry water-course of sand and pebbles where not even a shrub or blade of grass was growing. The heat was stifling and the rocks, owing to the mirage

effect, seemed to be quivering in the glare of the sun. I was glad to arrive at Khalatse about two o'clock, and found it an extensive, well-cultivated oasis with the welcome shade of walnut and fruit trees. It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that between this pleasant spot and the barren country outside the limits of the irrigation canal supplying it with water. The bungalow was clean, and after a welcome cup of tea, I went to look at the village of Khalatse.

Amongst the various States in existence before Western Tibet came under the sway of the Central Tibetans, was one at Khalatse, ruled over by a race of Dard kings, which, according to tradition and inscriptions, came to an end about A.D. 1150-1200. Local tradition still tells of the squabbles between the rulers and the inhabitants of those petty states, resulting in almost continuous warfare, which took the form of raiding. A favourite time for these affairs was during the harvest season, presumably, when loot in the form of the gathered crops was to be had. This led to the men of each village being divided into two parts, one of which would be on guard with their bows and arrows, while the other would be told off to reap; raids of this kind would naturally lead to reprisals, with the result that the country was in a constant state of unrest. In spite of this, it is somewhat surprising to find that, at that period, trade was carried on through Western Tibet, apparently between India and Yarkand, as at the present day. The explanation is probably two-fold, one reason being that the caravans were doubtless armed with some kind of escort; the other reason was that the rulers of these petty states took toll of the caravans. Confirmation of the latter is to be found in

the ruins of an old custom-house, not far from Khalatse.

This custom-house, called Balukar, was fortified and guarded by an old bridge across the Indus, and the officer in charge was called " Lord of the trade in the lower valley." It would be to the advantage of rulers of these petty states to protect, more or less, these caravans, as otherwise there would be no trade and consequently no tolls to collect. It is probable that these tolls were paid in kind rather than money, for no coins and only ancient beads have been found in this neighbourhood, or on the site of the custom-house. The Dards here furnish ample evidence of their warlike nature, for they appear to have built two or more strongholds, apart from one at Balukar. One of these castles was situated about a mile above the present village, on a tributary stream and its ruins show traces of elaborate water-courses to irrigate fields ; the other was on the banks of the Indus and guarded a bridge, which was possibly built in opposition to that at Balukar, either to attract trade or to avoid tolls at the latter place.

Coming to later times the Central Tibetan king, Naglug, who reigned towards the end of the twelfth century, is credited with having built the castle of Bragnag, now in ruins, on the rock that towers above Khalatse. According to tradition, this castle was the first in the country and was large enough to accommodate sixteen families. He also made a bridge over the Indus on the same site as the present one, and an inscription is still in existence giving the " dragon " year as the date of construction, confirming the chronicles in this respect. These efforts by different rulers to attract trade, or rather, to divert it, must have been to secure taxes or

tolls, and are sufficient evidence of its extent at that time.

Khalatse figures in fairly recent times—1840—as the scene of a gruesome incident arising out of the revolt in Ladakh, which was so firmly dealt with by the famous Dogra general, Zorawar. It will be remembered that an investigation was held and that one Sukamir was found by Zorawar to be one of the ringleaders ; he was punished in accordance with the Oriental methods of that time, by having his right hand cut off and his tongue cut out. As an object lesson, to warn the Ladakhis against following revolutionary leaders, Zorawar ordered Sukamir's hand to be placed on the top of a pole at Khalatse bridge. The hand was taken to Khalatse for this purpose, and was put in the rest-house preparatory to being exhibited in public the following day. During the night it was stolen by a cat, and the inhabitants were afraid that all their hands might be cut off as punishment for their want of care. Happily, someone conceived the idea of amputating the hand of an old lama who had just died, and this substitute was duly fastened to the end of a pole and hoisted into position at the bridge. Needless to say, it served its purpose quite as well as the hand of Sukamir would have done, and nothing untoward happened to the people.

We had arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon, and as we had a long march ahead of us I decided to remain there twenty-four hours ; and despite the comfort of the cool bungalow and the historical interest of Khalatse, coupled with my reluctance to start, I did not stay longer. The next morning instructions were given that the new ponies were to be ready and loaded up by half-past two. I enjoyed a quiet morning, and after lunch,

the transport started off for Lamayuru shortly before three. An hour later I left with the intention of stopping for dinner at the ten mile stage. Shortly after leaving Khalatse, the road crosses over to the left bank of the Indus by a bridge and then leaves the Indus valley, turning sharply up a steep narrow gorge with a noisy stream.

I noticed, just before reaching the gorge, a short cut over the hillside for pedestrians, but preferred to keep to the track, which crossed and re-crossed the stream several times, zigzagging considerably among the rocks. Later the gorge opened out somewhat and we had to climb up a steep hillside for some thousand feet, which eventually brought us on to a surface composed of yellow clay. This deposit is said to have formed the bed of a lake, which at one time existed here, and was drained off by means of a channel being cut through the rocks leading to the gorge up which we had travelled. Having crossed the bed of clay, the village of Lamayuru with its fine monastery came into sight.

The many-storied monastery, perched on a high rock, literally towered over the village, the latter being built on two smaller hills at the base of the rock. Rows of *chortens* and *mani* walls were on every hand, some of the former being painted in colours and elaborately carved; and anything more remarkably picturesque than this place I think it would be difficult to find. The monastery of Lamayuru is of particular interest, as although now devoted to the ordinary Lamaist faith, it was originally founded in pre-Buddhist days, when the Bonchos religion was supreme, and has survived from time immemorial. Buddhism, it will be remembered, entered Ladakh by two channels, the ancient tribe of Mons having brought it from India, and the Dards from Gilgit; and at one

period there were apparently two religions co-existent, namely, Buddhism and Bonchos. The latter was gradually modified by adopting Buddhist features, until about A.D. 1300 when it was absorbed and replaced by Lamaism.

The folk-lore of Western Tibet embodies a good many of the principles of the ancient Bonchos religion. The learned Dr. Francke has briefly summarised the leading features as follows: "The world consists of three great realms; the land of the gods, or heaven, which is of a white colour; the land of men, or the earth, of a red colour; and the land of the water-spirits, or lower world, of a blue colour. There is a king reigning in heaven as well as in the under-world, but the greatest in power on the earth is the 'Earth-mother.' There is a huge tree, the tree of the world, growing through all three realms. It has its roots in the under-world and its highest branches in heaven. The king of heaven is asked to send one of his sons as king to the earth, and around the story of the mission of the youngest son of the king of heaven to the earth, the national epic of Tibet in general, and Western Tibet in particular, has grown up."

Lamaism took hold of these sagas and a poem was composed in which the Bonchos religion was amalgamated with the Buddhist religion. It cannot be said that this form of the epic is very popular, each village having its own version, told by the village bard who sings the old songs alternated by prose passages. There are various features in the epic reminiscent of European and Aryan legends, but there appears to be an Indo-China origin, inasmuch that the same tales are to be found in Chinese folk-lore. Some authorities have traced, in this connexion, the influence of the Mons and Dard colonies.

It was about eight o'clock when I arrived at the rest-house and found the baggage ponies there, together with my servant who had dinner ready for me. I was tempted to stay the night, but the prospect of a cool march in the moonlight decided me to go on, the moon rising about half-past ten. Fresh ponies were ordered at once and started off in less than half an hour, as the next stage was some fourteen miles on to Bod Kharbu, and I was anxious to get the baggage well on ahead. After dinner, I followed, leaving Lamayuru—that picturesque spot—with great regret, as I should have liked a day there. I hoped to reach Bod Kharbu by two o'clock the next morning and to find my bedding there.

Our road led over a broad barren valley with boulders and pebbly waste ground, through which ran a small stream. Ahead of us was a defile which we found narrow on entering, with sandstone cliffs rising perpendicularly on both sides, carved into odd shapes like organ pipes. Since Lamayuru we had been ascending gradually some 2,000 feet, and after five miles, we reached the summit of the Fotu La, 13,446 feet above sea level. By this time the moon was well up and the view from this point, the highest on the road to Leh from Srinagar, was most impressive. Wild-looking peaks, some wrapped in clouds, towered on either side, and the pile of stones and twigs surmounted by a rude flag, which had been built at the summit, looked uncanny in the moonlight. The descent was as easy as the ascent had been, though the moon was occasionally hidden by the mountains, making it very dark indeed. Some three miles down we passed the village of Hiniskut, in dead silence without even the bark of a dog, and the remaining six miles to Bod Kharbu were done without incident. Subhana and

I arrived between two and three o'clock in the morning and found the ponies and baggage there. We had done twenty-four miles since leaving Khalatse and I turned in at once, the rest-house being fairly comfortable.

On rising late the next morning I found Kharbu to be one of a group of villages in an open valley, overlooked by a rock surmounted with a ruined fort. Up the valley to the north is the Chigtan castle, once the seat of government of the Sultan of Chigtan, who ruled most of the Purig district ; this castle, though in ruins, is imposing as is also the old monastery, the latter being of interest as Mahomedanism made slow progress in this neighbourhood in spite of the Sultan's support. To this day one can notice traces of the customs of Buddhist times, and the last Buddhist monk is said to have left the monastery as late as 1860. The ordinary traveller on the road to or from Leh, thinking of the miles ahead of him, hesitates to do any distance not strictly necessary ; but Chigtan will be found well worth a visit should time permit.

The Lamaist religion of Western Tibet would appear to have become firmly established about the seventeenth century, as its Mahomedan rival did not make great progress. The best opportunity that the latter religion had was towards the end of the seventeenth century, after the Mogul armies had assisted King Delegs against the Mongols. In return for this help, Delegs was forced to become a Mahomedan and to give every possible assistance to promote that religion. A large mosque was built in Leh at this time, though it is said not to have been the earliest. Later on the country became under the sway of Central Tibet and the Lamaist religion again grew in power and importance.

The temporary subjection of Delegs to the Mogul Mahomedan power, though a great personal indignity, was actually a benefit to the country and its trade as a whole. The fine wool of Western Tibet was ordered to be sold only to Kashmir, and the trade became well organised. The only coin which Western Tibet ever had was struck in Kashmir at that time for use in Ladakh ; it was called a *jau* and the name of Delegs was made known in its inscription. At that time trade was carried on mostly by barter, the few coins used belonging to neighbouring countries ; nowadays, needless to say, the rupee is the current coin, the *jau* having long been out of use.

I was so satisfied with the arrangement of marching later in the day that I decided to repeat it, and ordered the ponies to be got ready to leave by half-past one. Immediately after lunch I went to the *serai* to superintend the loading up and found a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. Baggage was strewn about the ground and only one or two pieces half secured to the ponies. A great deal of shouting was going on and there appeared to be some dispute as to which ponies were to be used. My servants informed me that as soon as a pony was loaded up, someone, perhaps the owner, would arrive and abuse everyone and proceed to unload it. I therefore took a hand in the selection of ponies, and found that every animal I chose was said to be a private pony or not for hire. I came to the conclusion that there was no truth in these protests, and disregarding the interrupters, had the ponies loaded up one by one. They were soon started off on the road to Mulbekh without any further delay, illustrating the advantage of personal supervision in case of trouble.

The reader, unacquainted perhaps with the dilatory methods of the East, may think that there has been too much reference to transport delays. I remember, when the second Mount Everest Expedition was on its way, reading in *The Times* of April 29th, 1924, a dispatch from the expedition, and the following extract may be of interest: "The dilatory methods inseparable from Tibetan transport lost the day's start gained at Phari, but Mr. Shebbeare is proceeding to Tinki Drjong to make all arrangements and change transport, so that the march may not be delayed even one day there." Transport for the Everest Expedition was on a scale enormously greater than my very modest requirements, but behind it were unlimited financial resources and Government assistance, and above all, a staff exclusively occupied therewith. I make no attempt at comparison in any way with my little troubles, but as the one European of my party, it was only by personal attention and forethought that I was able to avoid at times the most exasperating delays.

Once satisfied that the ponies were properly under way and clear of the village, I followed them. We soon turned off the broad open valley to the left, commencing a very easy ascent of four miles to the summit of the Namika La 13,008 feet above sea level. The surface of this small ridge is quite white with a deposit of nitre and other salts. A gradual descent of some ten miles brought us to Mulbekh, which we reached about eight o'clock, the baggage having already arrived. The village clusters at the foot of a spire-like rock, surmounted by a monastery. Just outside Mulbekh is a colossal figure of the god Chamba, carved on the face of a cliff, supposed to date from the time of one of the independent Purig chiefs.

I took things easily next day, and after an early lunch, climbed by a zigzag path up the back of the hill to the monastery. The lamas showed me round, and after admiring the view of the surrounding country I descended and found the transport ready for my departure. It was my intention to push on to Kargil, twenty-three miles away, though I had no desire to see this place again ; it may be remembered that I experienced great difficulty in getting transport before, and did not receive that assistance from the *tehsildar* to which I was entitled. I considered the question of stopping for the night at the hamlet of Lotsun, about half way there, but decided in the end to halt only for dinner, Subhana assuring me that it was a convenient place with a good supply of water.

At three o'clock I started the ponies—except one laden with kitchen utensils—with instructions to go straight through to Kargil without waiting for me. They appeared to be a good lot of drivers, and with a reliable servant of mine to accompany them, there was every prospect of them reaching their destination in good time. I left with Subhana at four o'clock, with the thought that I was soon to leave the land of Lamaism behind me and enter the land of Mahomedanism once again.

We had been walking about an hour when we came to the village of Shergol, which, for those travellers going to Leh, is well worth seeing. For my part, I had a feeling of regret and despondency at leaving it, for Shergol is the farthest western station of Lamaism or Buddhism in Asia. I had been some weeks in this strange country and its uncanniness had rather grown on me. As I entered Shergol I saw once more people sitting on the flat-roofed dwellings, gazing steadfastly at me, perhaps



LAMAS WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS ON MONASTERY WALL

with some thought in their minds entirely beyond my comprehension. It is possible that they felt they were unconsciously guarding the limit of Buddha's realms, but on the other hand, I am told that, if ever they speak in any way about their religion, the impression given is that they leave such matters to the lamas.

The monastery of Shergol, instead of being placed on the top of a rock, as are so many of them, is built into or on the face of a mountain side, which is honeycombed to provide accommodation. The only word to convey the effect of this situation is fantastic, and that applies to many things one sees in this part of the Himalayas. I sat down and looked at the striking prospect, of which the high mountains on the opposite side of the valley were not the least feature. So long did I remain entranced by the view that Subhana respectfully suggested that we should resume our journey. When I told him that I was leaving this odd country with regret and reminded him that Shergol was the last Buddhist village, he said that Buddhists were wicked and the Mahomedans were good! Although this was not the time for a discussion on the rival religions, even if such discussion were ever desirable, it was clearly necessary to act on his suggestion, so with one last glance we continued our journey.

After nearly two more hours marching I found my servant waiting for me by the roadside, and he announced that he had a good dinner ready for me; an hour was spent over the meal and I set off again for Kargil. The path wound through a narrow valley and in six miles we came to the village of Pashkyum, both Subhana and my servant promptly telling me that the inhabitants were Mahomedans; they seemed to be pleased at finding

themselves amongst people of their own faith once more. A large fort dominates the village which was the scene of a brilliant *coup-de-main* by the Dogra armies when Ladakh was occupied.

Soon after leaving the valley we ascended to a large sandy plateau, on the arid surface of which not a blade of grass or vegetation of any kind was visible. The plateau sloped and became narrower, ending as we reached the junction of the Suru River and the Wakka-chu stream, once across which our journey was nearly at an end. Fortunately I had a native with me who knew the road, as nothing would have been easier than to have lost one's way. We crossed the Suru River by a good bridge and in half an hour we entered Kargil, it being then about one o'clock in the morning. The baggage ponies had only arrived about a quarter of an hour before. The march of twenty-three miles had been a long and tiring one and the wisdom of marching at the hours I chose was amply demonstrated. I was glad to turn in at once, leaving orders for Subhana to inform the *tehsildar* that I wished to see him in the morning at eleven o'clock.

Next day I woke to the incessant babble of natives outside the rest-house. Possibly the news had spread, as it has a way of doing in the East, that I was annoyed with the *tehsildar*. About ten o'clock the latter's *chuprassi*, or messenger, came along to inquire if I had all the transport I wished ; this was a good sign for the future, and I was thus able to engage all the ponies necessary, which when loaded up, were sent off at once. Towards eleven o'clock the *tehsildar* himself arrived, and before I had an opportunity of relieving my mind as to my previous treatment, he commenced a long

rigmarole as to why I had experienced such difficulties in getting transport on my way through some three months before. I replied that there could be no question of any excuse and that he was entirely to blame. His manner was so extremely courteous that I was completely disarmed and refrained from carrying out my intention of telling him exactly what I thought of him; another illustration of the "soft answer which turneth away wrath." I have sometimes since that occasion wished that I could display the same diplomatic ability as the *tehsildar*.

Shortly after noon I started off for Shimsa Kharbu, fifteen miles away. I had barely passed the Hardus suspension bridge, which was on my right hand, when I saw some of my kit and baggage lying on the ground. A little farther on was a pony struggling along with half its load hanging between its four legs. No one was in sight, so I released the loose baggage and walked on about a quarter of a mile until I overtook the remainder of the baggage ponies, the drivers of which were quite unaware that anything had happened out of the ordinary. When I told them about the badly laden pony they appeared quite unconcerned, but I took one of them back to load up the animal again. In the cool of the evening we arrived at Shimsa Kharbu, where we halted for the night. The next day we continued our journey with the same ponies and towards dusk we reached Dras, having done the twenty-one miles in exceptionally good time. From Kargil to Srinagar was ground previously covered, and it was once more borne in upon me that my trip was over, or very nearly so.

At Dras there was no difficulty in getting ponies and
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Kashmiri drivers who would go through without a change to Gandarbal in Kashmir. The first halt we made the next day was at Matayan, which was convenient for a cup of tea, but the place still had the same dismal, cheerless look as before. The ponies were unloaded to give them a rest before starting on the six mile ascent to Mechoi, which we reached about seven o'clock, and stayed there for the night in an excellent rest-house. About nine o'clock, as I was turning in, Subhana came hurriedly in to ask me if I had felt the earthquake. Unfortunately, I had missed noticing it, as on several previous occasions, when I had been in places where shocks had occurred. Some months later, when travelling in Japan, where they are fairly frequent, I again failed to notice them.

It was September 5th, and the following day, all being well, we should be back in Kashmir and, about four o'clock, when crossing the Zoji La, we should once more glimpse the beautiful Sind valley. It was with some difficulty that I pictured its pine-clad slopes after having travelled nearly a thousand miles in a barren, arid, and desolate country, the scenery of which at times comprised vast snow-fields, mighty glaciers, and snowy peaks. Having already bidden the Ladakhi farewell, I was about to take leave of the Balti and the Dard, and to-morrow would renew my acquaintance with the Kashmiri once more.

CHAPTER XIV

MARCH TABLE						Miles
Sept. 6th	..	Mechoi to Sonamarg	..	..	18
„ 7th	..	Sonamarg to Gund	..	..	15
„ 8th	..	Gund .. ..	..	..	—
„ 9th	..	Gund to Gandarbal	..	..	24
„ 10th	..	Gandarbal to Srinagar	..	..	12
						—
						69

Total distance travelled, 1067 miles

SRINAGAR

THE dawn broke dim and overcast on September 6th, but as the day wore on the sun appeared, and we climbed up the gradual ascent leading to the summit of the Zoji La, which we reached about two o'clock. There was no snow, and it presented an entirely different appearance to that which it had done when I crossed it three months before in a snowstorm. I stood on the summit for a few minutes, and looked back with a deep feeling of regret that my trip was over. We began the descent, and soon the Sind valley came into sight, the view opening out later, showing us the beautiful autumn tints. In about an hour we had descended to Baltal, leaving the Zoji La 2,000 feet above us, and were now again in the Sind valley; after a short halt, we pushed on to Sonamarg, which was reached about eight o'clock, and we camped there for the night.

I was now back again in Kashmir, and it was interesting to notice the different ways in which we were affected by this change of scene. When crossing the Zoji La three months before, I referred to the remarkable

difference in the aspect of the two slopes of the Himalayas at this point, and there could be no doubt of the effect upon us all, on our return to the Sind valley. To begin with, the odour of the pine-trees and the smell of vegetation in the air was welcome after our wandering in so much mostly barren country. At this point, all the savage grandeur and the fantastic appearance of the Kara-koram mountains were entirely left behind, and the eye rested with relief on verdure, whichever way one turned.

Subhana was particularly pleased with life and himself at being back in his native country, and greeted me the first thing in the morning by making comparisons between the barrenness of Ladakh and the fertility of Kashmir. He pointed with pride to the green, pine-clad slopes on all sides, and inquired, was I not pleased to be back again? As a matter of fact I was, in a way, but I could not help yielding to the temptation of a little "leg-pulling," just to see the effect, once more, on the native mind. When I said Ladakh was a good country and Kashmir was a poor country, he was respectfully scornful of such an opinion. It is curious to see the expression on a native's face, reflecting what is passing through his mind, on such an occasion. Amazement, scorn, indignation, pity—all tempered with respect—and then the reply, "No, the Sahib is not correct!"

Very few, if any, races understand or appreciate the good-tempered chaff of this kind that can pass with understanding amongst Englishmen. I have in mind particularly a polite Frenchman who, on like occasions, invariably fell back on the formula, "*C'est une plaisanterie anglaise!*" As for the pony-drivers, they were all naturally keen on

getting back to Srinagar, and started off without any orders, while I was talking to Subhana. This was so very unusual that I called the latter's attention to it, whereupon he proceeded to sing their praises, and gave this action of theirs as an example of their devotion to duty! However, when I scouted this notion and suggested the possibility of its being due to their own desire to return, he smiled and agreed that there might perhaps be something in what I said.

It was September 7th when I started for Gund, fifteen miles from Sonamarg, and I admit to not hurrying that day, for I sat under the trees and enjoyed them again as a child enjoys a new toy. On arrival, the rest-house was found to be so dirty that I pitched my tent on a grassy patch near a large walnut-tree. About a hundred yards below me was the Sind River, showing nothing but a mass of swirling foam, into which dipped the branches of trees growing on the low banks. Nothing could be heard but the continuous roar of the river, which grew upon one ultimately with a sense of restfulness. According to my original plans, I intended to move on the next day, but tempted by the beauty and charm of my surroundings, I decided to remain another day. If I had thought of it, it would have occurred to me that such change of plans could not suit any of my Kashmiri servants; as it was, I found them deferentially inquiring if the Sahib had not to be back in Srinagar soon, only to be told the real reason, which was but imperfectly appreciated. It is possible that at the time, I thought the place more picturesque than it really was, but I thoroughly enjoyed the day spent in Gund.

We left early the next morning for Gandarbal, at which place I arrived about four o'clock, an hour and

a half ahead of the ponies ; it had been my intention to push on that night, if possible, to Srinagar, but the late arrival of the ponies decided me to camp there for the night. Any doubt as to my return to civilization was dispelled by the banks of the Sind River being crowded with a large number of houseboats, tied up in convenient positions.

Gandarbal is a favourite place during the summer months for tourists, who live there in houseboats, and it is occupied by quite an English colony, being used as a base for shooting and other excursions in the Sind valley. No sooner had I arrived than I ran across a friend, who asked me to dine with him. At first I declined, on the ground of having no suitable kit with me, but I was assured that it did not matter. On returning to my tent, which was pitched near the river, I told my bearer that no dinner would be required for me that evening. He informed me that I had no necktie of any description, but presumably, anxious that my appearance should not discredit him, quickly brought a borrowed one.

Clad in an old sports coat, rather torn in places, khaki shorts, native puttees and shoes, and the crowning glory of a coloured tie, borrowed for the occasion, I spent a very pleasant evening. Although I had seen a newspaper or two during my three months' absence, I appreciated being brought fairly up to date with news, and as I walked back to my tent in the cool of the evening I reflected that, however much one might long for the untrodden wilds, there was a great deal to be said for civilization, at suitable times.

The distance from here to Srinagar was only twelve miles, and I had the choice of going by boat or road. I

eventually arranged to go with Subhana by boat and send the servants with the baggage-ponies by road. I engaged fresh animals, and after seeing them start, I left at ten o'clock by *shikara*, or native boat.

We had a quiet, restful, uneventful trip, and reached Srinagar about three o'clock, to find the ponies and baggage just arrived. It was Sunday, September 10th, and the European quarter looked strange to me. I must have looked odd to people, in my travel-stained clothes and native shoes, to say nothing of my appearance, as I was very tanned and sunburnt. Having taken the precaution to order a room at the hotel, I sat down therein to await the return of my servant with my clothes, which had been left behind in store in Srinagar, but he returned later without the kit, which he had been unable to get, owing to it being Sunday. I went out again, being rather worried at the prospect, and ultimately succeeded in getting hold of my clothes and belongings. It was not long before I once more looked respectable, and I really felt that my trip was at an end, nothing remaining but to collate my notes and pass on any information considered to be of interest or value.

The next day I returned all the camp equipment hired for the trip, less a camp-table which had been used as firewood. Should any reader hold Prohibitionist views, he may be interested to know what became of a bottle of Three Star Brandy which I took with me on starting. It was intended for medicinal purposes, and was only to be used for emergencies ; after three months' wandering I was able to return the bottle unopened, and was credited with its value, no emergency having arisen to have justified its use. I had frequently thought, at the end of a long march, that one might have been excused for

opening the bottle, but in that case the contents would probably not have lasted very long, and there would have been nothing left for the serious emergency.

Soon after my return to Srinagar I was asked by Major Kenneth Mason, M.C., R.E., of the Survey of India Department, if I would revise and rewrite some of the routes in the official route-book entitled *Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, etc.*, vol. I. This was in progress of being revised and brought up to date for the issue of a new edition. I was only too pleased to do this, as I had kept full notes and particulars of all the routes I had traversed, together with details of transport and likely camping-places. Besides the revision of some routes given in previous editions I was able to add others, which appeared for the first time in the new edition published in March 1923. I also forwarded a memorandum dealing with the question of transport across the Kara-koram range into Central Asia, extracts of which were incorporated in the same book. It was not until October 20th that I finished this task, and I had the satisfaction of feeling that, apart from the invaluable experience that I had gained, my notes and records might prove of value to others.

During my stay in Srinagar I had many opportunities of discussing my experiences with all sorts and conditions of men, official and otherwise. I found it of interest to observe the effect on the official mind when confronted with facts which do not altogether fit in with the views that authority might reasonably be expected to hold, in certain circumstances. It may be remembered that I had some unpleasantness on the Shyok River, and was inclined to the view that it was due largely to the decline in the prestige of the British, arising out of the changed

political conditions in India. In coming to this conclusion I had not overlooked the fact that I had been travelling at times in parts rarely visited, but I found that this fact alone was held to account for the inconvenience I had suffered; all the same, I am satisfied that my explanation cannot be disregarded altogether. Travelling as a private individual, one has very different opportunities of gauging a local situation than with the much-heralded expedition under official patronage. On a tour of inspection, for example, when as is perfectly natural, everyone is out to make everything appear for the best in the best possible world, so to say, it must be obvious that no obstacles will be placed in the inspecting officer's way.

It has occurred to me that this account might possibly make a wider appeal if I suggested to anyone sufficiently interested to think of attempting to explore the Western Muztagh Pass to combine with it a regular shooting-trip. Whether the pass would be a side-show and the shooting the main interest would depend on the individual. I should think there must be at home many young men, with sufficient leisure and means, who, tired of winter sports in Switzerland and elsewhere, would be only too glad to start on such a trip. I should then be rewarded for the trouble of writing this account if I could learn that someone had enjoyed some good shooting—it is to be had—and incidentally had successfully tackled the pass and cleared up a minor bit of exploration.

It would be beyond the limits of this book, to say nothing of my own inability, to give instructions or even hints to anyone on Himalayan sport. There are many books written on that fascinating subject, and a good

shikari is always a tower of strength. In this connexion I must mention again how fortunate I was in having Subhana for my *shikari*, and had it not been for him, this trip would not have been the success it was from my point of view. That I had not stopped to do any shooting was always rather a subject for implied reproach from Subhana, most of whose employers had been in search of game and trophies. He always felt that for a *shikari* to bring his Sahib back to Srinagar without any trophies was something of a reflection on his ability, and I was never sure that I quite reconciled him to the fact that, though keen enough, yet shooting had to be a secondary consideration to exploration and covering distance. My bad luck with a snow leopard in not having my rifle near at hand to have a shot, and later missing some fine ibex head, though perhaps made up for by the Kashmir stag, or *barasingh*, which I shot later, was never quite forgotten. Throughout the trip Subhana constantly appealed to me to stop for the purpose, as we passed near good shooting-grounds, but each time I had to say "No" to his proposals.

The great question is transport, which should be kept to a minimum, and the party I have in mind would be similar to mine, and not the big expeditions one reads of, accompanied by European Alpine guides. Some of the books speak of the difference between mountaineering in the Alps and the Himalayas; one of the latest distinguishes between mountain climbing in the former and mountain travel in the latter. Having had no experience of the former, I am unable to confirm this distinction, but there can be no doubt of the accuracy as to the latter. The time may possibly come when the climbing of K2, or Mount Godwin-Austen, and other

peaks in the Kara-korams, will be practicable, in spite of the results of the Mount Everest attempts.

I should recommend anyone to start from Srinagar as early as possible, so as to find the snow-line low, and the game therefore more accessible. The greatest difficulty that sportsmen will have to deal with is the large scale on which the valleys and ravines in the Himalayas exist, and even with the small experience I have had of shooting, this fact became firmly impressed on my mind. For example, to cross from one side of a valley to another may take the best part of a day; likewise it may take a couple of hours to climb a few hundred feet or to get on to another ridge to obtain a better shot. Hence the lower the snow-line the more the game are confined in their movements, and the more readily stalked.

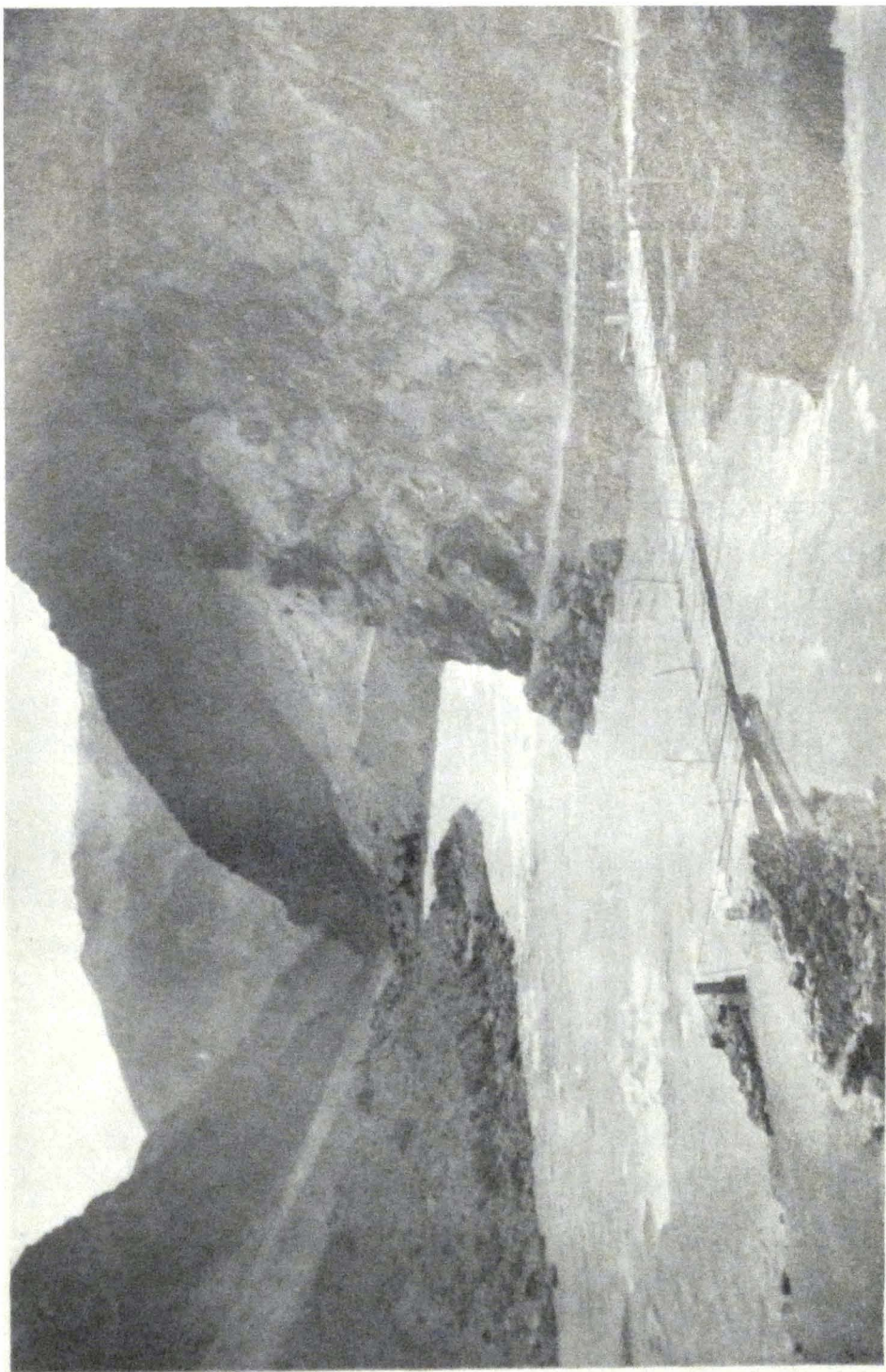
It will be remembered that I decided to go to Leh after failing to get over the pass, and from the point of view of sport, Leh is a good centre for shooting. This brings one to the subject of game licences; in Baltistan one can shoot practically anywhere without special permits, and some of the best ibex country is in the neighbourhood of Askole, which you must take on the way to the New Muztagh Pass. As regards Ladakh province, the rules for shooting permits are very strict, and application must be made as early as possible, only a very limited number being issued. In my own case, I was allotted a block about a hundred miles south of Leh, but the distance was too great for me to use it, owing to being pressed for time. But even without Ladakh, Baltistan would give anyone plenty of sport, especially in the unfrequented parts north of Askole.

I hope enough has been said as to the possibilities of

shooting and exploration to attract anyone to undertake the attempt described, but if further inducements are required, Srinagar and the charms of Kashmir could be added. These have been described so often that I must refer readers to other books with descriptions far better than I could ever hope to give. After I had finished collating my notes for the Indian Survey Route-book, I made a point of visiting all places of interest in and around Srinagar, and needless to say, found them absorbing.

About the middle of October I again felt the call of the Himalayas; I had been fortunate in obtaining an extension of leave, but the time was approaching when I was due to return to my regiment, which to my regret, I was leaving. It might be that I should not be in this neighbourhood for some years, so on my way back to India I decided to see more of the Himalayas, although it could only be the foothills. I had a month in which to return, and arranged to take the opportunity of doing a little shooting on the way.

My first idea was to walk to Dalhousie and get permission to shoot in the native State of Chamba, but the reply to my telegram only gave me permission to pass through, and expressly withheld the permission to shoot. As this would only have meant going out of my way, I selected a more direct route, and decided to walk by way of Kishtwar and Jammu, the latter the native capital of the State of Kashmir, and from thence to Sialkot, where I could pick up the train to Peshawar. This would involve a walk of some hundred and fifty miles across the Pir Panjal Range, during which I could once again wander freely, and perhaps, with luck, meet with game. Should any of my friends at the present



PRIMITIVE CANTILEVER BRIDGE OVER RIVER

moment propose my joining them in a walk, say, from London to Manchester, I am afraid the suggestion would be coldly received, but at that time, after my thousand-mile tramp, I looked upon this further trip of a hundred and fifty miles without concern.

The only regret I had was that, instead of leading me towards the icy wilds of the mighty Kara-koram Himalayas, it would take me nearer to civilization. Not having in mind at the time any further trip on my return to Srinagar, I had disposed of all my camp kit ; but requiring little, this was soon collected and ready. Concerning servants, I took those who were with me on my long journey, with one exception—a man who did not want to go—and he was easily replaced by another. Subhana was particularly keen to come, and I promised to take him on to India, which country he had never seen, and he showed his appreciation and gratitude by the way he looked after me all the time he was with me.

On October 24th I started on the first stage—to Islamabad, about thirty-two miles from Srinagar, there being a good motor-road the whole way. With most of the baggage in a car, and accompanied by Subhana, I reached Islamabad soon after five o'clock, where I found the remainder of the kit, with the other servants, who had left early in the morning in a *tonga*, or native cart.

Islamabad is the second town in Kashmir, with 20,000 inhabitants, being picturesquely situated among trees, and is built round the foot of a conical hill, from which issue numerous springs. Those interested in geology will find on the hillside beach-marks showing the level of a lake which formerly covered the valley. Intersecting

the town are running streams, fed by springs, over one of which a mosque has been built, while pleasant gardens, temples, and a house for the Maharajah, built amongst the trees, produce an agreeable effect ; from the top of the hill a striking view is obtained. Some of the streams flow into stone tanks, the water in which swarms with carp, here considered sacred. Weaving and other manufactures are carried on, and due to its being the starting-point for the Jammu route, the place is prosperous, and taken altogether, Islamabad is well worth a visit by travellers.

My servants, who had been sent on ahead, were told to arrange transport for me, and also to apply on my behalf for a *parwana*, or permit, from the most influential man in Islamabad. I had been warned by Mr. R. E. L. Wingate, Assistant to the Resident of Kashmir, that there would be difficulty about getting transport, not so much on account of its scarcity as the unwillingness and independence of the inhabitants. To add to the difficulty of the situation, a part of the Kashmir army was on its way down to Jammu, and I was told that all available transport was required for them. It is a fact that some troops were passing through, and this was made an excuse for all delays ; probably owing to the same cause, there was delay in supplying the *parwana*, so I decided to dispense with it. As for the ponies, by resorting to *backsheesh* three were forthcoming, this number being ample for the limited supplies I was taking on this occasion.

The next morning only one pony arrived, very late—so late that I thought my *backsheesh* had been thrown away—and a sorry-looking animal it was, but better than nothing ; my servants, having been promised ponies,

were not pleased at having to walk. We moved off over rather dull country, and about four o'clock I decided to camp for the night on the edge of a pine-wood some distance up a small ravine. It was a peaceful spot, the only sounds to be heard being the wind blowing through the pine-trees, the murmur of a small stream, and occasionally the faint thud of a falling pine-cone. When turning in, I heard Subhana arranging for me to go bear-shooting; after six weeks in Srinagar, it came to me rather as a shock to hear the *shikari* arranging for me to be called at three o'clock in the morning. I thereupon told him that bear-shooting would not start until the following day, and that we would have one more day's rest.

The Himalayan black bear, or *balu*, is found throughout the Himalayan forests, from the Persian frontier to Assam, the colour being uniformly black, with a little white on chest and chin. It is of a savage nature, and is dangerous when wounded, charging home and attacking with teeth and claws. It can swim and climb equally well, and is known to kill sheep and deer, though its food is mostly grain and fruit. The news that I was trying to get a shot at a bear had rapidly spread through the village, which was about a thousand yards distant. There was a continual procession of people, almost the whole day, to see Subhana, with information about bears and their movements. They were all anxious to be the lucky one to give the actual details which would lead to the Sahib's success.

I heard so much about the frequency of the damage done by these animals, and the certainty of their nightly visits to places pointed out to me, that unconsciously I began to feel sure of getting a shot at one. In the

course of the day I visited some of these places, and at one spot bears were supposed to come each night. Indian corn was here being cut and harvested, and some rather large, fresh footprints of a bear were distinctly visible ; sufficiently near for a shot was a small bush on the edge of the pine-forest, and after consultation with Subhana, it was decided to take up a position behind this bush. It was confidently stated that the bear came along, as a rule, about eight o'clock, and the place seemed the most likely to offer the chance of a shot. The evenings being very cold, especially if sitting still, I put on every warm garment I could, and left the camp with a rifle about eight o'clock with Subhana.

We met an old man who was full of complaints about the damage done by the bears to his corn, and he invited us to go to his field. This was very tempting, but I decided to keep to the place originally selected, and took up my position behind a clump of bushes forming a small hedge. By this time it was dark and very hard to distinguish anything at a distance, owing to our being rather near to the pine-forest and in the shade of the trees. At every sound, real or imaginary—mostly the latter—one stood to attention, at times raising one's rifle ; all the same, I began to feel the cold and also became sleepy. At ten o'clock the moon rose, and it was a little easier to see ahead of us, though where I was stationed was still in a dark shadow. In spite of being keen I found the waiting rather wearisome, and about eleven o'clock decided to lie down while Subhana kept watch ; I dosed a while, but was soon roused for what turned out to be a false alarm, and the cold becoming intense, we returned to camp.

While waiting for the bears which did not come, and

thinking over my bad luck, I recalled an occasion when I had not long to wait. I was after wild boar in the Eifel district in Western Germany, and was stationed on one side of a cart-track opposite two holes in the gorse and bushes with which the country was covered. As is well known, wild boar are ugly customers to be close to, and I was very much on the alert on hearing the sound of the beaters approaching in my direction. Suddenly a crashing sound in the underwood opposite me made me look towards the left opening, out of which I fully expected to see the animal come. To my surprise I saw a wild boar charging straight towards me from the hole to my right. As the cart-track separating us was only about six feet wide, and he was coming at a tremendous pace, before I had completely recovered from my surprise he was grazing my leg, with his head well to the ground. By raising my right shoulder I was just able, as he passed me, to get in one shot, which hit him in the back, but did not stop him; and it was not till later that he was found dead, about half a mile farther on.

The next morning, as not infrequently happens on similar occasions, villagers came to inform me that soon after my return to camp a bear came to the spot where I had been waiting; but such reports cannot be accepted at their face value. My real object was to shoot a *barasingh*, so I moved on to our next camp about five o'clock. The ponies had been sent back, and we found no difficulty in getting porters. It was my intention to go about two miles farther up the main valley and then through a small side ravine for some six miles.

Our road led through the village, and quite a number of natives came to us telling more stories of bears' visits, with the most circumstantial details of the damage done

by them. These villagers would have been only too pleased for me to stay on to rid them of a pest, and in that case I think I should have been pretty certain to have got a bear. I had decided, however, to push forward, and we passed on up the valley. Just before the point where we were to turn off three natives shouted to Subhana ; I walked with him to where they were working, to hear what they had to say, and they took us to a place said to be visited by bears. There was no doubt about it, the footprints being very clear, and half-eaten Indian corn lying about. I was eventually persuaded to try my luck here, and a halt was called so that a meal could be arranged for me. Originally, I was to have had my food on arrival in camp, but after a good meal at this spot, the cooking utensils were packed again, and everyone except Subhana was sent on up the ravine to prepare the camp.

We took up our position at the place which had been pointed out to us and remained there till midnight. Much as I should like to try to thrill my readers with an account of how I shot my first bear, it was not to be. I sat there cold and sleepy, with no luck, until I gave up and started the six-mile tramp up the ravine in the direction of the camp ; the track was stony, and the miles seemed longer than any I had ever walked. It was with relief that at about three o'clock in the morning we saw through the trees the light of a hurricane lamp, after which we were soon in camp, and in a few minutes all were sound asleep.

CHAPTER XV

BACK TO THE KHYBER PASS

I SPENT the next day quietly in camp, which was pleasantly situated in a pine forest with steep slopes on either side. Subhana and one of the men went out during the afternoon to explore the surrounding country and look for the most likely spots for *barasingh*; they returned in the evening and seemed pleased, on the whole, with the prospects. We arranged to start shortly after three o'clock and spend the day away from camp, returning after sunset. The Kashmir stag is generally called *barasingh* by the natives and its habitat is in the Kashmir valley, between 9,000 and 12,000 feet in summer and lower in winter; it is also found in parts of Chamba adjoining Kashmir. Its colour is brown to dark liver, the sides and limbs lighter, and lips, chin, and ears whitish; and adults usually carry five points. They roam from forest to forest and prefer grassy glades, with a supply of water; during the heat of the day they keep in the shade, coming out in the early morning and at dusk to graze, when it is cool.

At three o'clock sharp I was roused; I rose and gulped down a cup of tea. As not infrequently happens I found myself wondering why I was rising at this unearthly hour; but after the first shock, one's keenness returns and we were soon picking our way up a very stony *nala* with a local native guide. We then climbed the steep slopes of a hillside, which took us an hour, being very hard going, and I was thankful to reach the top, where

we found ourselves on a spur, with a good view of the country round. It was getting light and Subhana with the field-glasses was looking in all directions, when he suddenly handed them to me, pointing to a spot I estimated to be about 1,500 yards away. I looked through the glasses and saw three *barasingh*—a big one and two smaller ones—drinking water at a pool. I watched them, while the local guide and Subhana discussed the best plan of action.

There was no time to be lost, as before long, the animals would return to the shelter of the woods—certainly by the time the sun got up. We started off to try our luck, and hurried for all we were worth across the broken country and the two *nalas* that separated us. I fell to thinking of another occasion when I had climbed as fast over similar country at an early hour, the only difference being that then I was likely to be shot at instead of hoping for a shot ; I had been out on patrol in no-man's-land in Palestine, and the job, having taken longer than I thought, we had to hurry as fast as we could to get back before daylight. When we were about five hundred yards away we caught a glimpse of the three animals still at the pool, the big one sniffing the air and moving about at times in a nervous manner. We still had one *nala* between us, and once across it, I could get a shot from the other side. On reaching the place I could see nothing, but hurriedly searching with the field-glasses, I saw the hind-quarters of the big one disappearing among the trees.

Pushing on at once we arrived at the pool and followed the animal's tracks to the edge of the wood where I had seen it disappear. We stood still and listened but

there was no sound ; creeping in among the trees we could hear nothing, and the crackling of the dry, crisp leaves would certainly have betrayed our presence had we been near them. Turning back to the pool we examined the footprints, which were numerous, there being many old ones besides those of the animals we had just seen ; these latter showed the big one to have been a fine specimen, confirming what I had seen through the field-glasses. Even allowing for the fact that the game you don't shoot are often much finer, or at least appear to be, than those you do, the big fellow had looked to me to have been quite full grown.

By this time the sun was up and all chance of any shooting was over until the cool of the evening. Judging by the footprints, we had found a much-frequented spot, and it was settled to halt here for the day and wait for dusk. I took the glasses, and casually looking round, came to the place from whence we had commenced our stalk. To my astonishment I saw two *barasingh*, apparently just having finished grazing ! Such is luck in sport. I spent the greater part of the day, there being nothing else to do but converse in Persian with Subhana, in an endeavour to make myself a little more fluent in that language. Towards sunset we changed our position, but no *barasingh* appeared, and we went back to camp for the night by the most direct route.

The sportsman in the Himalayas must not be disappointed at getting nothing day after day, as owing to the country being so extensive, the element of luck is a factor of considerable importance. I was shooting at a bad time of the year, some six weeks after the mating season, when the animals call to each other, which helps

one considerably to locate them. Further, at that time there is generally the first fall of snow which brings them lower down ; another thing which was rather against me was that there had been no rain and the dry leaves made a great noise when stalking through woods.

The next three or four days were spent in much the same manner—rising at an unearthly hour, followed by a very steep climb ; we saw several animals but had no luck in getting sufficiently near for a shot. As I was meeting with no success, we moved on to another place about a day and a half's march from the summit of the Sinthian Pass. Our next camping-ground was a good one, and the *lambadar* of the neighbouring village proved a most obliging fellow. He was very hopeful as to my getting a *barasingh* and sent three men out the afternoon of my arrival to look for traces of them. Time was now short and at the most I could only stay another five or six days ; if after that time I had got nothing, I should have to move on, as it was still a long way to Jammu. Subhana was getting rather concerned about my failure, and was determined at all costs that I should shoot a *barasingh*.

After the first day out I came to the conclusion that we were in a good place and my hopes ran high. I used to start at about three in the morning and return to camp after sunset, as it was not worth while returning in the day only to have the terrific climb again. I did three days of this without luck, though several stags were seen through the glasses, but too far away to have a shot. The time came when I had two days left before continuing my journey to Jammu, and on a rainy morning I left camp in pitch darkness to try my luck once more. The path was very slippery going up, and it was so dark when

we reached the summit of the ridge that we had to wait an hour before we could see anything. We started off and unexpectedly saw on the top of a hillock the tips of the horns of a stag ; his body was concealed by bushes and it was only now and then, when he raised his head for a moment, that we could see his antlers.

We dashed off again in his direction, and as we were fairly close, it began to look as if our luck was in ; just as we rounded a spur, I suddenly spotted on my right another *barasingh*, grazing about a hundred and fifty yards away, below me, on the opposite side of a ravine. I pointed him out to Subhana, and immediately stretched myself out full length and fired. I was rather out of breath and in a most uncomfortable position, with Subhana holding my legs behind me, to prevent me from slipping forward. The first shot hit him in the hind quarters and he sprang a few yards up the side of the hill ; another shot in the shoulder and he dropped rolling down some hundred and fifty feet to the bottom of the ravine. His body, on its way down, crashed through small bushes and over rocks the whole way, and it seemed all but impossible that the horns should not be broken. We hurriedly clambered down to the body, and Subhana *hallalled* the stag by cutting its throat, so that the meat should be purified by bleeding, to permit of Mahomedans partaking of it. To my joy the horns were intact and unbroken after the fall ; a fine pair, ten points, very symmetrical but not unusually large for a *barasingh*.

The natives quickly got to work, skinned the animal, and cut up the carcass ; the flesh later I found quite good, but a little on the coarse side. There was too much for one load back to camp, so one of the men was left

behind to guard the remainder, while the head and a part of the body were taken down. No sooner had the men started cutting up the carcass, when a number of eagles and other birds of prey hovered overhead, and would have made short work of the remainder had it been left unattended. There was great joy in the camp when the news was brought that I had shot a stag, and in consequence, *backsheesh* and extra pay were dealt out on all sides. In the afternoon I decided to try my luck again ; I took bedding with me to sleep out, and spent a most uncomfortable night in the open, wrapped in two blankets, with a granite rock for a pillow. During the night it hailed ; later it turned to fine rain, and this sort of thing made it quite easy to start early when required. We saw several stags, but in no case could I get near enough for a shot, and being very wet, I abandoned my intention of spending the day there and returned to camp.

We could have crossed the Sinthian Pass in one day from our camp, but it would have been a long march ; so we packed up in the afternoon and started off about four o'clock. After a couple of hours we found a pleasant spot and camped for the night on the way up to the pass, by this means reducing the length of the stage for the next day.

We were off early the next day and soon reached the top of the pass, with a snow-field on our right hand ; already there had been heavy falls of snow and the sky was overcast, with the possibility of more. Subhana was doing his best to urge me on, and gave it as his opinion that snow might fall at any moment. Suddenly, about a quarter of a mile away, standing out clearly against the background of the snow-field I saw a dark object

moving about. It was not easily distinguishable, but, on using my field-glasses, I discovered it was a silver fox, known to the natives by the name of *lomri* ; it was gliding gently and gracefully over the snow, stopping now and again as though aware of my watching him.

A hurried consultation followed with Subhana, carried on in whispers ; he thought that the difficulty of moving over the snow of unknown depths would be sufficient to prevent me arriving within range of a shot before the animal moved away. I was so keen that, disregarding his opinion, I set off to stalk the fox, which by this time was about five hundred yards away ; I hoped to get within two or three hundred yards of him, and then, perhaps, be able to have a shot. We saw him stop on the top of a hillock, where he appeared to be feeding on something. Rifle in hand, followed by Subhana, I scrambled down a small rocky slope on to the snow, and landed on a spot where we at first sank in about a foot deep, and later, in places, well over our knees. The floundering through the snow as we moved cautiously forward was made more difficult by the necessity of holding the rifle high above my shoulder to prevent the possibility of the muzzle being choked by snow ; after heavy going we found ourselves within range, but in a small hollow from the upper edge of which I could put in a shot.

I was almost breathless with both excitement and exertion, and was nearly in position when I stepped into a soft deep snowdrift ; I fell forward and was completely buried, having to be hauled out. Recovering myself, I managed to stand up, and was delighted to find the fox only about two hundred yards away. I was just making ready to fire when I saw that the barrel of my

rifle had become choked with snow as I fell into the drift; I had nothing to clear it with and blowing through proved quite ineffectual. It was certainly fortunate for me that I noticed the choking, possibly also for the fox, who, during this time, had spotted us and with his prey hurried off out of range.

It had proved a tiring walk with hard luck, and I struggled back to our track, wet through and uncomfortable. Subhana refrained from commenting on the results of disregarding his advice, and attempted to console me by saying that he could get me plenty of skins if I so wished, as the natives trap them when they come down into the villages for food. The specimen of fox that I had seen was greyer than is sometimes the case, the colour varying from reddish brown to silver grey, whilst the back is darker than the sides, and the lower parts are whitish; it preys upon small animals, birds, and reptiles, and not having a strong scent, is rarely hunted. We continued our journey over the top of the pass, which proved to be a broad snow-field with few well-defined landmarks visible—an unpleasant spot to be caught in a snowstorm. We hurried on down the other side, and after a steep descent, reached a good camping-ground about sunset, where we halted for the night.

Subhana came with the report that we were now in a good district for *tahr*, which has the reputation of finding a footing in the most impossible looking places, and is found on steep tree-covered slopes, as a rule. Its horns are slightly wrinkled, much flattened on each side, and almost touch at the base, diverging backwards in a sharp curve; these horns are small in size, ranging from twelve to fifteen inches round the curve. I had a couple

of days to spare, so I tried my luck and spent them climbing hillsides, very slippery due to dry grass ; we saw one *tahr*, but a long distance away, and my shooting trip came to an end with no further addition to the bag.

The question now arose as to the disposal of the camp equipment ; to avoid the unnecessary expense of taking it to India with the porters, who would then have to return to Kashmir by way of Rawalpindi, I decided to send them back to Srinagar by the way we had come. This involved our spending a night or two without any tent or cooking utensils, and Subhana, ever solicitous for my comfort, thought it could not be done. I pointed out to him that if he could do so, I also could ; so the next day about nine o'clock, all the porters were started off for Srinagar with the camp equipment and the *barasingh* trophy.

The remainder of our kit was easily carried by three porters, and we left heading for Kishtwar, where I hoped to get ponies. We had marched the whole of that day, and at about eight o'clock came to a small village, with a ruined house or two on the outskirts ; these we occupied, any shelter being better than nothing. I had a good evening meal of *chupatties* and native tea, and spent a night which might have been more comfortable, but with nothing serious to complain of, under the circumstances. The next day was a Sunday, and I pushed on to Kishtwar, arriving about eleven o'clock ; it is quite a large town for Kashmir ; saffron, which has been cultivated in Kashmir since ancient times, is found here and in Srinagar. I found the inhabitants were very indifferent to my wants, confirming what Mr. R. E. L. Wingate had told me—that the nearer I was to Jammu, the more difficulty I should have.

The local authorities gave me no assistance whatsoever, and I was obliged to make my own transport arrangements; after much bargaining, I was able to get two mules and one driver to take us as far as Batoti. We took several days getting there, and my last days with pack transport were not without excitement, as on two separate occasions I nearly lost what little baggage I had. Once my *yakdan* slipped down between the legs of the mule which, being unattended, naturally became frightened and bolted; after a hundred yards, on rounding a corner, the *yakdan* was thrown down a steep slope, but was stopped by a bush from reaching the bottom. Then on another occasion, mule and load rolled down into a small ravine with water in it, wetting my two blankets.

Arrived at Batoti I was able to arrange for a car to take me to Sialkot, where I could pick up a train to Peshawar. I had intended staying at Jammu, the native capital of Kashmir, for an hour, to see the place, but at the outskirts of the town, a crowd of natives became rather threatening in manner. I had been refused a permit to visit Jammu by the Resident of Kashmir, and was told that if I went I did so at my own risk, the authorities not in any way holding themselves responsible for my safety. Under the circumstances, therefore, the wisest thing to do was to avoid it and go straight through to Sialkot, which I reached in about two hours without any further incident. After a few days here I took a train which bore me to Peshawar, where I changed to a *tonga*, the more primitive form of transport.

Once again the Khyber Pass stood out in all its barren, uncanny grandeur; after a time we slowly wound our way up the twisting road and soon reached Ali Masjid,

where my late regiment was stationed. I paid off the *tongawallas*, reported my arrival to the Colonel, and thus ended my wanderings in the Kara-koram Himalayas.

I mentioned in a previous chapter that if I were to tackle the New Muztagh Pass again I would try a different method ; so perhaps, a few words thereon will be found useful to anyone who, after reading this account, should feel inclined to make the attempt. For any large expeditions, food bases would naturally have to be made *en route*, but these notes are only intended as a guide to small and private enterprises. Although prepared to attempt the pass as a single European, I am inclined to think now that it would be as well to have a second in the party, for reasons which will appear later. I had full confidence in Subhana, but occasions might arise when the possibility of having to divide the party would occur.

The next condition would be to dispense entirely with Askolean porters for any work beyond Skeenmung, and to arrive at that place with six or eight trustworthy natives of Kashmir of the *shikari* type, who, if properly selected, would accompany one beyond Skeenmung up the pass, when required, without any arguments. Of course, the ideal men to have would be Ghurkas, Dogras, or Pathans, all used to mountainous countries ; it would be best of all to have trained sepoy or soldiers of some Indian regiment, but to do this, an official application to the Indian Government would have to be made. All these men would be reliable, and would carry the baggage from the time that one dispensed with the local Askolean porters at Skeenmung. It would be necessary at this stage to have enough food for the party of ten—

consisting of two Europeans, two servants, and six *shikaris* or six sepoy—to last for three weeks. Travelling light, having left your heavier baggage at Askole, the total weight should then be about four hundredweight, which would not be excessive for ten men.

There is, however, a slight variation of the above, and that is, not even to rely on Askole porters as far as Skeenmung. One could arrange to hire, in Skardu, permanent porters for an indefinite period, for the transport of stores and outfit, but unless special arrangements are made beforehand with the local authorities in Skardu, there is a possibility of some delay. The porters' food should be taken by local temporary porters, changing them at the various stages as far as Askole; for this purpose the *naib-tehsildar* at Skardu should be asked to supply a *chuprassi*, with his authority to assist.

The first few days, or up to a week, should be occupied with reconnoitring the pass by one half of the party at a time; the distance from Skeenmung to the summit is probably anything between eight to ten miles, and with ordinary luck, sufficient experience should have been gained as to the possibility of reaching the summit in a reasonable time. The chance of finding, between Skeenmung and the summit, any place which would afford enough shelter to serve as an advanced base or emergency station, should be kept in mind during the preliminary reconnoitring. Any such spot—which would be, almost of necessity, on either side of, but fairly near, the glacier, should be sought for and examined, as it might make all the difference between success and failure, apart from its use as an emergency shelter. No one would wish to camp out in or near the

summit of the pass, and the station might not even be used, given favourable weather conditions.

Some experienced travellers may be inclined to smile at these suggestions, but when one reads of the absolute impassability of a pass, it is as well to be prepared for emergencies, and to be ready to adopt plans to suit conditions as found to exist. According to the information gained of local conditions, including weather, a decision would have to be made as to when to take the whole party over the summit and down the other side, returning by the Old or Eastern Muztagh Pass to Askole. Allowing up to a week for preliminary exploration, one might allow another week to return to Askole by the Old Muztagh Pass, which would leave seven days' food as a margin for contingencies.

So long as one could have no anxiety about transport, which would be the case under the conditions here outlined, it will be seen that there are possibilities of carrying out the scheme in much less time than I have allowed. Of course, one might encounter prolonged bad weather, and very difficult going over the glaciers which fill the valleys leading to the two passes, but it is considered that, with average luck, there would be a good chance of success. The scheme suggested is a rough outline based on my experience, and could be modified as found necessary from time to time.

It would be a good plan for both Europeans to have read and be thoroughly familiar with all previous travellers' reports, and at the same time, to make due allowance for the conditions under which their journeys were made. One of them should have had some experience of Himalayan mountain travel, and, if

possible, some knowledge of Hindustani. Of course, the ideal explorer should know some geology, a little botany, and have many other qualifications; I regret to say that I had none of these, and no one was more sensible of my shortcomings in this respect than I was. But I suggest that, though very desirable, they are not absolutely necessary.

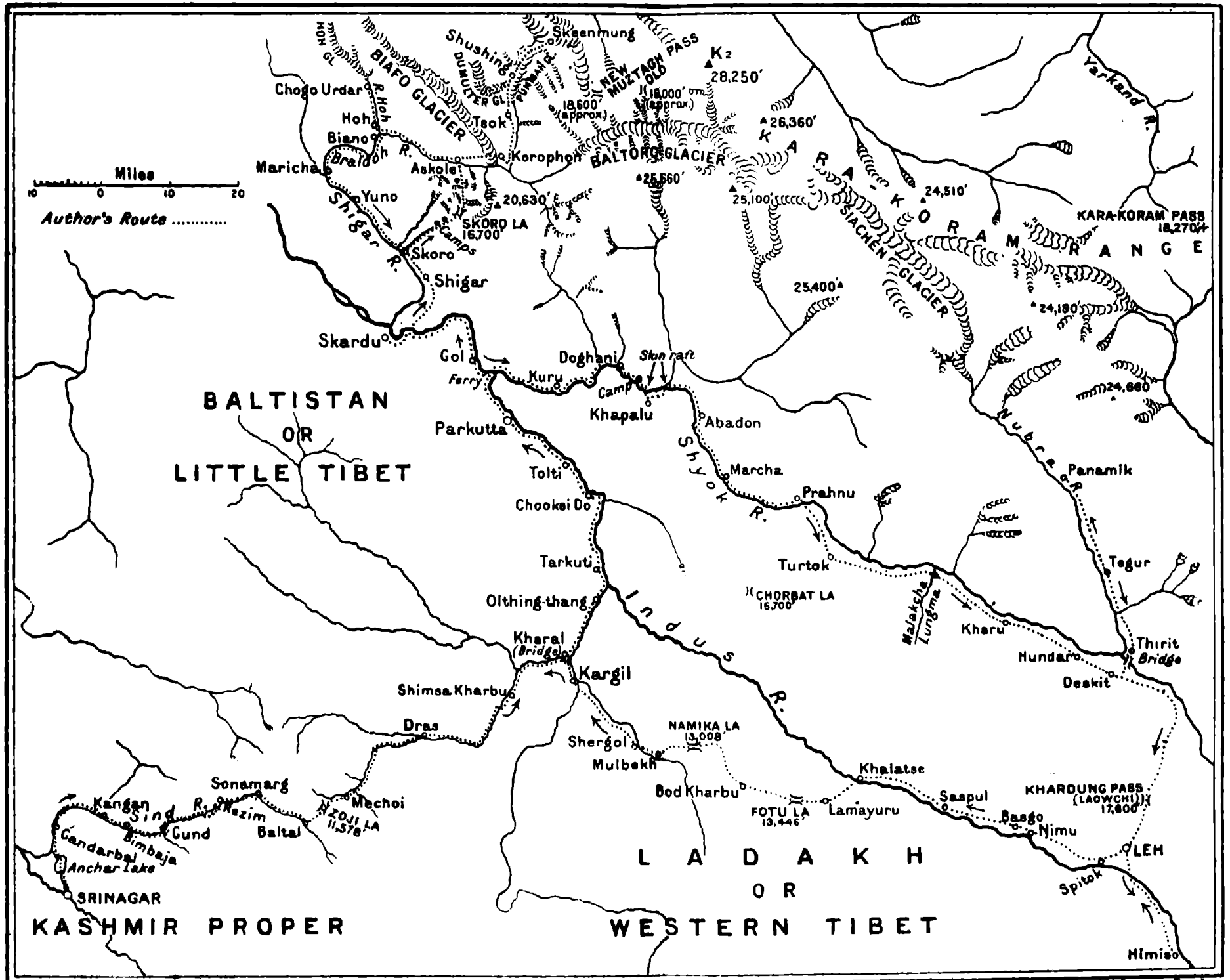
All the same, should the intending travellers have time and inclination, they are recommended to acquire some knowledge, even if only the rudiments, of surveying, as they may be able thereby to make a valuable contribution to geographical knowledge. The objection to doing any work of the kind is that carrying any instrument means extra transport, which is a very important matter to a modest expedition. The Royal Geographical Society is very good in this respect, and one can go through a short course on the subject.

I should much like to have another opportunity, but I shall be fully rewarded if this account fires anyone with the idea of attempting, and I hope, succeeding, in crossing the New Muztagh Pass, which, as said before, has not been crossed up to the present day by any European.

THE END

AN UNEXPLORED PASS

MAP SHOWING AUTHOR'S ROUTE



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GLOSSARY OF NATIVE TERMS

- bagh*—Compound
- barasingh*—A Kashmir stag
- chaddar*—Large white veil
- chang*—Native beer
- changpa*—Nomadic tribe
- charpoy*—A native bed
- chenars*—Plane-trees
- chorten*—Religious structure often holding remains of sainted Lamas
- chowris*—A fly whisk
- chupatties*—A native food-cake
- chuprassi*—Messenger
- elægnus*—A species of tree
- trampa*—Head villager in Baltistan
- gelupa* (religion)—"The Virtuous Ones"
- goa*—Head villager in Ladakh
- gompo*—A Tibetan monastery
- go ras*—White head cloth
- hlato*—Religious symbol
- jau*—Coin once used in Ladakh
- jhula*—Twig-bridge
- ju*—Word of greeting
- khamsin*—A dust-storm
- khilla*—A cone-shaped basket
- hhistiwallas*—Ferry-men
- la*—Mountain pass
- lambadar*—Head villager in Kashmir
- lomri*—Silver fox
- magpa*—The chosen husband of an heiress
- magpons*—Local chieftains
- maitreyan*—The Buddhist Messiah
- mani*—Religious structure
- metayer*—A system of land rentage
- naib-tehsildars*—Government officials
- numnahs*—Felt rugs
- nyopas*—Attendants at marriage ceremonies
- onpo*—Oracle or wise man
- parwana*—Permit
- pirak*—Headdress
- prangos*—A species of shrub
- pubboos*—Ankle boots
- pulu*—A ball
- purdah*—Veil
- rais*—To relay
- raiswallas*—Native transport men
- shikara*—Native canoe
- shikari*—Native guide
- tehsildars*—Government officials
- tehhidars*—Local contractors
- tse pag wed*—"Eternal life"
- yak*—Tibetan ox
- zah*—A raft made of goat skins
- zho* } Hybrid of the common cow
somo } and wild horse