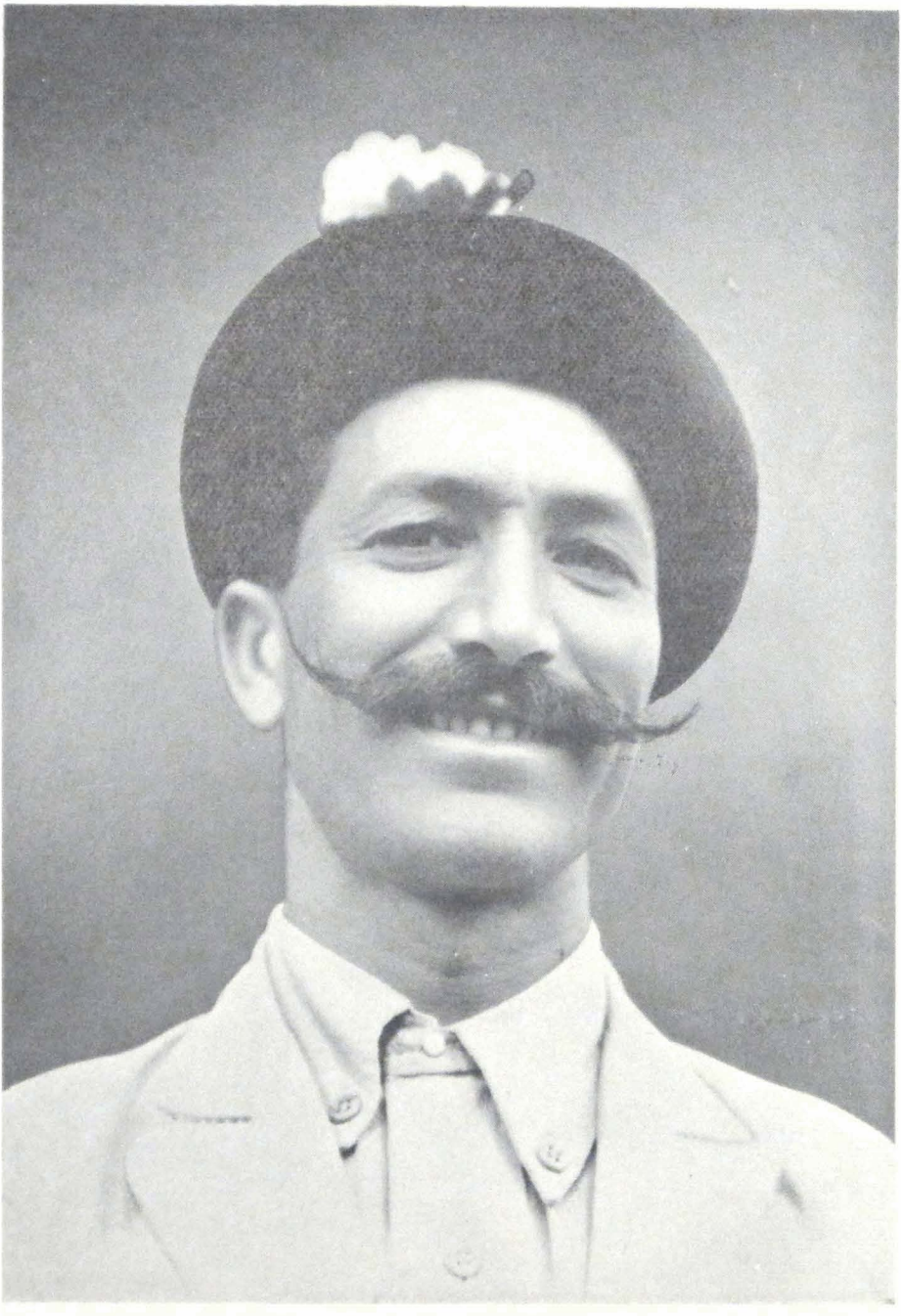

DAULAT SHAH

UNKNOWN KARAKORAM

by

R. C. F. SCHOMBERG

Author of *Peaks and Plains of Central Asia*
and *Between the Oxus and the Indus*

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MAP OF THE

SHINGSHĀL MUSTĀGH AREA

Scale 1 Inch to 4 Miles, or 1:253,440.

Miles 5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10 15 20 Miles

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DAVID AND FLORENCE McLEAN

INTRODUCTION

THE Karakoram Mountains form the northern frontier of the present State of Kashmir. They stretch South-East from the tangle of great ranges where China, Russia, Afghanistan and the Indian Empire meet, through parts of Baltistan and Ladakh to the confines of Tibet.

The Southern or Indian side drains into the Indus river, and from the green oases of Skardu, Shigar, and other well-known places in Baltistan, the great shining peaks can be seen. From this area many explorers and mountaineers have visited the range, and a good deal has been written about its mountains. The Karakoram Range possesses the second highest mountain in the world, K2, height 28,250 feet, and is also famous for its many great glaciers which even now have only been examined in part.

This book, however, deals with two journeys made in 1934 to the remoter and more inaccessible parts of the range. It is on their northern side, where the rivers flow into the distant deserts of Central Asia, there to be swallowed in wastes of pitiless sand, that the Karakoram have been so little visited and so superficially explored.

Here the difficulties are considerable. The valleys are deep, narrow, and frequently cliff-bound, so that progress is impossible in summer owing to unfordable and unbridgeable rivers, and in winter owing to intense cold as well as complications of food, fuel, and the like which make travel if not impossible, at any rate almost profitless. When a country is covered with a thick pall of snow, no useful information can really be obtained. The fauna and flora, the configuration of the landscape, the drainage and water supply, the very glaciers are all concealed from view, and the extremely harsh conditions put a very severe strain on the personnel. Even the animals are difficult to safeguard, and casualties are inevitable.

Lest I should be thought to emphasise unduly the hardships of a winter trip to the Mustagh-Raskam area, I will paraphrase from Grombchevski's account (*Proceedings R.G.S.*, Vol. XII., 1890, pp. 422, 423; the spelling is his). He went along the valley of the Uprang to the banks of the Muz and the Raskem Daria. The first-named of these rivers which is a tributary of the second,[1] was up to that time completely unknown. From this point, i.e., Chong Tokai, Captain Grombchevski turned to the S.E. and followed the valley of the Raskem Daria. He crossed the Karakoram Mountains by the pass of the Aghil Dawan, and visited the sources of the river Muz. . . . This

[1] It is in fact the other way about, as Colonel Mason has shown. *Vide Records of the Survey of India*, vol. xxii, 'The Exploration of the Shaksgam Valley and Aghil Ranges, 1926' (Dehra Dun, 1928), p. 63.

was a tiresome journey, owing to the season of the year (midwinter) and the inaccessibility of the country. The cold was intense, the thermometer falling to 22° and even 27° below zero, and the violence of the winds was extreme. After losing twenty-five out of his thirty-three horses, the traveller was obliged to quit the high desert.

The few inhabitants of this vast and inhospitable region live on the fringe and not in the middle of the area. Even they are uncertain both in permanence of site and fixity of tenure; and the narrative will show how man has settled, abandoned his home, come again, and yet once more gone, as though in spite of himself he was attracted to the country and then compelled by nature to give up his project. The journeys that I narrate in this book were made in the region of the Raskam, Oprang and Mustagh rivers, the three sources of the Yarkand river, of which the principal one is the last.

The first two explorers in this part of the Karakoram were Sir Francis Younghusband in 1887, and next, in 1889, that famous Pole in the Russian service, Grombchevski, to whom scanty justice has on the whole been done, for a more indefatigable and persevering traveller in these inhospitable regions has not yet been found. He suffered terribly during the Russian revolution, and has since died, but in the annals of exploration his name deserves a high place.

Since then other distinguished travellers have explored various parts of these regions, and the four

outstanding expeditions have been those made by Colonel Kenneth Mason in 1926, the Italian expedition in 1913, the Morris-Montagnier expedition in 1927, and the journeys of Dr and Mrs Visser in 1925. This last delightful couple completed a third journey in the Karakoram during 1935. Owing to the fact that the results of their explorations since 1925 have not been published in English, their remarkable successes are imperfectly known in Britain and America.

I have ventured to call this book *Unknown Karakoram*. In some of the places visited either Grombchevski or Younghusband has been my only predecessor. In part of the main Raskam valley, Captain Deasy was also before me. A great deal of the area has certainly never been visited by any European, and some places probably not even by a native. The Braldu glacier and valley, parts of the southern Ghujerab, the Oprang, and certain valleys on the left of the Raskam river are amongst these, to which must be added the head of the Pamir-i-tang, and other minor valleys, and I venture to claim that my journeys have elucidated some of the problems of this vast and extremely difficult region.

I must, however, admit to a certain degree of failure. I had hoped to ascend the Mustagh river at least as far as the so-called Shaksgam river (' so-called ' because it is the Balti name for the Mustagh, and is now unknown amongst the few occasional nomads met with in that area), and possibly reach the Zug Shaksgam and the neighbourhood of the Aghil Dawan. Although I twice

visited the Mustagh and Raskam valleys in the same year, I found it impossible to ascend the Mustagh river above Shingshal-Aghzi, as it flows through a precipice, and there is no means of turning it. We tried scrambling round or over, but not even my invaluable Hunza men could manage, and all I achieved was a long slide down the rocky slopes, to the detriment of my skin.

We were also greatly handicapped by the non-co-operation of the Shingshali coolies as well as by the failure of the Mir of Hunza to give me any assistance whatever. My friend, Major G. V. B. Gillan, C.I.E., did all in his power to assist me. He was personally assured by the Mir that he, too, would do all he could ; and the chief gave me personally the same promise. As I had known the Mir for a number of years, I was much disgusted to find that he gave me no help whatever. It is no use speculating as to why he failed to do so—the motives for the caprices of a Karakoram potentate must always remain undiscoverable—but he did not do so, and there the matter stands.

As to the Shingshali coolies, we were (as are all travellers who use human labour) very much in their hands. As animals, or even men, they were splendid. They were agile, tireless, and extremely helpful whenever they chose, but as they failed to co-operate with us unless it suited them, our journeys were long and exhausting wrangles. I attribute most of my success to my head man, Daulat Shah of Hunza. On him fell all the brunt of dealing with these tiresome swindling

savages, and it was not surprising that he was somewhat worn out at the end of the season.

I do not blame the Shingshalis. They live in a remote valley, free from any control. The Mir, their nominal chief, is frankly afraid of them, terrified lest, if he deal firmly with them, his annual tribute of butter and other products may be diminished. The object of the Shingshalis was quite simple. They hoped to bleed us as much as they could and then manœuvre us out of the valley. Much the same happened to the Vissers when they were in the country in 1925. Many travellers are fond of excusing the vagaries and the dishonesty of their coolies, and regard it as a slur on the white man if relations with the local inhabitants are not harmonious. I see no reason to exculpate the people of Shingshal. They behaved abominably, and for the sake of future travellers, their conduct should be recorded.

It seems to me that there is only one way properly to explore the present inaccessible parts of the Mustagh basin. If, say in April, when the rivers are low, a sufficient number of rope-bridges are made, of the pattern known as ' Dut ' and described in the narrative, it would be quite practicable to carry out a full survey of the valley. The coolies should be brought from outside, either specially selected Hunza men or else Baltis. It is possible to travel with pack animals during the winter, but the difficulties of doing so have already been indicated and are referred to again. I should recommend, however, that this region be reached via Ladakh, preferably by crossing the Karakoram Pass

and then turning West. But it is too big a subject to discuss here.

In endeavouring to describe the scenery one great difficulty lies in the lack of names for the mountains. In the *Geographical Journal*, Vol. LXXV., No. 5, page 399, that distinguished mountaineer, Dr T. G. Longstaff, emphasises the prejudice of the Royal Geographical Society against giving personal names to peaks. It would be impertinent of me to criticise the merits of this attitude. I may be permitted to point out, however, that unless something is done, foreign travellers will give names to these unnamed peaks and these will be incorporated into foreign maps, finally finding a place in our own. Unless therefore steps are taken, and that quickly, travellers in the mapped but unnamed valleys of the British Empire will find themselves crossing the Hitler Pass, descending the Goering glacier, and admiring Mount Mussolini—and quite right too. In *The Times* of 5 July 1935 it is announced that Denmark has decided that the names of distinguished persons, including H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, be given to various features in Greenland. The map of the world, from Tasmania to America, and from Stanleyville to the straits of La Perouse is covered with places called by personal names. To an amateur and outsider like myself, it is difficult to understand why it is improper to give the names of famous travellers like Younghusband, Stein or Mason to the scenes of their discoveries. Above all, those who have perished amongst the mountains, by murder or accident, men

like Mummery and Merkl, Schlangenweit or Hayward, should surely be appropriately commemorated. In a few years' time, the maps of the Himalaya, Karakoram and their neighbourhood, will resemble a badly printed table of logarithms rather than a mountain region.

To finish up, let me say that I owe a great debt of thanks to Major G. V. B. Gillan, C.I.E., of the Political Department and to his wife, old friends who have never failed to befriend me; to Major L. K. Ledger, I.M.S., the Agency Surgeon at Gilgit and to Mrs. Ledger, and also to Colonel L. E. Lang, C.I.E., M.C., the Resident in Kashmir. The Government of India, and also that of H.H. the Maharaja of Kashmir, with their customary courtesy, gave me many valuable facilities, and Major J. Rice, M.C., R.I.A.S.C., enabled me to feed my hungry domestics. And to those retainers who endured much discomfort and misery, who received all the kicks and none of the ha'pence of exploration, I owe a deep debt of gratitude.

My friend, Mr David McLean, has again undertaken for me the laborious and thankless task of scrutinising, correcting and verifying the text during my absence. For his great care and patience I am deeply in his debt. He has suggested many improvements and emendations, and has expunged many blemishes. I wish that I could repay him better than by the dedication of this book.

I should like to make it quite clear that the whole enterprise was a purely private and unofficial one.

R. C. F. S.

PART I

CHAPTER I

KASHMIR TO HUNZA

We left Srinagar, Kashmir, in bad weather at the end of April, 1934. Spring was late that year; a great deal of rain and snow had fallen in April, instead of during the winter when it would have been useful and would not have incommoded us.

We went by car to Bandapur, where the road to Gilgit begins, and where I spent a night with Captain Sherriff and Mr Ludlow in their camp, and watched them pull out of the river fat pink-fleshed English trout which I found first-rate to eat.

I left them unwillingly, for I had to set out in pouring rain, but I did not dare to stay, as behind me was one of those Gargantuan foreign expeditions which cost so much and achieve so little. Six hundred coolies were needed by the members to carry their gear, and I knew that if we marched behind this army we should fare badly. So I fled from these kindly scientists and mountaineers, as though from an avenging foe.

We hastened on, over snow-clad passes and muddy roads, like helpless pilchards before a pack of dog fish. The Gilgit road is intensely dull. I have walked up and down it more often than I dare to think, but I

never cease to marvel how a road can traverse two hundred miles of the finest scenery in the world, and yet offer no more than one or two good views. It is, in truth, a matter-of-fact road, and winds along the sides and beds of narrow valleys.

We found Gilgit in the middle of May an attractive spot. There, too, the spring had been late, and I rejoiced as I devoured large platefuls of strawberries of which a more genial season would have deprived me. My kind hostess, Mrs Ledger, gave me generous helpings, and the fact that her husband was laid up with typhus fever enabled me, rather ungraciously, to eat his share as well as my own, and to regard his convalescence with anxiety.

Major G. V. B. Gillan, the Political Agent, and Mrs Gillan returned to Gilgit before I left; I was thus able to see these best of friends who had consistently given me great help and showered kindnesses upon me during the past ten years.

Mrs Gillan's garden was a gorgeous sight, with beds of snapdragon, banks of marguerites and bushes of those delightful magenta cabbage roses which, with abundant sweet-william and other flowers, reminded me of the simple natural gardens, free from grotesque and scentless hybrids, of my Victorian youth.

From Gilgit we went up the Hunza valley and stayed two nights with the Mir of Hunza, who received me kindly and was profuse with promises of help on my journey, none of which were fulfilled. He was busy preparing for the marriage of his grandson,

Jemal Khan, with the daughter of his neighbour and hereditary enemy, the Mir of Nagir, who also was giving one of his grandsons to the daughter of the Hunza chief. These matrimonial arrangements were unpopular in Hunza where close union with Nagir was much disliked, not only because of old animosity, but also because the people of Nagir are of inferior stock to those of Hunza, and consequently closer relationships were resented as likely to cause deterioration of the race of Hunza. I do not think that anyone expected two marriages to heal the dissensions of centuries.

We left Hunza on a delightful day in May, though rather too late in that month, and continued up the main valley. Travel in Hunza entails the payment of heavy tolls, and I dispensed a great deal of useless largesse. The people are poor, and the demands of their Mir ensure their remaining in a state of simple poverty, but I doubt if enforced pauperisation results in contentment with one's lot. The leaves on the apricot and mulberry trees were just out, green and fresh ; the corn was unexpectedly high, and we walked comfortably to Altit, that strikingly picturesque village, with its fortress rising from orchards on the edge of a precipice. For many generations Altit, Baltit and Ganesh were the only inhabited places in Hunza.[1]

The road was narrow, and we were compelled to employ coolies. At Altit a fat *lumbardar* (headman)

[1] For a fuller description of Hunza, its people, history, and customs, see my *Between the Oxus and the Indus*, 1935.

came and looked at us. Behind him a fierce quarrel was taking place in the village and, judging from its noise, it was a very real one, but the fat man did not turn his head to look. The road was very hot, and we poured with sweat as we panted up the Atabad spur. Eight years ago this spur was as barren as the sheer and arid cliffs opposite. Now infinite labour has won a great deal of it to cultivation; fruit trees and wheat bore witness to the perseverance of the hardy men of Altit who had dared to colonise this unpromising site.

We descended steeply on the other side to a barren patch by the river: there, too, a fierce struggle was taking place with nature, to wrest a living from the soil. We met here a most unlikely party of Turks from Constantinople, provided with the unimpeachable passports of the Turkish Republic. The fact that the leader was a Russian Tartar from Kazan, as too were his friends, confused us slightly. They said, however, that they were a party of intelligent sightseers, who had been rambling through Chitral and the Pamirs, but with little luck, for they had been looted in Chinese territory. I envied these Turks, who had been allowed to go where they liked over lands closed to the ordinary British officer in India. I resolved to become a Turk and obtain a Turkish passport (for evidently nationality had nothing to do with the latter document), and so wander over the forbidden regions of the Indian Empire and its adjacent areas, no one objecting.

From Atabad the track led through a gorge in the Karakoram range, and reached Gulmit, a fair-sized

place, and the first Wakhi settlement. The Wakhis are a people of an old Iranian stock who, originally nomadic—as, indeed, they still are in some places—have settled down reluctantly, but often successfully, to agriculture. They are found in many of the adjoining valleys in this part of Asia. They are Maulais or Ismailis.[1] They still seem to hanker after their old nomadic life, and its influence appears in their diet, which consists largely of milk products. A certain laziness, too, in opening up new land, which in Hunza proper would long ago have been utilised, evinces their ineradicable pastoral tendencies.

At Gulmit a heavy dust storm swept down the valley, black clouds gathered, and the sky was overcast. We rejoiced as we hoped that two or three days of cloudy weather would enable us to reach our immediate destination, the village of Shingshal, by the river route from the next stage Pasu, instead of going by the Karun Pir, a pass which would entail a great detour. If the river were low, we could ford it, and so we wished for cloudy weather.

After leaving Gulmit, we reached the stream from the glacier above, and as the first pack animal was led over the bridge that flimsy erection toppled into the water, and we had to wait till it was repaired. The glacier stream was a raging torrent, casting spray high into the air as it roared down over the stones. But

[1] Maulais or Ismailis: a Mohammedan sect, followers of the Agha Khan, who claims descent, in direct line, from Ali by his wife Fatima, daughter of the Prophet.

there was nothing lovely about it. It was a thick, coffee-coloured surging flood, spewed out of the black ugly glacier, frowning above. It was just a nuisance.

When we reached Pasu, and suggested going to Shingshal by the river, we were told in horror-struck tones that that idea was out of the question; not even the promise of double pay and a lavish reward would shake the opinion of the local oracles; they said that once the river rose, and the glacier began to melt, the river was unfordable, no matter how many dull days there were.

Pasu has always pleased me. It is famous for its brilliant red apples, but it is an unlucky village. Formerly, and not so long ago, it possessed three hundred houses, now there are barely twenty, chiefly because its glacier—for every village has its private glacier whence the irrigation for the land comes—descended one year very low, and covered much land with rocks and boulders. When I first visited Pasu in 1926 I crossed this glacier, and found it very troublesome. Even in 1932 it was not easy, though the track ran over part of it. In 1934 the glacier had retired so far that the track did not come within a mile of its snout.

The famous Shingshal flood completed the destruction of the village; now there is a large tract of grey stones, and the wide, useless, ever dry river bed, replacing a rich expanse of orchard and corn-land. Across, facing us, was the mouth of the Shingshal river which flows into the left of the Hunza river, through a narrow gorge. We were again told that we were too

late, by ten days, but how were we to know that the river would rise so rapidly, after so much cold weather and so late a spring ?

The pleasant competent headman of Pasu had been removed from his appointment, and a baleful, one-eyed cadaverous wight given the job. I thought it hard, especially as the old and capable headman was grandson of the late Mir, but I was told that the Mir feared that he meant to emigrate. (A very childish yarn which it was incredible anyone could believe but, in a land of lies and suspicion, anything is believed when it pays to do so.) However, the ex-headman had been told that he would be reinstated in another year, which made the whole business the more ridiculous and unfair. The behaviour and motives of oriental despots are tedious and devious.

So from Pasu we had to go to the small village of Morkhun (the ' House of Rain ' as the name means in Wakhi) at the foot of the Karun Pir, the pass leading to Shingshal, and at once began our preparations for the journey there.

We passed a large party of Turkis on their way back from Mecca, delighted at having accomplished their pilgrimage—for in Turkestan it is a great thing to be a *Haji*—and at having nearly regained their native land, still in a sadly unsettled state. They all complained bitterly of the excessive charges for conveyance whether by car or camel from Jeddah to the Holy City, but Turkis are so easy to swindle that the temptation to overcharge such pilgrims must be irresistible.

My new cook, Muhib, has not yet been honourably mentioned in this narrative. He was a small but active man from Baltit in Hunza ; he had long wished to feed me but I could not engage him until my old Kashmiri cook Aziza had retired in 1933, worn out and full of wealth. I doubt if Muhib, though a great character, a dancer, a singer of songs both proper and otherwise, and a particularly skilful bread-maker, will ever become such a figure of fun as old Aziza, whose determination to quarrel with everyone gave him prominence in camp life. Daulat Shah, another servant of mine, referred to Muhib as a camel, and also reproved him for forgetfulness, and no wonder when from sheer absent-mindedness he sometimes cooked the vegetables without putting them in water. ' I am as God made me be ', Muhib would say, when taken to task, an unanswerable rejoinder. But he was a good cook, and the only untoward incident—which I blush to relate—was when I slapped a partridge in his face which he had cooked in such a way that it bore a greater likeness to his leather *pabboos*, or boots, than to an edible bird. This was his only fall from grace, otherwise he fed me well and promised well as a cook : he insisted on giving me soup, and even made me drink it. Few travellers, great or small, realise that on a journey only one thing matters—a good cook. I often groan as I pass the coolies of tourists in Kashmir, carrying boxes of expensive and unnecessary tinned foods. If they took instead a good cook, a great strain would be removed from their purses and their stomachs. Native cooks,

AKBAR SHAH DAULAT SHAH HASIL SHAH
ABDULLA RATHER MUHIB ALI
QULI KHAN AT DAULAT'S FEET

Kashmiri ones in particular, worship tinned food and encourage their employers to carry it, as it saves so much trouble.

We left Morkhun on the last day of May 1934—far too late as it turned out. Just as I was starting Raja Nafis Khan, the elder half-brother of the Mir of Hunza, called. He had ridden over from his village a dozen miles off. He was an agreeable old man, and we exchanged platitudes in bad Persian.

I had always felt sorry for him as it must be galling to see his younger brother, by a lucky chance, enjoying the good things of this world whilst he, the elder, through no fault at all, is poor, oppressed and ignored, pigging it in a remote village. £22 10s. from Government seems an inadequate annual compensation for the loss of a throne, especially since the old man's property has been largely sequestrated and he is not even invited to the annual Durbar at Gilgit.

It is, however, the sacred rule of the East to trample on the under-dog and, when he is down, press him down and down. To a Western mind the contrast is indecent between the elder brother a pauper and the younger one, equally by mere luck, prosperous and arrogant. Perhaps it is just as well that the opinions of passing travellers, who often see most of the game, should be ignored.

We left Morkhun in dismal, cloudy weather, and turned up the small valley that irrigates that hamlet. We wandered up a narrow gorge between high clay cliffs with large eroded cavities in their faces. One

day these cliffs will fall, and much damage will be done. We picked our way over the stones, amongst which sparse wild roses grew, and half-way up reached the cultivated plateau and settlement of Abgarch.

In old days Wakhis lived here, and sent their flocks to graze at Morkhun, but in these peaceful times the reverse is the case; the upper village is cultivated but not inhabited, and the animals come up to graze in the summer. It is a very old settlement with two absurd toy forts tumbling to bits, yet there were only three trees in the place when there might have been three hundred. Of these one was a great apricot, in full bloom, a lovely sight. The Wakhis do not care for trees, and believe that only one is needed, in front of the house, for shade in the hot weather. Fruit is not appreciated, and where a Hunza man will plant as many trees as he can, the Wakhis will plant none at all, a very tiresome trait for those who like fruit.

Below Abgarch we descended into the bed of the valley, which now began to widen. Here the hill-sides were covered with pencil cedar trees. The sun came out, and when we reached the huts and steading of Puryar below the pass, the sky was blue and the prospects for the morrow favourable. A cloudy night means that the snow remains soft, and we needed a clear sky and a sharp frost.

Puryar we found a pleasant place with stone huts, poor grazing, and great rocky peaks encircling it. There was, thanks to the cedars, an abundance of wood, a rare event in the Karakoram, where fuel and grass

are usually inadequate. Puryar is 12,000 feet above sea-level and this explained my shortness of breath for the last few miles.

Daulat Shah went out to try for a shot at Ram Chikor, the Himalayan snowcock, which were abundant but elusive. These birds can always be relied on to provide both good exercise and good meat. He came back after a long search without having fired a shot.

CHAPTER II

OVER THE KARUN PIR

WE left Puryar early on 1 June 1934 to cross the pass, the Karun Pir, only 12 feet short of 16,000 feet. On the other side, we should find the Shingshal valley and its river. The Karun Pir, or Pass of Karun, is called after Karun, a famous athlete who flourished in bygone days and was the first to cross the pass. He ranks high in the opinion of the natives, and a favourite curse is 'If Shams-i-tabriz will not kill you, then Karun will'. An account of the holy but vindictive Shams is given later, but the fact of comparing Karun with him indicates the athlete's prowess and prestige. It was a fine morning, and we reached the crest of the pass at 9.30 a.m. after a steady crawl. From the Morkhun side there is nothing difficult about the pass; laden animals can be taken to the top. We, however, had none with us, for it was too early to find any pasture for them and to take animals would have meant no food for a whole day, which would have been too much for the local ponies after their long winter fast.

I was greatly disappointed to find the magnificent view was wholly spoiled by clouds. We looked down, on the far side, over a precipice to where the Shingshal river, present but invisible, ran in its confined bed. At

right angles to us, three valleys fell from the white slopes of Dastoghil (25,868 ft.), the magnificent peak which is a feature of the Shingshal area. Occasionally, as we looked for a second or two, the clouds would roll away, and this giant would appear gleaming, austere and aloof; then mists would gather again and hide this glorious sight. For two hours I waited before giving up all hope of a view and then, after these tantalising glimpses, I mournfully descended.

It was unfortunate that some of the lower glaciers flowing from this grand mountain were so unworthy of their parentage. Indeed, they resembled nothing so much as streams of frozen sewage flowing dourly down their valley beds. Where all the black filth came from I do not know, but when, at the end of that day's march, we camped by one of the streams from these sable ice rivers, the water was more like a flow of ink than a mountain torrent. We had to drink and to wash in it, and I wonder why we did not emerge like the boys in *Struwel Peter*, dipped in the ink by tall Agrippa.

From just below the pass, we caught a glimpse of the main Hunza valley between Gulmit and Pasu, and realised the wide detour which the high water in the Shingshal river had obliged us to take, although the actual length of the defiles where the stream had to be forded was only about two miles. From the summit of the pass to the Shingshal river was a drop of over 6,000 feet. The rough path was not over a gentle slope, or even a series of zigzags, but it plunged, head

foremost, in a straight precipitous direct line. It would be difficult to imagine a more mournful prospect than that viewed from the upper part of this steep decline. The eye swept over a purplish brown circle of barren cliffs, below which the steep shale slopes poured their loose stones in an eternal trickle. How the supply of this loose rubbish was renewed did not appear; and as we glissaded and waded, often knee deep, in this ever-moving stream of scree, earth, and miscellaneous stone oddments, tons of material descended with us. Some care was needed, as the displaced debris encouraged the stones above to come rumbling down, and Daulat often looked anxiously behind him, squinting up the rattling, moving slope, as we shuffled down the slipping hillside.

It took four hours to reach the Shingshal stream, and all the time a strong, morose wind blew in our faces, bathing us in dust full of soda salts and producing much bad language.

In the whole 6,000 feet there was only one place of interest, called Murad's bivouac (Murad Shipurgah), or place where he had stayed for the night. I asked about Murad, but found that he had been dead for many years beyond the memory of man, yet the accident of piling a few stones together for shelter and for spending the night had made for him a monument more lasting than brass. When we reached the foot of this descent we found that four streams met almost in the same spot, and formed a kind of Alpine cross-roads. We crossed the Shingshal river by a fair if alarming

bridge, with no railings, and camped by the side of the black water from the Lupghar stream. My Hunza men tried their best to make a filter bed, by building a series of pools through which a trickle of water flowed. The silt and the current, however, were too great to allow this artifice to succeed. Even here the odious wind did not cease, but roared round us, smothering us with dust. In camp there is only one calamity, a strong wind. Against snow, rain and sun protection can be found, but a wind evades all human ingenuity.

From here the coolies who had brought us over the pass returned. They had a meal and then at once climbed up the slippery hill under the moonlight. They would sleep half-way up, and would be home next day, thinking nothing of the exertion. I have often longed for the hillman's legs, and still more for his wind, for to any Briton 15,000 feet means a great deal of puffing and blowing.

The Shingshali coolies arrived the same evening; otherwise we should not have allowed the others to go. 'Here comes the Baltistan army', said Daulat, as the men trooped in; he was not far wrong, they were far more like Baltis than their neighbours in the Hunza valley.

We left camp next day, thankful to escape the wind, and a little way on crossed one of those strange dark streams in its deep sunless gorge that are so frequent in this country. The place was Dikut, and the bridge had been made by the children of Shahino in memory of their father, as a charitable work of public utility.

Of its value there was no doubt, but I earnestly wished there had been a railing of some kind, as three planks a hundred feet above the bed of a narrow ravine, approached too on both sides by a scramble over steep slippery rocks, fail to comfort the feet of the European.

Bridge building was clearly a fashionable form of good work, for we were told that the two bridges we had crossed the previous day on our way to camp had been built by Kiskol—of whom more later—in honour of his father Mohamed Amin. Let these names be honourably mentioned and saved from oblivion in this book.

We now climbed over 2,500 feet up a steep barren hillside, then up a long couloir full of falling stones, and so to the top of the ridge between the Dikut and main valleys. The view was only fine towards the West and, where I longed for a clear sky, I saw nothing but rolling clouds. Our descent was as far down as our ascent had been up, over an even worse track, with a sheer drop of hundreds of feet; and we regained once more the accursed and capricious Shingshal stream which, because it elected to run through a gorge for some hundreds of yards, obliged every traveller, at all seasons, to suffer this wearisome climb.

We followed the river bed for some time, yet were not spared another maddeningly tiresome ascent over a high crumbling cliff and then passed the locally famous shrine of Shams-i-tabriz, or the Sun of Tabriz, a well-reputed Moslem saint. The shrine or *ziarat* proper was on the opposite side of the unfordable river, on the top of a yellow and inaccessible cliff.

To satisfy the devotion of the pious there was, however, a ziarat-of-ease close to the path, and this was decorated with many flags and rags. The real shrine commemorated the place where the saint had left his staff, and was a mere bundle of sticks, not easy to see. Our coolies on approaching the shrine went down to the river, washed superficially, and prayed to the saint. Pious Moslems as we were, the coolies' piety annoyed us, for we had been eight hours on the road and longed for our tea, which we finally obtained at a pleasant place with clear running water, abundant willow trees, and small energetic mosquitoes. Our dog, poor little Quli Khan, made straight for my tent, and stretched himself out quite exhausted.

But I must refer again to the Sun of Tabriz. He could not have been a pleasant visitor, as he was afflicted with an evil disease, a putrefaction of the flesh which prevented people from approaching him. He lived during the reign of the Mogul Emperor, Shah Jahan (1627-58), and his tomb is at Multan in the Punjab, where he begged a piece of meat from a butcher but was refused by the people any fire with which to cook it, as they could not endure his smell. So he reminded the sun that he too was a sun, and he called down the great heat which has always been the bane of Multan. But how or why this holy but vindictive man ever came to Shingshal, I failed to discover.

Two gold washers had accompanied us from our last camp and intended to go further on as the water in the Shingshal river was now too high for gold washing,

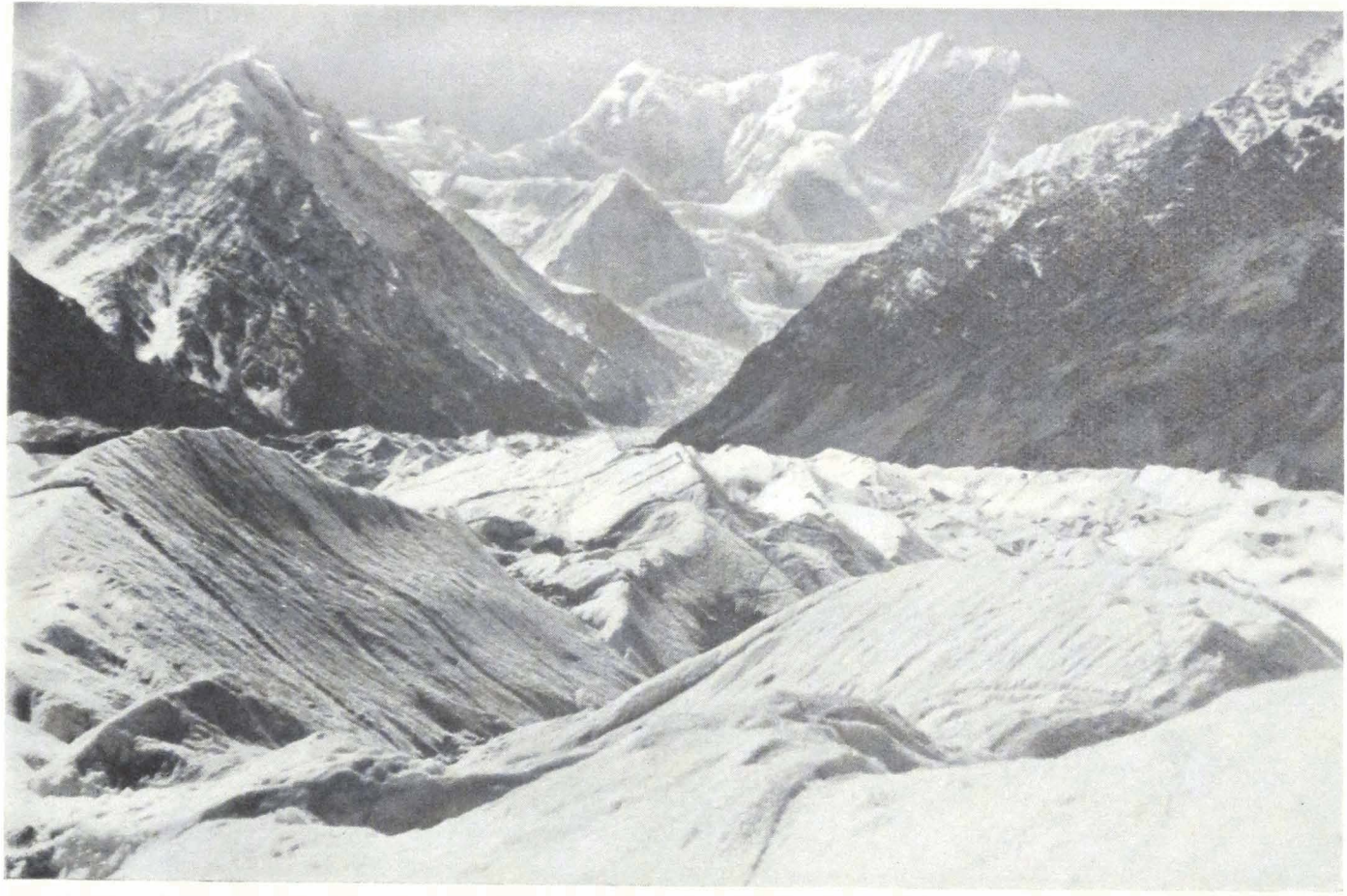
and it was therefore very unprofitable labour. They carried bags of flour on their backs but otherwise their equipment was scanty. They seemed hardy men, and with their black beards, large heads, and prominent noses were a very different type from the rest of our party. Daulat said that they actually lived near him at Gilgit but originally came from Yaghistan, or independent territory.

As we left our camp a coolie left his cooking pot and two wooden ladles by the side of the path. I asked him whether it was not a rather risky proceeding, but he said that as he had placed them under the protection of the Sun of Tabriz no harm would come to them.

A short distance from the camp was a narrow valley on the right with a fine conical peak at its end: this was Purk Jerrikh, or the trapped mouse; a shepherd had once seen a mouse caught by the rising water of the glacier, and so gave this name to the valley.

We next crossed the wide mouth of the Mulungutti glacier, a fine sheet of white ice with Dastoghil at its head; but the weather was still unfavourable, and the view was not clear but showed a tantalising shrouded outline of the mountain opposite: on the other side of the Shingshal river were hot springs, but they were quite unapproachable.

The Mulungutti glacier was very much alive and reached to the opposite or right side of the valley, with the river full of ice flowing below it. We had no difficulty in crossing the glacier, as our coolies seemed to find it easy going up and down over the



DASTOGHIL FROM CENTRE OF THE MULUNGUTTI GLACIER

slippery hummocks of ice, with their loads on their backs. Indeed, on the far side they laughed and sang with true Balti cheerfulness, though I fancy they would have greatly resented being told that they were like the people of Baltistan. It would, though, have been a compliment, for the Baltis have many virtues and the Shingshalis have but few.

After crossing the glacier, we looked up the broad bed of the Shingshal river, a vast expanse of grey stone between precipitous walls of loose shale. On the right, the river flowed on its turgid way; beyond, up the valley, we could see the green fields of the village, a very welcome sight in this barren heartless land.

The track was now easy but stony, and we passed the small and despised shrine of Shah Said decorated with three ibex horns and as many bits of stick. One of our chaperons, Balti by name and the local tourist conductor, proudly announced that he had shot the animals. A little further was a heap of ibex horns piled on some stones which marked the place where Shah Said had lived and taught.

I could discover nothing about this holy man; no one knew anything; no one cared; and so completely had his reputation vanished, that not a single man invoked him in passing. So I fear that he belonged to that class of holy men who are of no use to living sinners.

At last we reached the village of Shingshal and camped under some wild apricot trees which were still in blossom.

CHAPTER III

SHINGSHAL

WE spent three nights at Shingshal village, as this place was, so to speak, the last port of call, and both we and our coolies had to make our final preparations. We also had to collect enough rope from each village to bridge the widest river. On the whole I was agreeably surprised at the village, which must be almost the most remote and inaccessible inhabited place in the Indian Empire, cut off as it is from the outer world, and hardly visited by anyone, native or foreign. The community is quite self-contained, and the many faults and disagreeable qualities of the people are aggravated by this undesirable isolation, for they do not live the ordinary life of the hillman but pass a squalid if contented existence.

In 1934 there were fifty houses with one hundred and sixty males of all ages, but when I asked how many women there were, the village elders frankly confessed that they did not know. They would have told me if they could. I should put the total inhabitants at about three hundred and fifty.

I sat comfortably under the apricot trees, with the villagers around me, and was told the history of the settlement. On my left, reclining against a box, was

one of the Mir's levies, absorbed in extracting the vermin from his little son's head, and showing the skill of long practice by killing them with his thumb-nail. It is no use trying to kill vermin by pressure. It is essential to cut them with one's nail. Daulat superintended the chase and assured me that each execution was well and truly done, and that there was no danger of the victims taking refuge with us.

The story of the founding of Shingshal was narrated as follows: Eleven generations ago, a certain Mamu Singh, a Yeshkun or peasant of the Shinaka race from the valley of Chaprot in the Gilgit district, came with his wife and settled in this valley. His wife always disliked her husband, but she loathed him when he brought her from the comparative comfort of Chaprot to live in this cold and isolated place. She never called him anything else but Shum, which means a dog in the Shina tongue—for the subservience of Eastern woman is largely a Western fiction—and the village was called Shumshal. When I asked what Shal meant the elders said briefly ' God knows '. In our maps the place is called Shingshal, and the people never refer to their village or themselves except as Shimshal or Shimshalis—so I suppose that, not for the first time, the Western traveller has been too ingenious and too learned. I have often asked them about this point, and never once have I found them agree with the pronunciation of the European pundits and map-mongers. Shum had one son called Sher, who in turn had three sons, Bakhti, Wali, and Boki. Both

Sher and his sons married Wakhi women from Gulmit, Ghulkin, and the neighbouring villages in the Guhjal district of Hunza. The men were positive that there was no Balti and no Hunza strain in them, but I am quite certain that they are wrong, and that there is a very large admixture of Balti blood. As already stated, the original ancestor of the present villagers was a Shinaki Yeshkun. The Shinakis of the Gilgit valley are the ordinary inhabitants, of no prowess, physique, or personality, and in general poor creatures. Thanks to an occasional strain of strong Wakhi blood a few fine men are met with in Shingshal, but their paucity and their unusual presence both emphasise the generally poor appearance of the majority. My own Shingshali attendant was one of these exceptions. Tall, athletic, blue-eyed, with a fair moustache, he stood out from the rest of his fellows like a white Kaffir amongst his black mates. No one with any knowledge of the Balti, or the Shinakis of the Gilgit valley, would have any hesitation in placing the ancestry of the Shingshali. The Balti blood came when the routes to Baltistan were open, before the glaciers advanced. There is, as explained, a Wakhi strain, but the people are no more pure Wakhis than they are exclusively anything else. They are consequently not a pure-blooded community. Apart from inter-marriage with Wakhis, immigration from Baltistan, and their original Shinaki ancestor, there have been many settlers in Shingshal from other places. For years the valley was a remote Alsatia for the conscience-stricken, and the varying types to-day

prove their varied ancestry. Shingshal has been used by the Mir of Hunza as a penal station, and he sends his criminals, most cleverly, to expiate their crimes there. One of my servants' relatives spent a long time in this valley for some trifling peccadillo.

Eleven generations means, at the longest, three hundred years, and during that time the population has been of a very varied nature. The Shingshalis are not Wakhis, even if they have frequently married Wakhi women, and they fail to show enough signs of Wakhi characteristics to be identified as such. It is true that they speak Wakhi, but their language is a different dialect, both in pronunciation and its use of words, from the true Wakhi spoken in Upper Hunza. They are Maulais by creed, but very indifferent followers of that lax form of Islam. Owing to their remoteness the people were not polyglots as in most parts of Hunza, where a knowledge of four or five of the local languages is quite usual. A dozen words of Persian or Turki were all that some of them could muster, and few had even a moderate knowledge of Burishashki, the speech of Hunza. I abused Daulat for knowing so little of the language, but by the time we left the country we had all acquired a very fair smattering of it.

The Shingshalis have one great advantage over their neighbours, abundance of food. They have more land than they can cultivate, and more pastures than they can use, so there is no incentive to labour as an alternative to hunger. To this point I shall refer again. There is only one crop in the year, wheat, peas, or

barley. No buck-wheat is grown, and the people seldom smoke. There are, very unfortunately for the visitor, no hens, because the hens are said to have died owing to the cold, but more probably because the people did not look after them. There was, in 1934, one horse only, the property of my man, Balti, but it was more a sign of wealth than a beast of utility. The people all had yaks, but they said that in a very snowy winter the animals die; that is probably quite untrue. At the village itself there are Lombardy poplars, plenty of wild apricot trees, and a good deal of thorn.

The chief flocks are sheep and goats, and a few cows, as well as the yaks referred to. Animals are sent to Hunza as tribute to the Mir, and can travel at any time of the year, except when the snow on the pass is too heavy. All small disputes are settled locally, and only the serious cases are referred to the Mir. The poorer people give annually one sheep to their chief, the better-off give two. They also give him one *gharbal* of flour, about twenty-two lb., annually, and he exacts a good deal of *ghi* or butter. The *lumbardar* of Shingshal is a Hunza man, a permanent absentee, and the control of the Mir over the people is practically non-existent. This absence of authority has a bad effect on the people, and evokes the chagrin of their neighbours, who enjoy to the utmost the benefit of a complete supervision by their chief.

The food of the people is simple but adequate. They have no sugar, tea, or fruit, not even the dried apricots that are such a great staple in Hunza, nor do

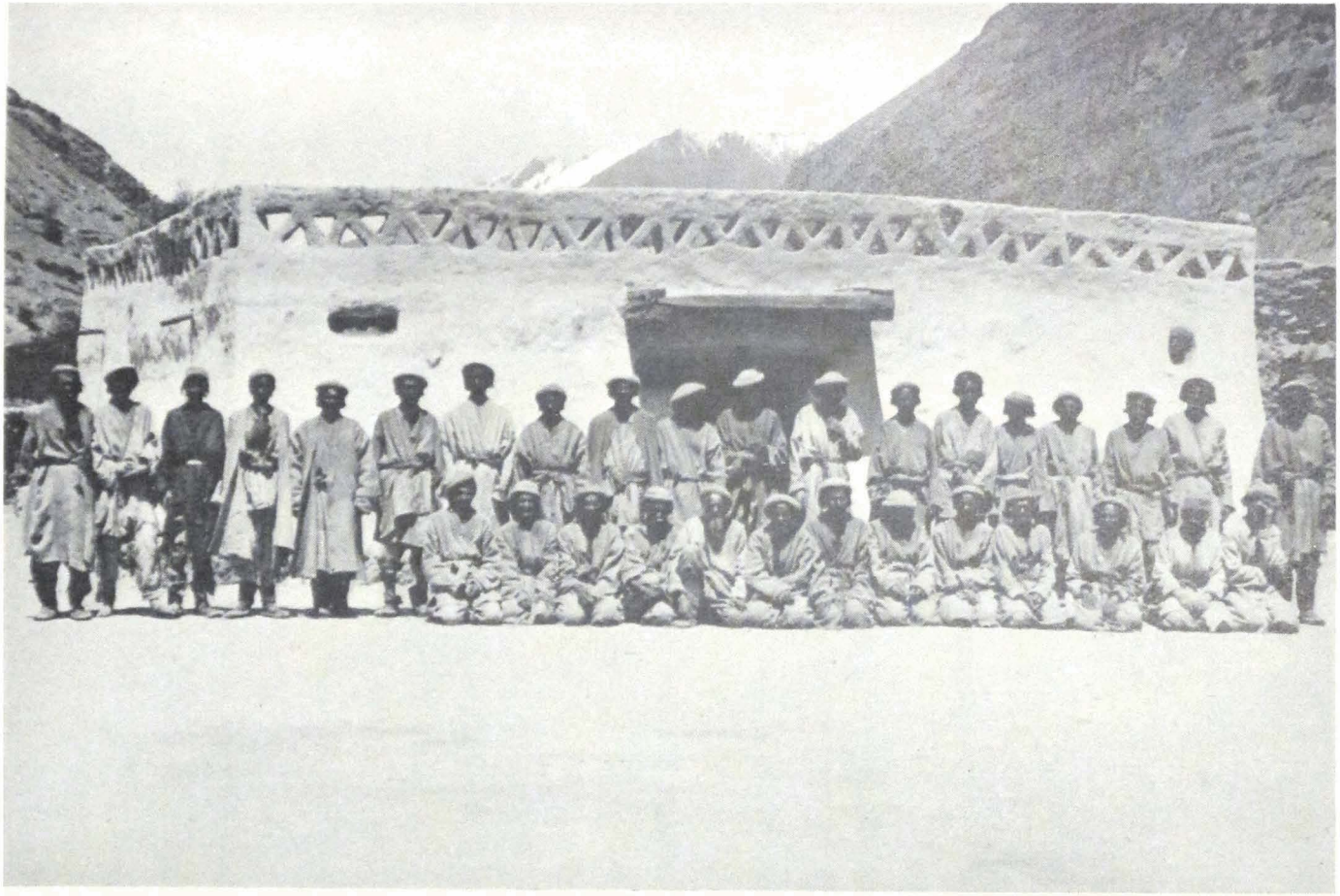
they appreciate these articles. When we finally paid off our Shingshalis in Hunza, they seemed surprised when I asked them if they were going to take back some tea. They are glad of it, and fruit too, when free but not otherwise. Vegetables are practically unknown, even the turnip being extremely rare. Sometimes a merchant will bring tea or sugar to exchange for *palos*, the hair rugs woven in Shingshal, but there was, so far as we could see, no real demand for these commodities. Very few of the Shingshalis had been out of their valley, and of those only one or two had visited Gilgit.

Their food, though abundant, was indescribably foul. Their flour was mixed with dry dung, dust, wood, grass, and every sort of rubbish, so that we who were not used to such stuff found our insides scraped as though with a nutmeg grater. Their *ghi* was adulterated with even worse rubbish, and when we boiled ours we removed from the top a thick black scum, about half an inch in thickness, consisting of hair, other oddments, and much sheer dirt.

Primitive and lonely though life may be in Shingshal, it is, in spite of many drawbacks, hardly fair to call it squalid. I went into many of the houses and I was surprised to find how clean, roomy and comfortable they were, compared with what one would expect from the owners. In one house, an especially good one, we entered a small empty room, and then passed into the principal room, 25 by 22 feet, supported by a double row of wooden pillars. The beams were carved in simple whorls and scrolls and there were two orifices

for light and air. The mud walls had a ledge, 18 inches wide, running along two sides of the apartment, and I saw a matchlock and a couple of swords hanging up. Facing the entrance wall was a raised platform, 15 inches high, for cooking, and in it was a horseshoe-shaped recess, scooped out to hold the cooking pot. Behind was more room for odds and ends, and a door leading to the women's apartments. There was nothing cramped. There were skin mats on the floor and, in the walls, recesses in lieu of cupboards. The wood consisted of beams of the pencil cedar, the only timber available—except a few poplars—and brought from about four miles away. Daulat's comment on seeing this house was quite selfish : ' If I'd known of this, we should have put up here '. This was, more or less, a show house, a ' museum piece ', and the others were much poorer in every way, but I have described this one to give an idea of what is possible in Shingshal, and to show that the present primitive state of the people is their own choice.

The customs of the valley seem to be much the same as those prevailing in the main valley, except that the marriage arrangements differ somewhat. When a boy wishes to marry four men go to the girl's house, and if they bring back a favourable answer to his suit the bridegroom gives them *mulida*, a mixture of chu-pattis, curd and butter. After eating this, the four intermediaries go and kiss the hand of the bride's father. The boy then gives his betrothed five yards of cotton cloth, chintz, or the like, and the girl gives



AT SHINGSHAL

him a cap of the usual local pattern. The marriage does not take place till the next year, and the bridegroom sends to his bride two sheep, two pieces of *kham* (coarse cotton cloth), and two large pots containing a mess of butter, flour, water, and a little salt, all cooked and ready for eating. The girl's father contributes two large hair rugs (*palos*), a large wooden platter for bread, a large cooking pot, a large flat metal utensil for making stir-about, tongs and a quilt. He also gives his daughter whatever necklaces and clothes he can afford. The result is that the plenishing for the young couple is quite adequate according to local standards, and they can set up together with comfort on this simple dowry. The Mir of Hunza is given nothing, although in Hunza proper every marriage means at least eight rupees in his pocket.

There was not much disease from what I could see, and I was not importuned for medicines, but that I think was because visitors are almost unknown, and the practice of travellers carrying remedies to be given free was not suspected by the people. There was certainly a good deal of venereal disease, and I saw undoubted signs of cretinism and inter-breeding.

Regarding the Balti strain, so carefully repudiated by the people, the Shingshalis told me an incident which clearly proved what they denied. Many years ago, certainly a century, when the glaciers were smaller, there was a route from the Hispar valley in Nagir to Shingshal. This must have been via Bittermal, the Kunyang valley and Lak glacier, and I have strong

reasons for believing that this route is even now open, though with difficulty. The people of Nagir and Shingshal deny it, for obvious and natural reasons, but I am not convinced. In old days the Shingshalis used this route to buy fruit in Nagir, so it shows how greatly glaciation has increased. The men of Hispar, it seems, came over one year to Shingshal, killed all the men they could find, loaded all the movable property on to the women, and returned to Hispar with their loot. Only those men who were grazing their flocks in the hills escaped the slaughter and went to Hunza to tell the tale. The fighting men of that place accompanied them back to Shingshal and then on to Hispar. In that village the Hunza men killed all the males except two, whose ears they cut off, and allowed them to go free as a warning to any of their fellows who might feel inclined to do likewise. As the Hispar people are largely of a Balti strain, and as it is evident that the way to Shingshal was open, much admixture of blood must have taken place.

There is only one feasible way to reach Shingshal from the Hunza valley, and that is the way we came, by the Karun Pass. It is an arduous route, entailing a crossing over one high pass, and on the third day over a lower pass marked on the map as the Uwinsar Pass, not a very felicitous name, for the word only means 'The Top of the Pass'. Thus the pass has really no name at all. There are many awkward places on this route which is quite unrideable and is none too pleasant for walkers. In winter the high Karun

Pir can be avoided during three or four months when the river, as far down as the bridge below the pass, can be forded, but there are always the nameless pass, the big Mulungutti glacier, and many other minor difficulties to be surmounted, all of which take the stitching and stiffening out of the traveller. No Shingshali will follow this path alone; he must have a companion on this wholly uninhabited route, and he is quite right. A liberal use of explosives would solve many of the difficulties of this road, but no one except the villagers wants to enter the place, and certainly none of these want to leave it. However, the opening up of this route would offer an easy and useful alternative road to Chinese Turkestan. The Shingshal river is famous for its floods, and I have already mentioned how the village of Pasu suffered from them. Shingshal itself has often experienced them, and much of the arable land has been destroyed, but happily there is plenty left. So, when I asked the inhabitants how they were providing for future population, they answered that they had already chosen suitable places for cultivation which would be developed when need arose.

I visited one old woman—it was Balti's mother—to attend to her ears, and she gave me the usual salute of the Wakhi female, waving her hand round as if she were spinning. On the second visit she said she felt better, but as she was very old I fear her improvement was due to faith-healing. I found her house very comfortable, on the whole, but cleanliness is not a Shingshali virtue.

I saw a great deal of the Shingshalis during my two visits to their valleys, and I am afraid that, generally, they proved but a sorry lot: I shall have to refer to their bad points very often, as their virtues were so well and consistently hidden. I found them unamiable to deal with, feckless, and shy of all endurance and enterprise. They have, however, one priceless advantage, and are much to be envied. They are, happily for themselves, out of all reach of that well-meaning but misguided interference that is such a curse to many communities. Reformers, improvers, and other busybodies cannot afflict the Shingshalis, who are so remote that they are spared the curse of education, so-called. I should hazard the opinion that they are the one community of any land most likely to be left alone. I have no love for the Shingshalis, very much the reverse, but I should be sorry to see any attempts to modernise them. They are happy and contented, surly, intractable, and quite untrustworthy. There is nothing to be gained by improving them, in the modern sense, and all they need is proper government, as it is locally understood.

SOME OF MY SHINGSHALI COOLIES

CHAPTER IV

TO THE SHINGSHAL PASS

OUR departure from Shingshal was delayed as the ramshackle bridge to the right bank of the river had been washed away, and we had to await its repair. We were fortunately spared having to cross by a rope bridge, such as will be described later on, and we went over the boiling river on a bridge made by lashing pieces of wood with hair ropes to two planks. On our way to the river we passed the clean ' Assembly-Room ' (for the Maulai faith has now no mosques) with a large enclosure, and beyond the tomb of Haji Khizr. By the river, too, were piles of stones placed in the bed, which were used as butts for shooting wild fowl in winter. Squatting behind these, with his long match-lock, the hunter awaits with patience a pot-shot. Time is no object, the discomfort is nothing, and it is only when he is sure of shooting several birds with one shot, that he fires. He is shooting for his stomach and not for sport, and his ethics are not Western.

Our immediate destination was the Shingshal Pass, on the watershed between Central Asia and India, and as the direct route up the Pamir-i-tang gorge was closed by the high water, we had to make a detour which involved crossing two high passes. So we left the

main valley, and went up a narrow boulder-filled ravine. On our left was the high rock of Put Put—far to the right was the pinnacle of Ghim Ghim, names more reminiscent of fairyland than of actual places: it was clever, I thought, of the Shingshalis to invent such ridiculous names. The valley was the Zard-i-gar, or Yellow Rock, and we found it a very tedious climb. We lost the lid of our kettle, an old experienced companion of two years, and although we fumbled in the icy water, the current had clearly carried it away, so we could but curse and pass on.

A long stone wall stretched across the only open space in the valley, and I thought very naturally that this was some defence work, copied from the Chinese, and dating from the good old days; but it was nothing so historic. It was a device for snaring ibex. Nets were stretched on one side of the wall, and the animals driven from the opposite direction. They jumped the wall, and their legs were caught in the nets, and the poor brutes were conveniently slain, an ingenious and unsporting amusement. Now there are hardly any ibex left. They have been killed off, thanks to this barbarous contraption.

At last, after six hours of sweating, we reached the foot of the first pass and found an unexpectedly open and level space, so we camped in a snowstorm, in the lee of a high rock, honeycombed with large holes which the local people used for themselves and their sheep. We had not left the village alone; almost the entire population came with us, for the summer migration

had begun. Women and children, with their flocks and herds, yaks laden with their meagre bedding and utensils, were all moving to the upland grazing grounds where they would spend the next three or four months, moving about from pasture to pasture as the flocks ate down the grass. In the village the old folk remained, with a few men to attend to the irrigation and harvesting of the crops. The sheep were often very small beasts, according to our ideas, and the goats little better, but the wool was very good and abundant.

It snowed a good deal during the night and then froze, so that in the morning we had to leave the tents standing, in charge of our 'odd man', Hasil Shah, until the sun came out to thaw and dry them. The Shingshalis crept out of their caves in the rocks, like marmots out of their burrows; they had probably spent a much warmer night than we had. We toiled up to the top of the Zard-i-gar Pass, with a bitter wind fouling our tempers, and snow congealing our feet. But on the crest we found the sun shining and enjoyed a fine view of Dastoghil and other peaks. As we looked East, straight in front of us was the square head of Chot Pert, and nearer, a far less pleasant sight, rose the Shach Mirk or Dead Dog Pass (14,460 feet) which we had to cross. Wherever we turned we saw only the arid slopes, naked cliffs and deep canyons of the very heart of the Karakoram. We gazed at this unchanging vista of harsh mountain and valley unrelieved by any verdure, unbroken by any gentle slope or open plain. It was a land of sheer vertices, up which intruding man,

an unwelcome guest, scrambled humbly and furtively. We plunged down the slopes, wading in shale and sand, and came to a small nullah in which a few junipers were hidden. Had I known of the long march in front of us I should have halted there for the night, but the Shingshali coolies went on affably as though there were nothing arduous before us. Unfortunately, it was sheer stupidity that made them do so, and we all alike were to suffer for this nonchalance.

We had already crossed one major pass and we steadily ascended the other, crawling up and up, at first easily then precipitously. Our reward, on reaching the summit, was a magnificent view. True, mists were resting on the bosoms of the great peaks, and clouds were darkening their brows, but even so the spectacle was superb. The heights beyond the Shingshal valley were all unfolded before us, and there was a gentle azure haze dappling the snow slopes. Below us was the Yazghil glacier with its myriad crystal facets twinkling in the sun. I was attracted, too, by the views to the East and North, where the mountains, if lower, were spread out in a resplendent panorama as yet untouched by clouds, as though the latter scorned the lower summits. At last I had to leave and attend to the business of reaching camp. We went on and on, the coolies growing more and more mournful, and crawling even more slowly than their wont. I do not blame them but they were determined, very foolishly, to reach the camping ground of Purien, and never suggested a halt nearer. The fact was that all their

THE CHOT PERT MASSIF ON LEFT OF PAMIR-I-TANG. ON EXTREME RIGHT IS KANJUT II

flocks and their families were making for that place, and they naturally wanted to be there.

As we went down I passed a narrow ridge or spur on which a row of the trunks of pencil cedar trees had been laid. This was to prevent the yaks when grazing from crossing the ridge, and wandering off to pastures in the lower valleys where their owners could only find them with difficulty. I thought this a very ingenious and simple device.

At last, after a final breakneck descent, we camped, late in the day, in the black gorge of Purien, which means a ladder or a stair, a very appropriate name for we had to enter or leave by a clumsy stairway of cedar wood. We were all tired out, but no fatigue will ever stop the ceaseless chatter of the Shingshalis, which goes on night and day, as ruthlessly and persistently as a mountain stream.

Next day we went straight up the steep valley side and passed through a doorway without a door. This foolish waste of precious wood was due to Matik, who had set it up in honour of his grandfather, and its complete uselessness at once classified it as a memorial, for it could have been erected for no other purpose. Passing through this door, we climbed up a circular wooden staircase, and emerged on an extensive arid plain, a pleasing change from the deep abysses and stark narrow gorges amidst which we had been groping and moiling.

We had with us an old man, Sadiq, adorned with three teeth, a head nodding like a China mandarin, a

goatee beard, and a convincing manner. He had been with Messrs Montagnier and Morris, and had been forced on us by the Mir of Hunza. He was a complete fraud, and his one desire was to go nowhere. His conversation was a series of dreary negatives, and if we asked the name of a place, the possibility of a path, or any questions, intelligent or otherwise, about local features, the answer was invariably a long and negative bleat. And, as we subsequently found out, all his negatives were lies. Our second cicerone, Balti, was far more informative, but he did not dare to give away his superior.

We passed a rock on which were five ibex horns, shot and placed there by this old reprobate; we naturally thought it was a shrine and, stretching out our arms, we murmured prayers for good weather and a safe return. Unhappily, our piety was wasted. Indeed, it aroused general amusement, and a wag shouted: 'You had better wait till Sadiq is planted under the horns. Then there will be a shrine worth praying at.' Old Sadiq never turned a hair at this gibe.

Our journey and spirits alike improved as we trudged up the wide valley. Below us, on our right, was the Pamir-i-tang, the deep water in which had caused this long detour. Opposite to us, and very close, was Chot Pert, no longer a square mass of rock and ice, but a graceful peak with a glacier-clad side. Opposite, too, was a large herd of burrhel or 'blue sheep', safe because quite inaccessible. A little further on was a red hill, looking like sealing wax.

The Pamir-i-tang stream, though near us, was unapproachable. At noon it had been a dark green stream: suddenly I found that it had turned into a brown torrent, thanks to a small but energetic burn, flowing from Kirkaz-i-kisht, which was of the appearance and consistency of cocoa. Fortunately our camp was higher up where the water was uncontaminated, but it was interesting to observe the adulteration of the abundant green flood by this small admixture, polluting the whole course of the river.

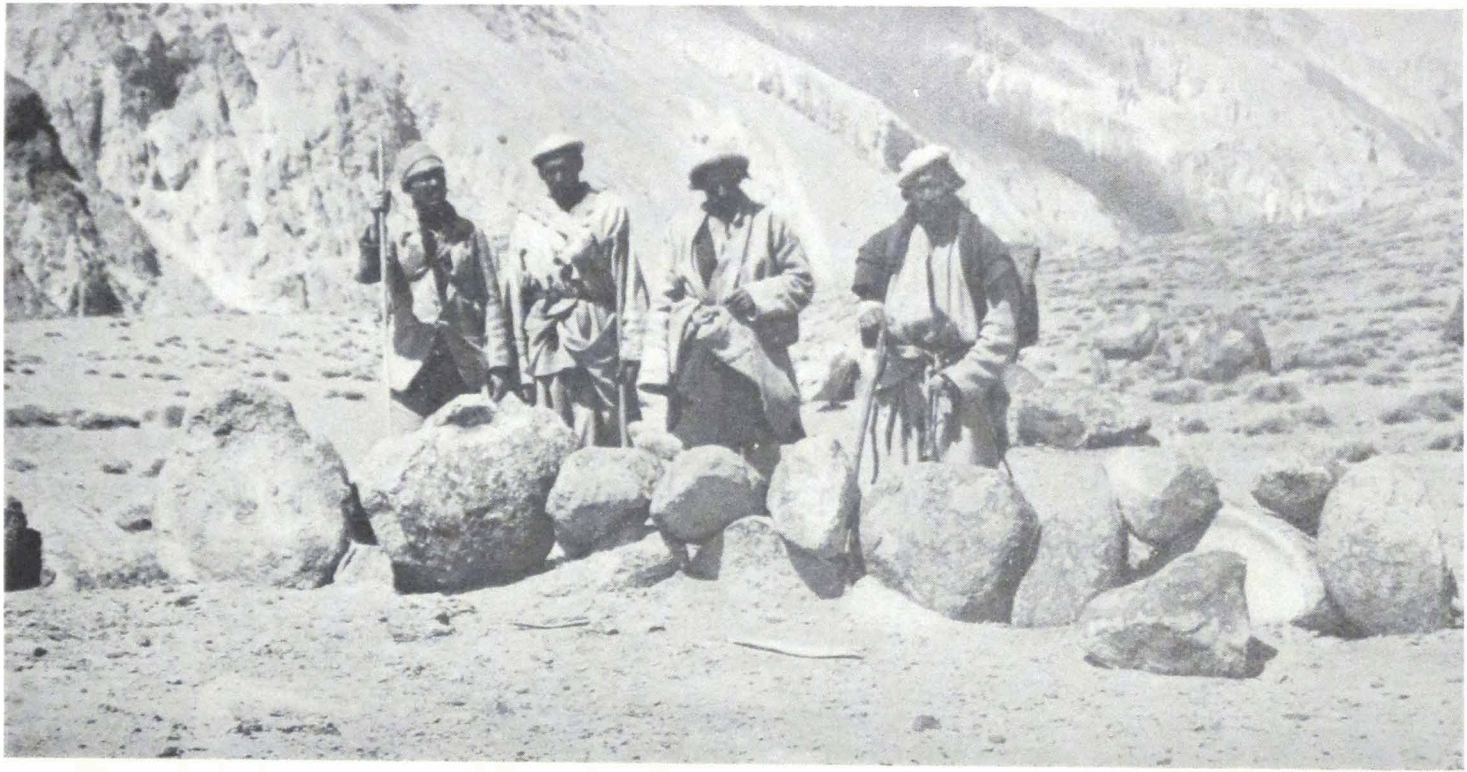
This valley abounded in the works of the pious, including a bridge—I fear of little use to the public of Shingshal as it led merely to a private pasture. It turned out that Balti had built it in honour of his father, Farhad. He beamed when I asked him if this was his work of merit, and said it was certainly so, and of great merit too. I photographed him on his bridge, and he looked quite smart with his brightest pink shirt rapidly turning magenta through dirt.

Before reaching Balti's bridge, we had descended into a steep nullah, known as Arbab-i-purien or the Headman's Ladder. On my way down this very steep stairway, I asked for the fiftieth time where Sir Francis Younghusband had made his cairn when he visited this place in 1887. 'Oh', said Balti, 'you want Yunusmand's cairn? That is behind!' I was very peevish, and looked it, as I had to climb up the steps to the plain above. Sir Francis had been turned back by Safdar Ali, the Mir of Hunza, who did not know who he was or why he had come: he had made a

cairn here, to mark the place of the incident. In 1902 General Sir George Cockerill had come as far, but did not go on, and merely made another cairn. These cairns were now two low circles of stone, and that nearer the lip or edge of the nullah was set up by Sir Francis. My chief regret was that my age was not the same as his when he made his remarkable journey.

We passed a long nullah, coming in from the North-West, and I was told that it was the Ganj-i-dur or Valley of Wealth. I expected to hear the usual long story of buried treasure, and was comforted to learn that the name was given on account of the abundant milk always yielded by the flocks which pastured there.

We arrived at Shuijerab at last. This place was below the Shingshal Pass and of a considerable size, judged by local standards. There were forty-two stone huts with large pens for the animals. Many of the villagers were there, and countless sheep and goats for which there did not seem enough pasture. The sheep varied in size, and some were no bigger than tom-cats. It was chilly at Shuijerab, for the place is high, 13,620 feet above sea level, and wholly without attractions, being bleak, exposed, and wind-swept. Fuel was scarce. For the coolies, however, it was ideal, as their homes and their club were close by. We were delayed for twenty-four hours by snow, a fine dry snow, but snow none the less. We sat miserably in our tents, but Daulat went out and shot two snow-cock, and then made the mistake of going out a second time, getting very tired and shooting nothing. The



YOUNGHUSBAND'S CAIRN IN THE PAMIR-I-TANG. (COCKERILL'S CAIRN ON RIGHT IN BACKGROUND)

place provided us with yak dung for fuel and some milk, but the local bread, made of the local flour, was hardly better than the fuel itself. What we did want was eggs. There was no egg nearer than the main Hunza valley, eight arduous marches away. We had left orders for eggs, but none came, and Muhib the cook was in tears. To him the egglessness of the district was a grievous problem, and as a deeply interested party I sympathised with him.

On this, my first visit, and again, later, on my second visit in August, I was able to make a fair examination of the head of the Pamir-i-tang, which had never been visited by a European. We crossed the river and went up the left of the valley, passing several good grassy level stretches on the way, and saw many young yaks grazing; they all tried to attack our poor dog. About two miles from the village a steep grey moraine came down the left of the valley from some considerable glaciers which were invisible from below, but which coalesced above the moraine which was their joint contribution. The glacier flowing from the N.E. or right was the longer, but that from the left, with a considerable snow-field culminating in a dome-like peak, provided an alternative to the Shingshal Pass route over the watershed. This was known as the Shuijerab-i-dest Pass, and was practically never used except by men after game. On the grey unpromising moraine I found quantities of purple aconite growing luxuriantly.

Continuing our tedious way up the left of the valley we passed under a high, red-brown massif from which

quantities of rock and stone had fallen. The whole main valley was now choked with debris, and great masses of dead and often isolated ice, from the glacier at the head, appeared. This ice was liberally covered with stones, and the ice itself was broken into hillocks; the original living glacier had retired for nearly a mile.

Five miles from Shuijerab a small affluent came in from the North-West with a fair-sized glacier field which, however, failed to reach the bed of the Pamir-i-tang. This affluent was considerably crevassed, but I was certain that there was a way up it, and not a very difficult one, to the Ganj-i-dur, though the local people *more suo* insisted that there was not, admitting with the same breath that they had never troubled to find out. They were, of course, terrified lest we should attempt to find a way over.

Below this junction we noticed on both sides smaller glaciers, and crossing very gingerly to the right side over a rotten snowbridge, we ascended high on the right of the valley, and had an excellent view of the head of the Pamir-i-tang, which I estimated to be about twelve miles from Shuijerab.

The view to the head of the Pamir-i-tang, which meets the head of the Shirin Yailaq in the South Oprang, was rather disappointing. There were no fine peaks, for we had left the grandeur of the great heights of the Karakoram and were facing the Sarikol range, which lies south of the Chinese Pamirs and possesses many of the rounded, featureless characteristics of those bleak uplands. There is something meek and

insipid in the outlines of the Pamir formation, which is paltry and unsatisfying when contrasted with the savage and overwhelming vastness of the mighty heights of the Karakoram.

We did see a considerable glacier which had retreated, and ample snow, but it seemed to us that, besides this ice-field at its head, the Pamir-i-tang stream received a large supply of water from the snow deposits near the Shuijerab-i-dest Pass, and that much of this water reached the main stream subterraneously.

CHAPTER V

THE BRALDU VALLEY

I HAVE already mentioned that there were two passes from Shuijerab village over the main watershed, and we chose the easier and more frequented one, the Shingshal Pass. The path to this led straight up from the village, after crossing the Pamir-i-tang by a good bridge. We left on June 10th. There were still heavy clouds in the sky, the tents were frozen stiff as boards, and were left behind to thaw and dry. After mounting steeply for a mile, we reached an open valley with fair grazing, and the gradient was gentle. We passed two lakes more or less frozen, and five miles from our camp we were on the crest of the Shingshal Pass, height 15,900 feet. When we recrossed this pass in late summer on our second journey to the Mustagh river the two lakes were free from ice, and were as dazzling a blue as the heavens above. Their size varies considerably as they are fed by melting snows. There was no visible drainage from these lakes, and there was a danger of mistaking the real crest of the pass, which lay beyond, on the Mustagh side. Indeed, from the far side a low wall or ridge ran across from side to side, the remains, now grass-covered and boggy, of an old moraine. The actual drainage into the

Pamir-i-tang was well below these lakes, and I recognised in the drainageless area beneath the top of the pass a well-known Central Asiatic feature. Indeed, as the whole of Turkestan is one enclosed basin with no exit to it, we had in miniature what the whole country was on a big scale. There was a false crest before we reached the real one, and I sat in the cold wind and soft snow taking useless hypsometrical readings to repeat the dismal rite later on.

The pass was a mere saddle. It is the easiest crossing out of India into Central Asia that exists, a pleasant grassy down, and it seemed almost scandalous that the passage over so momentous a watershed should be so insignificant a geographical feature. But, of course, to reach so easy a pass, the route on both sides is intricate and even dangerous.

I am always impressed when I stand on this Central Asiatic divide and, though I have often done so, the novelty and strangeness never wear off. So it was on this occasion. Below me, towards the East, I looked on the streams destined to flow far, by circuitous routes, below the Tien Shan and past the bleak Mongolian headquarters settlements in the dry mountains of Eastern Turkestan, and then to swerve South and again East till, after their weary wanderings, they were to be lost in the Lop Nor and the bowels of the Gobi, on the fringe of that ravaged Chinese province, Kansu. Behind me, the water from the melting snow trickled and glided till it found its way to the Indus and the Arabian Sea. The fate of the two streams on either

side was so wholly different, led them so far apart, and treated them unjustly.

Politically we were still in the Indian Empire, for in at least two places in Central Asia the British flag flies by right, here and at Chaman in Northern Baluchistan. The main valley before us, known to the map-makers and a few Turkis as the Shingshal, and to everyone else as the Braldu, has long been an appanage of the Mirs of Hunza, and without it the people of the real Shingshal would be sadly at a loss for sufficient pastures.

The view was, on the whole, poor, but that is so often the case with passes. The clouds, however, had by this time largely rolled away, and our spirits rose as we walked down the open rolling Pamir. After being cooped up so long in the abysses and precipices of the Karakoram, we had now left our dungeon and were really in the wide open spaces of Asia: we reminded one another of the great contrast that the scene before us offered, and much regretted that disturbances in Turkestan closed our onward path.

Below the pass, on our right, we passed a grim forbidding collection of huts, the hamlet of Shuwert, occupied only for a few weeks every year. I asked one of the villagers how many houses there were and he reeled off forty-two names and announced that there were forty-two houses.

Behind this village was a really striking isolated mass of reddish-brown stone, rising like a watch-tower over the watershed, and a useful means of identifying

the pass. Opposite to it, to the North and on our left, was a high but narrow moraine which blocked the mouth of the tributary valley behind it. As we continued our way down we passed on our right the broad barren plain of Zhit Badav with its circle of snow-covered hills behind.

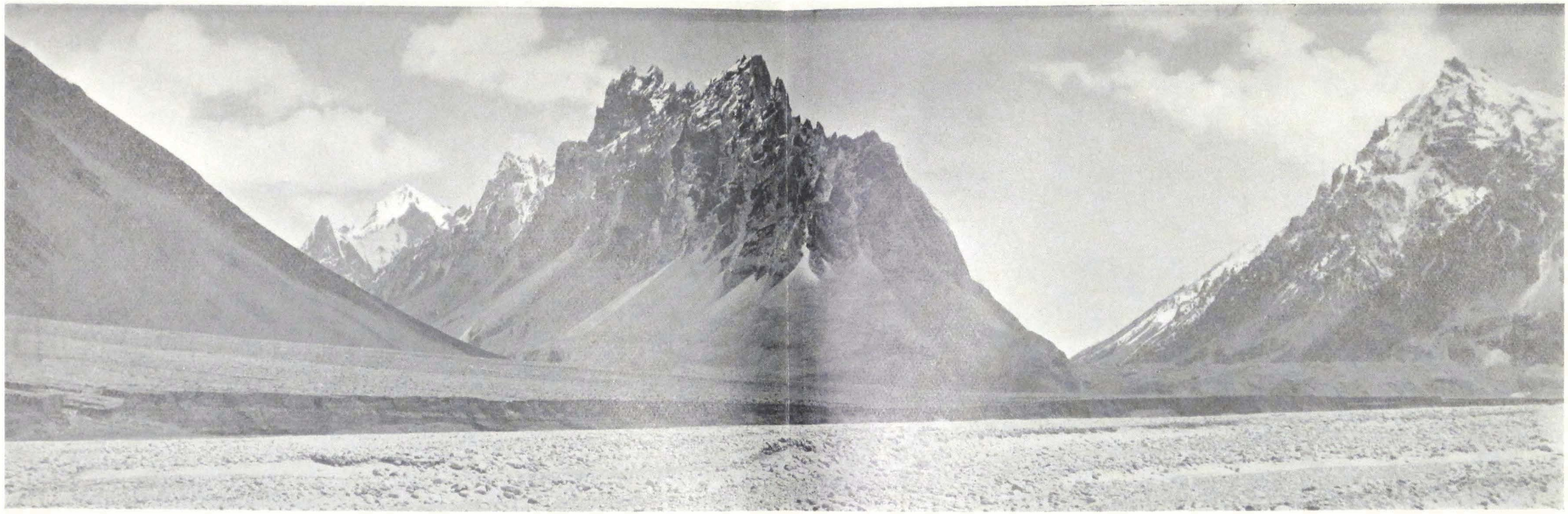
Further on, we saw a herd of burrhel and with two score pairs of hungry-looking eyes gazing at me, I was forced to go and shoot one. It is always poor fun shooting on the line of march, and this was no exception, but I could not disappoint my followers, and I was able to bring back some meat. It interfered considerably with our plans, and shortened the march, but next day we reached an attractive spot, Chikar, with grassy lawns, good spring water, and dense well-grown brakes of willow.

This was an important place for us, as it lay at the mouth of the broad Braldu valley with its glacier at its head, a wholly unknown, unmapped area. From Chikar, accordingly, I made a detour to the South into this unvisited country. The name Braldu is a Balti one; and there is a valley of the same name further to the South, in Baltistan, beyond the long line of snow giants. It is, unfortunately for cartographers and geographers, a very usual habit in these regions to call two valleys on opposite sides of a watershed by the same name. The traveller may march up a long valley for several days. After crossing a pass he finds another valley, equally long, with the same name, and the only means of differentiating two completely

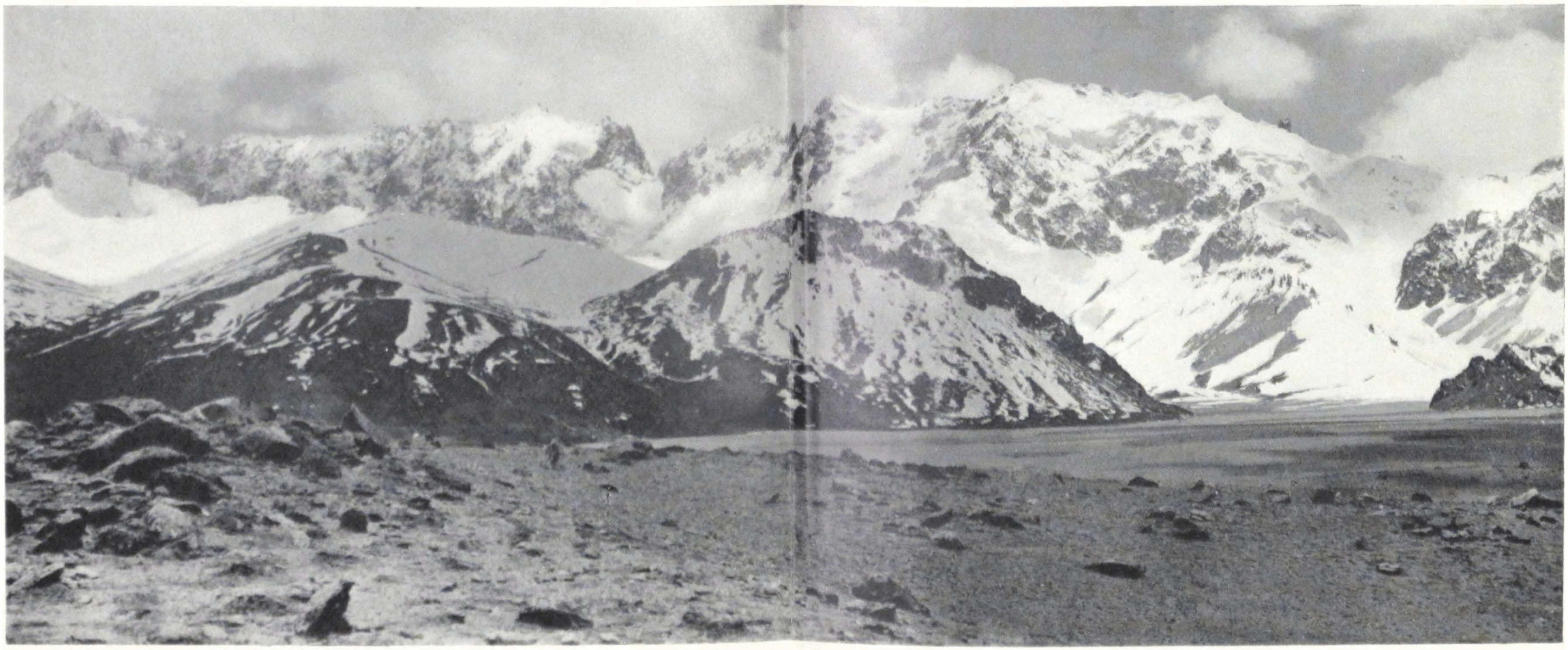
different places, is by treating them by the points of the compass. Thus the Braldu we now ascended was clearly the North Braldu. This economy of names in a land where there is hardly a name given to the most important features in the scenery is particularly vexatious. This poverty of nomenclature indicates a lack of imagination as well as of enterprise, and indeed only two or three of the Shingshalis had ever entered this valley.

At Chikar a man came with papers and letters, and a neat little basket which excited the cook who asserted that it contained eggs, the much-needed, longed-for eggs. To our dismay, it contained nothing but twenty potatoes, a very distressing substitute. We built a large cairn at this place, but the villagers could not make one that would stand. They built several and as soon as they were finished down they all fell. It was not until my critical Hunza men, who had been gibing at the efforts of the Shingshalis, took an active part in the operations, that a durable and worthy cairn was set up.

We started up the Braldu, and I am sure that its Balti name was due to its being, years ago, part of a route to Baltistan, and used by the people of that country, who naturally gave their own name to it. From what I have seen of the glaciers of this region, and have gleaned from the large volume of tradition, I am certain that the extensive glaciation is recent, at a hazard not more than about 100 years old. Before then, the accumulations of ice and snow did not prevent people from crossing to and fro from Baltistan to Hunza and



LOOKING UP THE BRALDU VALLEY: ON LEFT, THE MOUTH OF THE WESM-I-DUR VALLEY. ON RIGHT, THE SNOUT OF THE BRALDU GLACIER



MASSIF ON RIGHT OF THE SHINGSHAL VALLEY (MUSTAGH SIDE). THE ZHIT BADAV PLAIN BELOW

Nagir, and certainly into several parts of the Mustagh valley.

I have already referred to the raid from Hispar into Shingshal, which was a popular and frequented route. I think, moreover, that the time is coming, but it will not be for some decades, when these routes will be again open, provided of course increased glaciation does not take place. There is no reason why it should, as judging from past history the great increase in the glaciers was definitely exceptional. But there will be no incentive to use these routes to Baltistan. The development of the Hunza valley has replaced Baltistan as the source of supply for women and goods, and the Shingshalis can now obtain all they need from places much closer, which a century ago did not exist.

We left Chikar, forded the insignificant stream that flowed from the Shingshal Pass, but which, later in the day, would be a considerable torrent, and entered the Braldu valley. Its mouth, for it is really more like a tributary than a main valley, was an immensely broad expanse, like some dry estuary of grey stone, the remains of a former flood which must have torn away much useful land. Nowadays, even at the period of highest water, this bed is never filled, but the Braldu river flows in a few small channels, almost lost in this waste.

As we went up we saw some wild sheep very low down, on our right. As already mentioned, I dislike shooting on the line of march, but in this case there was no more chance of denying the stomachs of the

men than there had been before. The stalk was easy but the wind was treacherous and, just as we came near, the burrhel scented us and were off like lightning. I had a wild shot at them but missed, and I fear that I greatly lost face, for the trust in the power of the Sahib's rifle is almost too complimentary. There was general disappointment at the loss of a good free meal of roast mutton.

We did not go far up the valley, as Muhib was attracted by a pleasant stream of clear water, so we camped close by, but in two hours the stream was dry, and we had to put up with the thick pea-soup that rolled from the glacier. We were also new to the ways of the Shingshalis, and had wholly underrated their capacity for lying and swindling. All night it blew great gusts, and the muttonless coolies slept under a large tarpaulin, and declared they had spent a comfortable night. For them it was almost too warm, as it was summer in their country, and they were used to much lower temperatures without finding them at all disagreeable.

The next day Daulat and I set off to see the Braldu glacier. We had with us a young Shingshali, a pleasing savage with a very attractive grin. Just before reaching the snout of the glacier we came to a shepherd's hut, heaps of yak dung and brushwood, and good water. It was an ideal camping ground, and our coolies had just lied to us, declaring there was neither shelter, fuel, nor water higher up. We found that the glacier was retiring—or, as my men always described it—drying.

In front of the snout was a litter of old moraine, but not until we began the ascent of the valley proper, on the right, did I realise that the glacier was so afflicted. There were masses of dead ice frowning down on lakelets a hundred or more feet below. Heaps of stone, rubble and earth covered the irregular surface of the glacier, amidst which were many sheer walls of black decaying ice. There is something both attractive and repellent in the disruption of these great ice rivers, which have swept down valleys swallowing or destroying all in their way. These large glaciers are such vital, relentless, and omnipotent natural engines of destruction, yet they are quite useless. They achieve nothing, and are wholly evil. When suddenly movement ends, the glacier begins to mortify and its whole appearance is changed ; it becomes black, rotting, and dangerous in its extremities, and as its gangrenous ends drop off it leaves behind piles of stone and rubbish that remain for centuries the worthless monument of a disastrous career.

Just above the end of the moraine, a large tributary entered the Braldu on the left. At the head was a fine cirque of snow, but in the wide open valley that lay beneath there was a long thin spine of jagged ice. This was the remains of a once broad and active glacier that had filled the valley bed. Now it looked almost absurd, this desiccated mass of white angles strewn haphazard on the grey floor of the wide valley.

We continued our slow, tedious, and exhausting struggle up the Braldu, at times on the ice, sometimes

by the rocky side, but always beside us was this desolate ice-river. I know nothing, nor does any other traveller, so vexatious and wearying as walking on a glacier. There is none of the exhilaration of a mountain climb, with fresh views as one goes higher as a reward for a difficult ascent. On a glacier everyone is absorbed in the treacherous ice beneath him, with its crevasses, hummocks, and other traps for the unwary. At last, however, we came in sight of the living glacier ; a line of white pinnacles stretching across the valley from one side to the other, and flashing in the sun, told us that we had reached the trunk and left the mortified parts behind. It was clear that here the glacier was vital and active.

By this time we had done as much as we could, and had to return. I should have liked to stay for a few days, as there's no time like the present in travel, but the Shingshalis warned us that, if we wished to cross the Mustagh river, we should have to reach it as soon as possible, and that there was no hope if we loafed in the Braldu.

Accordingly, very reluctantly and with a good deal of misgiving, I decided to continue our way down to the river. It was a choice between two objects, and the more important objects of my journey were certainly lower down. But I resented leaving these unknown valleys and resolved to return, for the Braldu and its tributaries are quite unknown and unmapped.

A feature of the Upper Braldu was the amazing pinnacles of rock. In a country where rock pinnacles,

SHINGSHALI SHEPHERDS WITH NEWLY BORN LAMBS

bizarre and preposterous, are as common objects in a landscape as sand is in a desert, these had indeed to be unusual to make an impression. Even Daulat, bored from infancy by the extravagant forms of his domestic crags, exclaimed at the wonderful splinters of stone that rose sheer from the valley side. We returned to our tents, but our first brief visit had been of value, we had noted where to camp, and we had had our first lesson in the utter untrustworthiness of the aborigines.

The dreary estuary of the lower Braldu was explained by the present state of the glacier which, in its earlier days, must have sent down great quantities of water. Now, in its decline, but little could find its way down, not enough to fill the bed. This dismal waste of stone was merely a proof of departed greatness.

The ubiquitous and loathsome haze of Turkestan was a noticeable feature, even in this remote valley. As soon as we had crossed the watershed the atmosphere had become opaque; it is not always so, but only when, in the far deserts of Turkestan, dust-storms rage.

CHAPTER VI

TO THE UNMAPPED MUSTAGH

We returned to our camp at Chikar in an active state of peevishness. Old Sadiq, specially appointed as our guide by the Mir of Hunza as the most responsible resident of his village, in spite of age, experience and authority sided with the coolies in the daily wrangles that make travel in these regions so very troublesome. We found that he was the instigator of short marches and inconvenient camps, his desire being always to save trouble to his fellow clansmen, and of course what was their gain was our loss. He had already lied boldly and foolishly in denying that there was a good site higher up and near the glaciers in this valley.

I am afraid that this narrative will contain sundry uncomplimentary references to the Shingshalis. Whilst Daulat and I had been struggling with the glacier, our coolies had been eating their heads off, for a more voracious and valiant lot of trenchermen I had never seen; so, when they came clamouring for tea and butter when we had not enough for ourselves, our exasperation was considerable, especially as it turned out that Sadiq had incited the men to make these demands. We were determined, therefore, to have a row, for it was only by that means we should have any relief from these scenes.

Old Sadiq, who might have been rather a pet, was completely crushed, and all our trouble vanished after a full-dress display of rage. I felt sorry for the poor old man, as he belonged to that large class of people who hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, and did not make a success of it, as the average Kashmiri would have done.

The weather at Chikar was curious. The mornings were hot, calm and fine; the afternoons generally overcast with driving showers of sleet, and even of rain. The people said that Chikar was famous for its winds, storms, and foul climate, especially in winter, but we found it pleasant enough now, with its dense willows affording good shelter and ample fuel. Again I would have tarried, but the coolies told us tales once more of the Mustagh, so we had to hurry on. As a matter of fact, this was all a desire on the part of the Shingshalis to speed us on our way, and to have done with us. But there was sweet reason in their arguments, and so we hearkened to them.

Daulat and I had intended to spend a day after burrhel and snowcock as the larder needed replenishing, but we found we could not. So anxious were our companions to continue the journey that they had driven off all the animals, even the ramchikor, and I was certain that old Sadiq was at the bottom of this, so that he might even up matters with us. We had been watching the hillside with great care, and until early evening wild sheep were there. Then they disappeared, and a man was seen where they had been. It was all

very obvious, but it did not make us fonder of Sadiq and his fellows.

I make no apologies for thus dwelling on the ways and habits of our men. In a journey of this kind, it is imperative to be on good terms with our coolies, but we found it impossible; and I mention our worries with these unpleasant folk as a warning to others who travel in these regions. The cause of all our woes was the inveterate dislike of work on the part of the Shingshalis.

So we left Chikar, set off down the Braldu, and took the gold-washers with us. They had been trying the streams by the Shingshal Pass, and had reported very little gold, and were now going on to the Mustagh. Although they had won little metal, they were hearty well-nourished rogues, and obviously had been living on credit and credulity, with promises to pay on return from the Raskam eldorado. 'These men are no ordinary feeders', said one of my men. 'Every day they eat a sheep, a good fat sheep, with plenty of *ghi*, and good bread. They take much concern for their bellies. Look at them, Sahib.' This diagnosis was correct in every particular. It was curious how these two sturdy knaves outwitted and swindled the mean and cunning Shingshalis. Pure bluff, of course, but very successful; and with their fine figures and finer appetites they bounced the natives into giving them a hearty meal before it was realised what was happening.

At Chikar I noticed a number of small square excavations by a filthy hut and filthier steading. These small pits were about two feet square and one to

two feet deep, roughly covered with transverse pieces of wood. This was a Shingshali dairy when they were pasturing their flocks here, and it explained to some extent the dirt and adulteration of their milk products, particularly their *ghi* and butter. Each shepherd had a separate hole for the produce of his own animals. What did it matter if dust, dirt, dung and wool blew into the contents of this primitive dairy ?

We went down the left of the Braldu river, which at once became a constricted stream, behind high banks, and passed Ghoskhun, a place of some size, and enriched with female society at this time of the year. Some of the flocks of the Mir of Hunza were here, and we bought a sheep—a poor substitute for the toothsome flesh of a burrhel—and the coolies were regaled with butter milk and curd by their friends and relations. It was only an hour or two since they had had a good meal, but they devoured all they could lay hands on at Ghoskhun with fierce and noisy voracity. I asked how the Mir kept a check on his flocks, which are so numerous and scattered that wherever I went I was sure to meet some of them. In Turkestan the shepherd is allowed a fixed number every year, partly as food, partly as payment, but the Mir is far too economical to allow such an arrangement. And I fear that the result is that there is no check at all. When the herdsman feels that he has had too many meatless days he kills an animal and attributes the casualty to a sudden and unavoidable accident. An official called a Yerpa or Yapa is the Mir's representative, and when he comes to tell the

tale of the flocks on behalf of his master, the scene of the catastrophe and the remains of the deceased are shown to him. Sometimes, as a variant, a wolf or wild dog is invoked as the culprit. Both parties understand each other but, human nature being what it is, the Mir would be better served if he were more liberal.

At Ghoskhun we were in a warmer temperature, and the tamarisk bushes were plentiful. Some, indeed, were of a great size, seven to ten feet round the trunk, but very stunted. It was remarkable that any wood survived with an annual encampment close at hand but, as is so often the case with semi-nomadic people, and even more so with true nomads, Shingshalis preferred dung to wood for fuel. They were more used to the former, for wood was only found in a few places, and they enjoyed the acrid flavour which a dung fire, especially of sheeps' dung, gives to food.

After a wait for the consumption of food at Ghoskhun I asked my Shingshali guides why nothing was forthcoming for my men, and why the customs of their country had not been observed. Some confused and feeble explanations were given and, after a time, a large flat wooden dish, mended with bits of copper, black with dirt and age, and full of a dingy compound resembling soapsuds, was produced. We declined to eat, and made some strictures on the boorishness of the inhabitants.

We had by now left the open rolling Pamirs and, though the country was spacious, the valley narrowed. The landscape was sombre and austere, barren and

forbidding, with smooth umber cliffs and long sliding slopes of shale. Perhaps it was the contrast with the surroundings that made the little slips of green turf between the turbid waters of the Braldu river and the rock or conglomerate cliffs so fascinating. These slender tenuous lawns had springs of clear water bursting from them, and often a small back-water with long green weeds and a few fish. At the edge of these miniature oases, the wide dry channel of the river lay quivering in the mirage with its muddy stream roaring below, out of sight beneath the bank. These plots of grass were little gardens, dappled with flowers, that by some accident had strayed into this wilderness. I could hardly believe that the season was as brief as it is. A bare two months, perhaps three in sheltered places, and the summer of these altitudes is over.

These grass patches were all grazing grounds, and all held a rough hut and a sheep-fold, and heaps of precious dry dung. They had names, too, a distinction denied to the noblest mountain, as the people used these places for their sheep, driving them from one to another as the pasture was eaten down.

As we descended the Braldu valley we met a slightly more abundant flora and wild briars were frequent, but the variety of plants was never great even under favourable circumstances, and plant life undoubtedly lacked interest. In many cases it was a desert flora in this high altitude amidst so much snow and ice. Alpine flowers were rare. The absence of humidity discouraged them, for after the snow had melted in

the early summer there was only a little rare snow or rain till winter returned. Owing to the powerful sun, intense isolation on the rocks and sand, and infrequent streams, Alpine plants could only flourish where there were springs. As this implied moisture and grass, and as animals either wild or domestic ate the latter, plants had no chance in their struggle to exist. Although I went everywhere, and to great heights, I was seldom rewarded by the sight of Alpine plants. I rarely found a primula, and only an occasional miniature gentian.

So we had but a dreary scene before us, as we went down the Braldu valley. The views were fine, bold and big, but had it not been for the occasional emerald sward by the river, they would have been of an unrelieved dismalness. Day by day, these arid heights, parched slopes, and glittering shale offered us the final phase of mountainous monotony.

The people complained, of course, that the river often changed its channel, and tore away much precious pasture; and I was shown one stretch quite devoured by the flood. I fancy that this occasional devastation unnerves the people, naturally lazy and timid. I found a dead vulture by the path—the common sort found everywhere in India which feeds on carrion—and I found another on the hillside, in the Braldu valley. I had found the same kind in the Karakoram Pass, feasting on the dead pack animals, and I suppose that these two had died of exposure. These great repulsive birds are uncommon in these regions, and their beat is limited; indeed, on the road to Yarkand

from Ladakh, a larger number would be welcome. We had some rain during one night, and this caused a late start as the tents could not be struck till the weather improved.

Below this camp we came to Darband or Darwaza, the look-out post of the men of Hunza in former days. On the brink of a steep nullah, running along the crest of the ridge, was a long wall with a watch-tower at either end. In former days there were four men on duty here, and if there were tidings of a rich caravan, messengers hastened to Hunza with all possible speed. Sometimes unsuspecting travellers came this way by accident, and were duly robbed. On one occasion the Kirghiz attacked the place. Half the party came creeping along the river bed, half came boldly up from below, by the side of the hill. They failed to reach the Darband, but in the adjoining ravine below were attacked and defeated, and the place is known now as the Jang-i-dur or Valley of the Combat.

I cannot understand why the men of Hunza should be scorned as robbers or blamed as freebooters. In those jolly bygone days there was no law at all in all that wild country, and those who ventured there, did so at their own risk and with full knowledge. The Chinese were far away in their yamens at Yarkand or Kashgar, and made no attempt to intervene in these forays and sallies. Indeed, they had neither the men nor means to do so, and it was even said that a good present from Hunza made them strangely deaf to the complaints of raids made on their Turki subjects. In 1934

conditions in Turkestan were not so very different from what they had been in these good old days, but unfortunately there were no caravans to pillage.

The rain in the night was followed by a clean-washed atmosphere without a trace of haze, and the view from Darband down the Braldu valley was indeed beautiful. Away in the ochre-coloured distance was a crisp green forest, shining with its rain-drops. It was a surprise and delight to see anything of the kind; it proved to be a dense grove of willows named after some man long departed and long forgotten. We also saw beyond this grove the peaks and brown hills on the far side of the Mustagh river, and over all was a gentle sprinkling of snow.

Near our view-point too, a little way up the hill, was one of the salt deposits from which the Mir of Hunza obtained some of that precious mineral, for there is no salt anywhere in the Gilgit area. Below Darband we came to a plain with the ruins of at least twelve dwellings and traces of considerable cultivation. This was Ferok-i-deor, or the estate or settlement of Ferok, the original cultivator. It had clearly been a flourishing community at one time, and we saw no reason why it should not be now, as the irrigation channel only needed repair to tap the copious flow of water in the adjacent nullah. The truth is, however, that the Shingshalis, apart from being very indifferent cultivators, have more land and grazing than they know what to do with. The beautiful grass, which aroused the envy of my Hunza followers, in whose land every

blade is precious, is never cut and often never grazed on. The pastures referred to a little earlier in this chapter are used only occasionally. Thus it is that the villages in the main valley of Hunza are congested, suffering from lack of grazing and land, whilst here in the Shingshal area there is ample of both, going to waste. Men in Hunza have to sneak out of their country—for the Mir dislikes emigration, as tending to decrease the supply of forced labour—to hunt for employment in Gilgit or even in India when, close at hand, there is abundance for all. It is lamentable that the population of Hunza should be impoverished and afflicted when relief would be so easy. It is harsh treatment of a fine race.

Close to Ferok-i-deor, the Braldu river runs through a deep and narrow gorge; and across this gorge an old Shingshali, who has figured before in this book, one Kiskol, had built a bridge, a clumsy but perfectly serviceable piece of work, and indeed one of considerable engineering skill. Scores of feet below is the stream. The smooth polished rock curves inward, and on piles of stones cleverly built up on this unlikely foundation the bridge is supported.

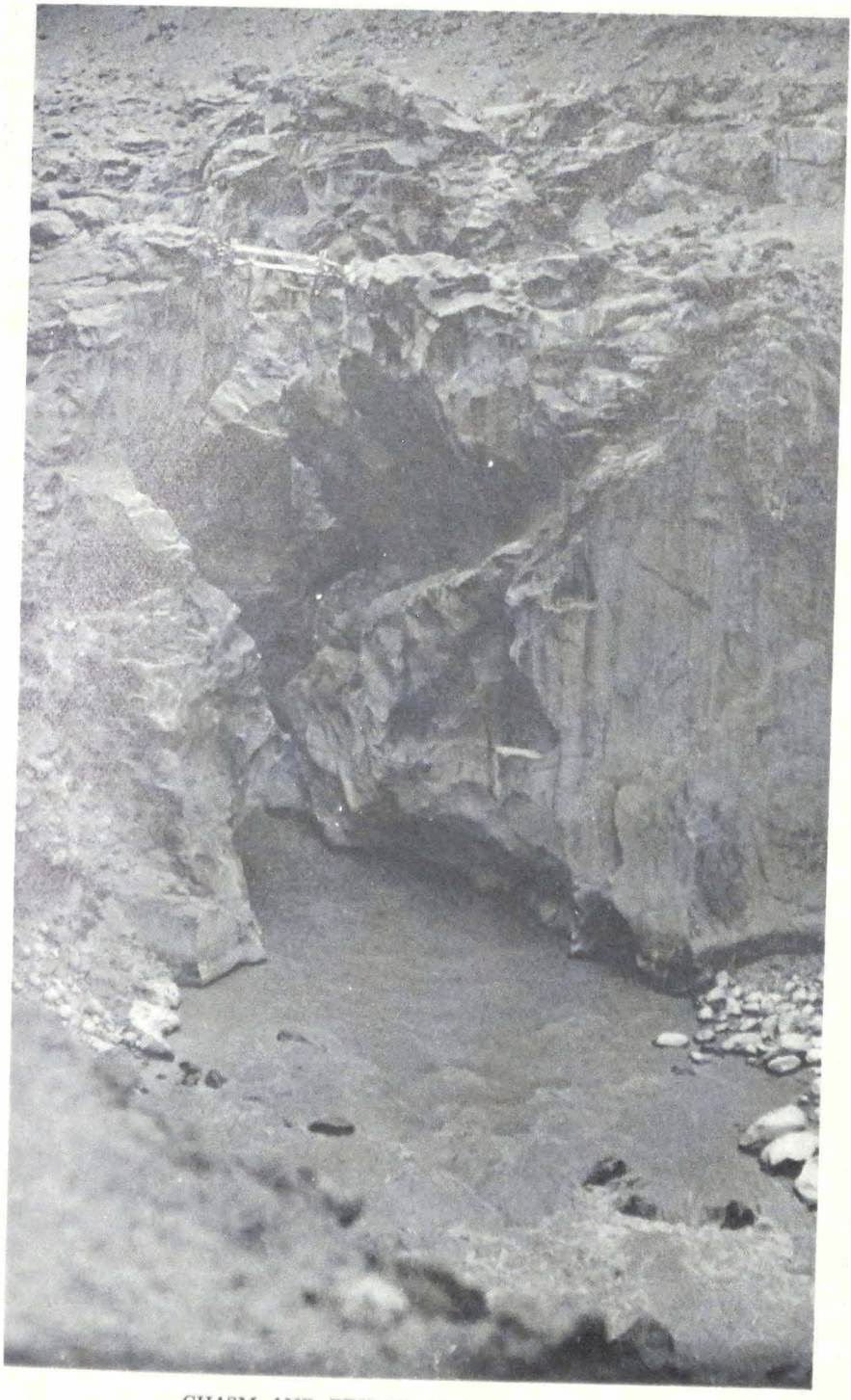
At last we reached the end of the Braldu valley where it joined the Mustagh river. We forded the stream just above the junction and camped on the left bank, at a place called by the Turkis, who now never come here, but by nobody else, Shingshal Aghzi or 'the Mouth of the Shingshal' (height 11,020 ft.).

This place was under the lee of a spit of land

between the two rivers. There was a sheepfold, a roofless hut, quantities of coarse grass, reeds and other vegetation, and a large expanse of sand. There was no good water, fuel was scanty, and the wind blew from every quarter; an exposed, unpleasant spot. Beyond the sand was a cliff with a drop of twenty feet to some age-old channel of the Braldu, which had once roared round the bend, then scored a new course, and had now left it, after having done a good deal of damage, as is the tiresome habit of these mountain streams. I do not think that the blame can be attributed to the Mustagh river which flowed on the far side of its immense channel, away beyond the twinkling mirage and the grey stones with their desert plants, so far on the right of the valley that even its roar was faint.

Close to our camp, in the ugly sand, was a little burn now dry, but which had left enough moisture for its bed to be thick with the yellow flowers of the wild clematis.

I have said that Shingshal Aghzi, or ' Mouth of the Shingshal ', was a Turki name unknown to the inhabitants, not to be confused with the Braldu, which is the river flowing down the main valley on the North or Central Asiatic side of the Shingshal Pass, and it is worth noting that the name Shingshal is never given to any part of the stream across the main watershed, or indeed to any other natural feature; so that to describe the end of this stream, where it joins the Mustagh, as Shingshal Aghzi is misleading. The real name of this place is Phurzin-i-dasht, or the ' Birch Trees in the



CHASM AND BRIDGE AT FEROK-I-DEOR

Desert ', a picturesque title and not the less so because there are no birch trees there, though there are some further down, in the bed of the Mustagh.

Having arrived here, I had now to decide what to do, and it was not easy. My original intention had been to turn right-handed, follow up the Mustagh river—which the maps insist on calling the Shaksgam, a name unknown here though correct enough higher up, near its source—as far as the Sarpo Laggo glacier, or the Suget Jangal of Younghusband. As soon as I saw the river in front of me I realised that my plans would have to be radically altered, if I wished to complete my journey through the remote and largely unknown regions to the East and West. I could not go up the Mustagh, as the summer was too far advanced. Just above its junction with the Braldu the rapidly rising river ran between high cliffs. It was impossible to work up the side of the river, as there were precipices which not even a wild goat could cross. It was equally impossible, in the defile, to ford the river which flowed from side to side in an aggravating manner, entailing a number of crossings. Bridges, too, could not be improvised. I examined the ground further back, in the hope that a long detour might overcome these difficulties, but although one or two of us could have managed, it was out of the question to take the whole party, and unless we could bring our supplies with us, there would be no use going, only to be driven back at once for want of rations. It is a great problem, when using coolies, to ensure that they have not gone too

far, yet far enough, before they have eaten their loads; and even by making dumps of provisions it is not easy to work far ahead. Consequently, the value of pack animals cannot be overestimated for journeys in uninhabited places. So I decided to give up the journey up the Mustagh for the present, and to return later in the year on the chance that the water might allow us to make our way up.

I believe that in former times the ascent of the river was much easier. Perhaps the hillside has since slipped or the stream altered its course, for in former times there was always some way of working up the Mustagh. Our two Shingshalis, Balti and Sadiq, said that in olden days people used to go to Baltistan by this route, though they certainly implied that the river had to be low. So we changed our plans, and went down the river instead.

The valleys on either side were almost unknown. A fresh trouble now arose about crossing the river. The only means of doing so was by a rope bridge. Both the Shingshali guides insisted that to reach the mouth of the Mustagh, where it joins the Raskam, and where the two streams become the Yarkand river, it was necessary to cross the stream four times, and it was now impossible to cross it even once. Both these statements were false. However, I did not mind very much, as it suited me equally well to descend the left of the river, and return to Hunza by an almost unknown route.

We arranged accordingly to do so, whereupon our

Shingshalis came to us, in great grief and tribulation, to announce that there was only enough flour left for four days. By this time, however, we had long ceased to believe anything that the coolies said, especially as five days previously they had blithely announced that they had enough supplies left to last to the end of our journey: and it was hardly possible that so much flour could vanish at once. The whole thing was merely a trick. The Shingshalis, always a poor lot and hating all effort, wanted to go home, and this was their means of having their way. Naturally enough, we were sick to death of them. The Mir of Hunza had originally suggested taking coolies from Hunza, but after some discussion he agreed that it would be fairer to take local labour, as there was less for these people to do than for the Hunza men, for the Shingshalis being pastoral folk have little work in the summer as compared with the agriculturalists of Hunza. The Shingshalis, too, never had a chance of earning any money, and would welcome it, or so we thought. In reality their indolence was far greater than their cupidity. At first they had been delighted at the chance of steady employment and good pay, but as with children, the novelty wore off. The moderate but regular labour became a burden to them, and they began, in their ingenious and unpleasant fashion, to do all they could to thwart us.

We were, however, committed to them, and they to us, and although they endeavoured daily, and even hourly, by every piece of knavery and deceit they could concoct, to divert us from our purpose, they

failed completely. They were members of that unhappy class who think they can eat their cake and have it too. They desired our money, heartily and greedily, but they disliked our work. It only dawned on us gradually that the Shingshalis, although they spoke the Wakhi language, were not really natives of Wakhan but, as has been said, were a jumble of local races. This admixture of race did not result in a good whole, and our coolies seemed to possess the defects of all, and the good qualities of none. I lay some emphasis on the shortcomings of our coolies because, in European circles, travellers are often blamed when the fault is not theirs. Transport is the very foundation of our present civilisation in the West, and it is even more so of any expedition in the wilds. Thus our failure or success depended on our coolies. It was a daily pitting of their wits against ours ; and if we won it was because our will-power was superior. We tried to do all we could for our men, but they refused to co-operate with us, and remained sulky, tiresome, ungracious savages.

We started down the left side of the Mustagh river. On our right was the old bed of the Braldu river which had been abandoned when that stream turned more easterly and joined the main river. Three miles on we came to Kuchin. Above, were salt mines and a large piece of good salt was shown to me. The Mir of Hunza exacts a quantity of salt every year as tribute. There is a great demand for salt in Hunza, and it is unfortunate that these mines should be so remote, but

TYPICAL PIECE OF 'PATH' IN THE MUSTAGH VALLEY

even so, the Shingshalis had an easy and profitable industry at their doors, and could have earned considerable sums if they had not been so lazy. Very often the Shingshalis come here in the winter for grazing as the snowfall is light, and it would be easy for the shepherds to dig salt at the same time. The track was a very tiresome one, with exasperating ascents and descents which a little fording might have avoided, but our coolies hated water as does a cat, and preferred a stiff climb to wet feet.

There was also the shibboleth of the short cut. The hillman prefers a very steep and difficult track to an easier but slightly longer one. Perhaps, to people who regard up-hill and down-hill with equal indifference, that is natural enough.

It had rained during the night and morning, and the air was blessedly clear and bright. The red-brown cliffs on both sides of the valley were glowing in the radiant day, and yet the scene was desolate despite the briskness of the atmosphere and the flashing sunlight pouring on grey crests. Not a single living thing was visible, not a lizard nor a bird. The hills were deadly, with no grass on them, and yet lurking in the depths of the nullahs and at the heads of the valleys were abundant secret pastures, on which the Shingshalis fed their yaks. Still, this desolate valley was not depressing, and the whole area burned a rich umber under the hot sun and dancing mirages.

Our first trouble was when we tried to ford the Mustagh river. Daulat and old Balti advanced, like

loving brothers, arm in arm, and set out for the opposite bank. In his enthusiasm Daulat had forgotten the haversack on his back, in which were the field glasses and many valuable oddments, so I bawled furiously to him as he splashed about in the stream ; but its noise deafened all my angry admonitions. The current was too high, and they could not cross, so all the contents of the haversack were soaked to no purpose. Muhib, the cook, made a gallant and successful effort ; alone, with only an alpenstock, he reached the opposite side, where he collapsed on the dry stones, and warmed himself in the still air.

We had been ahead of the coolies and, when they arrived, they sent two of their fellows on who crossed, and at once declared that it was out of the question to attempt the passage with laden men. It was not true, but I gave in, as I knew that, though we might ford the Mustagh that day, it would be a very different matter on our return, a couple of weeks later. All our kit, too, would get wet, but by doing up the boxes in tarpaulins, this could have been avoided. The coolies then offered to make a rope bridge, though it meant a long delay, and the question of rations was rather serious. However, off they went, only to return with the sad news that there was no suitable site. The truth was that they had no intention whatever of crossing the river, but were bent on bustling us back to their village as soon as they could.

The whole day was spent in endless palaver, and in the evening we camped under high and rather

dangerous conglomerate cliffs at the mouth of the Ghorjerab, or Stony Valley; I have seldom met a more apposite name.

We were determined to push on, down the left of the main valley and then up the Oprang, so, in spite of the wails and whines of the coolies and their protests that we must return, we sent on our two cicerones, Balti of the pink shirt and Sadiq of the three teeth, with orders to find a track. They disappeared, but came back unexpectedly soon with the news that a fair path had been found. It seemed that Sadiq had remembered being told by his grandfather's father the tale of a path over the spur and, thanks to this aged ancestor and a good memory, had traced the track. We were suitably grateful and impressed, knowing perfectly well that the old fox had all the time been aware of this track.

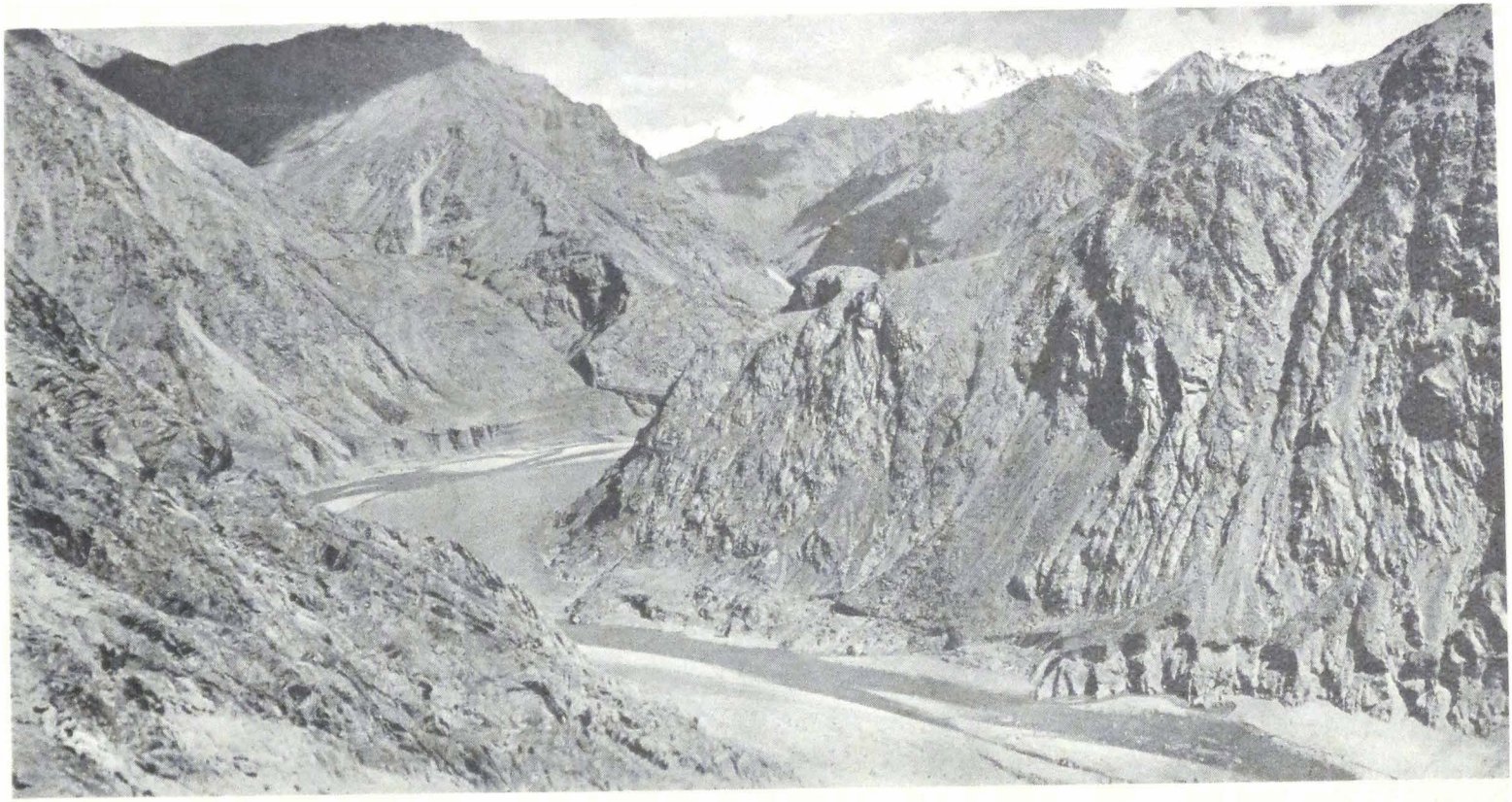
Next morning we ascended the Ghorjerab, a stony valley with a fine stream of clear water. At first it was rough and difficult over the boulders. We reached a waterfall, and had to cut down some of the tall, well-grown tamarisk trees, and wedge the branches between the cliff and rocks, to enable the coolies to climb up. It was not easy, but by pushing and pulling we forced our way through, between the cliff and the waterfall. It was sad to see the tamarisks slashed down, as any tree was precious in this bleak region.

After scrambling some way up the hillside, I was astonished to find the remains of a well-made graded caravan road, winding up the spur in zigzags. The

track was well revetted and carefully aligned. Much of it had been destroyed by falling rocks or had been damaged by rain, but it was quite unmistakably the old caravan road built laboriously over this spur because, during the season of high water, it was not possible for animals to pass below. On reaching the top of the spur (12,540 ft.) and descending on the other side we found similar remains.

This road explained a great deal which I have elaborated in another chapter. It showed why there was a post of Hunza raiders at Darband in former times, as from there they could easily command the caravan routes, whereas, later on, when the traders adopted the way over the Karakoram Pass, raiding became more arduous and less profitable, because the prey was so much further off. This old road also explained how the Kirghiz were able to make an attack on Darband, for no Kirghiz can walk a hundred yards whereas, with a good track, raiders could easily reach and surprise that place. Obviously all these remains prove that this was the original trade route to Baltistan and the South in the days when the glaciers were passable, and when the present obstacles, that have now existed for wellnigh a century, were no hindrance to pack transport.

From the top of this spur we had good views South up the Mustagh, and North over the Oprang; also below us were the remains of the old shelters and camping ground of the caravans. We descended, passing many remnants of this old track which has survived so long.



THE OPRANG AND MUSTAGH VALLEYS SEEN FROM JUST BELOW THE SUMMIT OF THE GHORJERAB SPUR

Below the spur, on the northern side, the rocks were of that unpleasant and dangerous kind which flake off and look like grotesque 'mille feuilles' pastry. In many places the road fell down, and so did we. After a long and arduous day we again reached the Mustagh river, and camped about half a mile down stream from our starting-place of the early morning. An immense boulder gave us shade and shelter, and we were delighted at defeating both the schemes of the Shingshalis and the unfordable river.

The lower Mustagh supplied us with nothing to eat, and not a bird or animal to shoot. We did, however, once find some wild onions, delicate little plants, as tender as a snowdrop, with demure hanging heads. Nevertheless, they were true onions; we all gathered them, advancing on our way in a delicate aroma of onion, penetrating, savoury and delightful.

We had surmounted the difficulty of the Ghorjerab *parri* but we still had to reach the Oprang river only four miles off, and the way did not look easy. The river roared below, the cliff soared above. If we took the lower route, the coolies would get wet feet and, indeed, in one place the river dashed against the shining rocks in a way that horrified us. There was only one course, to clamber up the cliff. It was most disagreeable. We went along, pavid but determined, and very gingerly, and at last reached a nullah with conglomerate cliffs over a hundred feet high. Balti and Sadiq gave up at once. This was a rubicon they would not cross, and they chattered of other routes, well knowing that

there were none. It was just as well that the coolies were far behind, and could not add to the general pessimism. My two Hunza men, Daulat and Hasil, promptly went down the headlong cliff, forcing the wailing Shingshalis to go with them. I sat on the top, holding the dog who was very anxious to follow. Clouds of dust arose, cries and curses flew up, stones and rocks clattered down, and at last I looked over and saw Hasil safely on the far side. In spite of the moans of the guides who said they would die and prayed piously, my two braves had scratched a fair if rough track in the nullah sides.

It was not an easy descent, as we all had to be roped, and the boxes carefully lowered: even little Quli Khan, the dog, had to have a rope round his waist and be dangled over the precipice, an absurd sight. One box fell into the stream, the only damage. It was certainly due to Daulat's perseverance and resource that we managed the descent. When all the party had crossed Daulat threw down the rope, and scrambled down without it. The chief danger was from falling stones and the natural instability of the comglomerate.

It tooks us five hours to do these two miles. It was remarkable how the coolies crossed the smooth sloping rocks with their absurd soft *pabboos* (leather boots), while the same places were alarming to us who wore nailed boots or sandals. The coolies used to rest quite happily perched on a smooth polished slope, with their feet thrust into a ledge of rock, two inches wide. On such slopes I used to crawl up on hands and knees, not

trusting my nailed soles, but the Shingshalis pattered up them without a care in their untanned leather boots.

I saw from this high point two easy fords, which would have saved this march over bad tracks, crumbling hill-sides, and precipices, with their consequent danger and delay. But the thought of the river unmanned our followers, and I did not venture to suggest it.

On our way down to the plains above the river bed we passed several ruins dating from Kirghiz times, including old breastworks built up along the side of the hill. I also found the first wild rose in flower.

After crossing a wide level plain of firm clay which would have made good tennis courts, we arrived at last at the right bank of the Oprang river, just above its junction with the Mustagh. This new river was a lovely stream, a clear blue-green glacier torrent, flowing between luxuriant tamarisk, and presenting a great contrast to the greasy black Mustagh, swirling and wallowing in its vast channel between bare rubble-like hill-sides, for here the glaring brown rocks ended. It was really a very wide channel, often nearly all awash at the height of summer, and when the floods came down with a roar, it must have been a terrific sight. Our coolies were always talking about the floods of the Mustagh. The weather was fine; indeed it was a brilliant day, and the heat was overwhelming; we all dripped with sweat.

On the map a place called Sokh Bulak is marked. The proper name is Shor Bulak; it is a patch of grass and willow on the left of the Mustagh just below the

spot where the Oprang flows in. It was rather disappointing to look at, and strangely insignificant for the importance it has on maps. I should say that, in spite of the brackish water which gives it the name, it was at one time more important, as there seems to have been a landslip there, and its size is now much reduced in consequence.

We turned aside from the Mustagh, and went up the Oprang for a couple of miles. It was the only course open to us. We could not go further down the Mustagh as the river was not fordable, and so we were compelled to turn to the North, and hope to come out somewhere on the other side. So we crossed the glaucous stream and camped on a patch of green reeds, just above it, with brakes of tamarisk all in flower, and bushes of blooming roses close at hand. Once more I delighted in the contrast between this gay tributary stream, and the surly river which swallowed it.

CHAPTER VII

THE UNKNOWN OPRANG

OUR first camp on the Oprang was at the place already described, and called Kumushlik, a Turki word descriptive of its reedy nature, and it was noticeable that most of the few names in the valley were Turki in origin. Towards evening we found that the stream had turned into an ugly brown, thanks to the melting snow water, but by the following morning it was its old colour once more.

I have called this valley unknown, as I have failed to find any account of it. It has, certainly, been ascended by one European at least, who seems to have gone as quickly and as directly as he could to the Oprang Pass, and over into the main valley of the Chinese Pamirs. Our route was both new and leisurely, we saw much of the side valleys and the head of the main one, and we also, after crossing the Oprang Pass, took a new route, hitherto uncharted, which brought us into the top eastern corner of Hunza.

I had never really contemplated this part of the journey, which was begotten by circumstances; we could not return, as we had not enough food; we could not descend the main Mustagh valley, and thus our footsteps were forcibly turned to the upper Oprang.

There are two Oprangs, the South and the North, which are connected for travellers by the Oprang Pass. This economy of names is very confusing and very general. Now we were travelling up the Southern Oprang. The map showed tentatively two long valleys coming in on the right, but they were hard to identify. We ascended the valley, which was surprisingly well-wooded along the edges of the stream; indeed, even the side valleys held tamarisk and brushwood, pointing to the sheltered nature of the parent valley, as well as to the suitable aspect of its affluents. We actually found poplars growing by the Oprang.

We forded the river several times (it was very easy even for the Shingshalis) and continued up a rough but very evident track which, in some places, was built-up and aligned. The weather was perfect, with not a cloud in the sky, and extremely hot.

We passed ruined huts and sheepfolds, long abandoned, for the weeds of years were flourishing amongst them. The whole valley had an air of neglect and of desolation, and the small amount of fresh dung showed that few flocks enjoyed the ample pasture. It is always something of a mystery to understand why valuable and accessible grazing grounds are thus abandoned. Many reasons are offered, but the real one is usually concealed. I sometimes wonder if it is often mere superstition, caused by a run of bad luck such as deaths amongst the animals. And I should not be surprised if the nomads do not themselves know the reason. Abandonment of pastures is a common sight.

As we crawled up the right bank we passed a fine stream of clear warm water, drinkable but with a faint sulphurous flavour. When we crossed over to the left side, above this warm spring, we saw before us a truly delightful place. To Western eyes it would have been insignificant: it was merely an open stretch in a narrow valley, with a good deal of scrub, but to us, used to the utter aridity of the country, it was a Garden of Eden. This delectable spot was Kor-i-sar (12,240 ft.). First we came on a Kirghiz cemetery, sure sign of an habitable site. There was much grass, abundant tamarisk and bushes by the stream and, beyond, a fine expanse of barley. This last was as great a surprise to us as would have been a railway station in such a spot. Some nomads had sown their crops and left them, to return in the autumn and harvest them. So confident were they in the remoteness of their fields, with no fear of intruders, that they had left all their property lying about, spades, cooking pots, ploughs, and so forth. It was not very valuable gear, in money, but there it was beyond price, and I took good care that our coolies did not take anything away. On the left a curious, very deep, almost gorge-like nullah flowed in, full of well-grown willows and a rushing torrent of warm water. The shade of the willows was very welcome, but we could not camp, partly because the ground was swampy, but chiefly because the water was too sulphurous to drink, and the smell was an added drawback.

We were told that in old days Kor-i-sar had been a flourishing Kirghiz settlement, but a flood came and

ruined most of the arable land. This legend explained the graveyard, the many ruined houses, and the generally mournful air of former prosperity which all abandoned settlements seem to wear. Up to this point, we had been expecting coolies from Shingshal with letters, eggs, and other minor necessaries, but we now realised that no one would find us, and that our only course was to push on. The flour question was rather serious but, when the coolies had discovered that we did not mean to turn back, they discovered in some mysterious fashion a further amount of flour. But we did not have enough; it was not our fault, though that fact did not ease the situation. The coolies told us that they had sent word home that they were returning by the Oprang, and that flour was to be sent to meet them. I always found the Shingshalis singularly well able to take care of themselves.

Above Kor-i-sar was a strange black peak with bands of brown and grey. We continued up the valley, passing clumps of willows and, in some places, birch trees; occasionally, but not often, we caught sight of a snow peak. After some eight miles we emerged at a place where a large stream came in on the right, which contributed quite half of the volume of the Oprang river. At the junction were the usual vast expanse of grey dry stone and the numerous discarded channels of the two streams. This place was the Kosh-i-dur-i-ghash, the mouth of the meeting of the nullahs. But the large stream and its valley which came into the Oprang had no name at all.

It is natural enough, in a primitive society, that the remoter and especially the uninhabited parts of the Karakoram and adjacent ranges should have no names. I was always asking the Shingshalis the names of important features, but there never were any. Perhaps one place in fifty would have a name. Maps of this area are consequently apt to be disappointing, thanks to this scanty nomenclature. Both the Survey of India and the Royal Geographical Society taboo giving names to unknown peaks, and advocate labelling snow mountains by a letter and a number, as cattle are marked at a show or objects in a cloak-room. It is often the privilege of science to be dreary, insipid and confusing, but why burden the memory of the public and disfigure their atlases with a string of meaningless letters and numbers? The mere amateur fails to understand why it is improper to commemorate great alpinists or explorers by giving their names to unnamed mountains. Pope Pius XI, Mr Douglas Freshfield, Lord Conway, Sir Aurel Stein, and Mr Arthur Hinks, the genial Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, might well be commemorated. Why should Mount Smith be wrong, and K 999 right? It is difficult to think of the Alps as a series of numbers, and it is indecent to see some glorious peak ticketed like a garment in a pawn-shop or an umbrella in a cloak-room. How wooden and dismal science can be!

The Oprang river, above Kor-i-sar, flowed through a gorge, and we followed it up, crossing the now diminished stream many times. The water was

inconsiderable before midday. The gorge was a dull affair, usually plastered with shining black shale, though in places relieved by brownish red cliffs; even that relief was not enough to break the monotony. Doubtless in itself this defile was a striking piece of natural scenery, but in a region where gorges and ravines are common objects in the landscape the eye soon grows unappreciative. All we thought of was the fords, the turns and twists of the gorge, and the glorious sun baking us as it shone out of an unclouded sky.

Suddenly we were thrilled by coming on the fresh tracks of a shepherd and his flocks. He was clearly only a few hours ahead, and we longed to catch him up, to eat his sheep and drink his milk, and be generally greedy. We meandered on, growing hotter and more irritable, till we realised that it would be unfair to our coolies to attempt to catch him up that day. So we camped in the ravine, and let the agile herd await the morrow.

The abundant tamarisk and brushwood had by this time disappeared, but there was noble yak dung and ample dwarf tamarisk among the stones. We were all peevish. The previous march had been short, to-day's too long yet not long enough to reach the Sarikoli nomads, and we felt ready to slay poor Sadiq in spite of his three teeth.

The next day was easy, and in two hours we reached the end of the gorge, where we had to cross the stream. The Shingshalis were too timid to cross by the snow-

bridge which was clearly a sound one. Even after we had crossed some of the coolies demurred, yet the snow would have carried a dozen elephants.

As we mounted the bank on the other side, four Tajiks, nomads of Sarikol, came to meet us. Their tents were just behind a spur, and they welcomed us politely. This site was Tekkalik, 'The Place of the Ibex', or Oprang Yailaq (13,600 ft.). Our attention, however, was distracted by our wretched coolies, who chose that moment to throw down their loads and declare that, if they were not given proper supplies of flour to take them to Misgar in Hunza, they would go home at once. They might just as well have asked for boiled turbot and oyster sauce, and they and we knew it.

Now we had arranged in Shingshal that the coolies would provide transport and their own flour as far as Misgar, and they had sworn that they had enough to last till there. We had told them a dozen times that if they did not wish to accompany us, they had only to say so, and we would send to Hunza for coolies. They had consented, and the onus was on them. The truth was, of course, that they had relied on persuading us to return direct to the Shingshal, and had concealed a quantity of flour on the way to consume during the return journey.

It was a typical example of the low and stupid cunning of the savage. At 8 a.m. the argument began. After taking some photographs, I returned some two hours later to find the squabble still raging, and Daulat showing signs of a very natural exhaustion.

I rushed at the Shingshalis, flung their bags of flour at them, told them to go to hell and home and clear off, and that we should carry on without them. I knew that I could hire animals from the Tajiks. After this outburst, Daulat led me away by the arm, but the situation was changed. The coolies gave way at once. They knew they were wrong, and in the afternoon two or three coolies arrived with the flour which they had cached in the certainty of their final triumph.

It was a tiresome and exasperating incident, but typical of these people. They had, unfortunately, on a previous occasion been allowed to swindle the Visser expedition right and left, and thought that a kind providence had once again sent someone to fill their pockets with silver and their bellies with food, both unearned. It was a useful lesson to us also, and we resolved to have nothing to do with these people again; but our resolution was quickly broken when we returned to their country a second time.

After the disturbance had ended, we went to see the Tajiks, who vied with one another in doing all they could for us. They said that the Southern Oprang belonged to the Mir of Hunza, and they had come there as refugees from their own country. It was they who had sown the barley at Kor-i-sar. They begged me to pray for rain as the grass was poor and their flocks were suffering. I certainly did not wish for this fine midsummer weather to change. They would do nothing for the Shingshalis, and I could not wholly blame them, but I managed to buy a stalwart he-goat which I

TAJIKS IN UPPER (SOUTH) OPRANG

gave to the coolies. These Tajiks had the distinction of being the only ones of their race more or less permanently in the British Empire.

After our visit had ended I went to the head of the Oprang, as the day was still young and the distance not very great. The head of the valley was a regular 'Pamir' with excellent grazing. The Tajiks had, indeed, over fifty yaks and numbers of sheep, all of which they cautiously said belonged to someone else, for that is the stock answer when they are unwilling to sell. They said, too, that the head of the Oprang was impossible to cross, but they had never tried, and I am pretty sure that they were wrong, and that in the South of the valley there was a way over the watershed. It might conceivably be closed on the far side but not on that of the Oprang. The Oprang Pass itself is up a side valley which flows in from the North, and joins the main one just above the Tajik encampment. The remains of the old sites would always be a guide even if the tents were absent, but the entrance to the valley is not easily identified, owing to the steep fall at the junction which conceals its direction and extent.

The scenery at the head of the Oprang was disappointing. It is true that the mountains of the Pamir formation lack that grandeur and nobility to which one had grown accustomed in the Karakoram; but the Oprang was a fine valley and the shoddy snow peak at its head was an unworthy finish. On the right of the valley and facing the North there were fine masses of snow and some hanging glaciers, but even so the

scenery was unimpressive. I climbed to a great height, and was rewarded with an extensive view, especially looking down the valley in an easterly direction. There the massif opposite the mouth of the Oprang and facing Shor Bulak was clearly to be seen, but the view was disappointing, barren and unrelieved, and it might have been any arid valley anywhere. No one would imagine that within the dreary folds of this sterile broken landscape so much vegetation was concealed.

This Southern Oprang is, I consider, part of Hunza. The frontier has never been demarcated, but as the valley drains into what is unquestionably Hunza territory, it is illogical for it to belong to China, whose nomadic tribes seldom or never use it.

Our plans were to cross the Oprang Pass, descend into the Northern Oprang valley and, turning North and West up the Northern Khunjerab, cross over into Hunza by the Khunjerab Pass and reach Misgar, the most northerly village of that country. The distance between the two passes was inconsiderable, but our trouble lay in our ignorance of what was happening in the piece of Chinese territory in between. Chinese Turkestan had been in a very disturbed state and we were anxious to avoid all complications during our short journey across a remote corner of that country. The Tajiks, too, were equally in the dark, as they had fled from Sarikol and prudently abstained from all intercourse with their neighbours; for over eight months they had lived a secluded but peaceful existence. I felt that it would be as well to find out, so old Sadiq

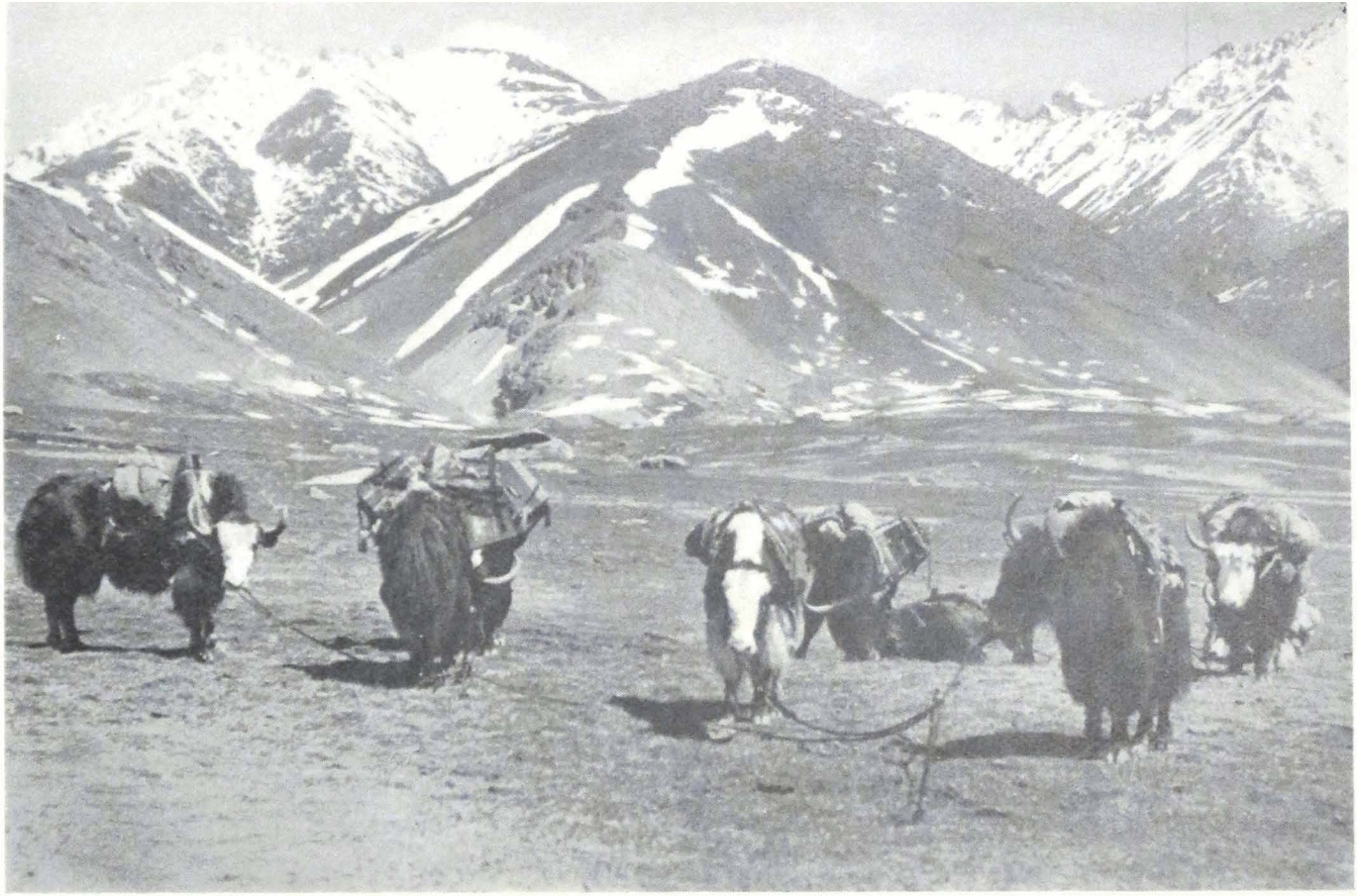
and a Tajik, bravely mounted on yaks, were despatched with much admonition and many messages to our numerous friends and acquaintances across the watershed. If all were well, these people would be close at hand, feeding their flocks, loafing and gorging, and living the care-free life of the nomad of Central Asia.

Our two messengers returned with mournful tidings. They said that about three days previously a party of Andijanis and Kirghiz had swept up the Oprang, pillaged all the camps, driven off the best animals, collected all the well-to-do men, bound them, taken them away, and vanished. This news was agitating. It was wellnigh impossible to return by the way we had come, the Mustagh river was rising, and we had made such arrangements as we could to return by the Khunjerab. We had to take our chance and, since the rebels had thoroughly pillaged the whole of the Oprang, it was improbable that they would return; and even if they did they would leave us alone. So off we started. We arranged to hire yaks from the Tajiks as far as the top of the pass, and for our coolies to stroll in a gentlemanly fashion behind. On the top of the pass the coolies would take up their loads, and cover as much ground as they could the same day. The distances were not great, the track was over an easy Pamir, and with reasonable luck we should be well up in the Khunjerab, and close to the pass, before anyone could know about us. I had my Chinese passports, but as Chinese rule was no longer recognised, I was doubtful whether they would be of use.

We bade farewell to the Tajiks, and gave them presents of money, necklaces, looking-glasses, and pocket-knives; as well as some miscellaneous rubbish, including an empty butter tin, a precious relic, judging from the way the women squabbled over it.

Climbing up the left of the Oprang valley, we found ourselves in a broad grassy plain, well-watered and attractive. The scenery improved, and I revised my previously unfavourable opinion of the Oprang. On the right or West of the valley there were two or three small lakes with well-covered snow hills beyond. The weather was unpropitious. In the morning it had suddenly clouded over, although at dawn there had not been a cloud in the sky. Before reaching the pass, we entered a narrow light-brown nullah, and after following a frozen stream for three-quarters of a mile, we turned sharp to the left, or due West, and in four hundred yards we reached the snow-covered crest of the Oprang Pass. There, with many expressions of affection and esteem, we took farewell of the kindly Tajiks, and descended into no-man's land.

The Oprang valley—that is the northern one—is regarded as the very cream of the Pamir grazing-grounds, and in normal times it is dotted with the round felt tents of the nomads and covered with a moving mass of animals. We should, in such circumstances, have sauntered from tent to tent, devouring clotted cream, curd, tender mutton, and such-like pastoral dainties, growing fat and happy as we rolled along. We had many friends, and we should have



LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE OPRANG PASS

gossiped prodigiously, lying on quilts and drinking China tea. There would have been a plethora of all things, food, drink, conversation, and leisure to enjoy. Instead of any such simple idyll, this superb valley stretched before us naked and empty, its rich pasture wasting, its camping grounds unoccupied. We did indeed find four or five tents, and listened to the sad tale, the same at each. One wretched woman was sitting on a pile of old numdahs, all she had left in the world. The few tents left had been the poorest, but even they had been stripped, and all that was left were such animals as were too worthless to drive away, the barren ewes, the skinny goats, and aging yaks. A few of the men had saved themselves and their beasts by the lucky accident of having been in some remote valley when the raiders sacked their valley.

It was a wicked and a cruel spectacle, this once happy, prosperous valley ; and I wished that the fools who think lawlessness and revolt a fine thing, and the unrestrained will of the mob desirable in itself, could have seen this ravaged district.

Apparently the Andijanis and the Kirghiz had come up, two hundred strong and well-mounted, had split into four parties, and had made most successful forays. Armed to the teeth, these brutes could do what they liked with the wretched, helpless Tajiks, but I could not understand why they had carried off the leading men. We enquired about our friends, and found that all had gone, even the great religious leader, Imam Dad, bound and taken away with his two daughters. These

Andijanis were largely refugees from Russian Turkestan who had settled in Chinese territory, and who, in return for Chinese hospitality, had seized the opportunity offered by the rebellion, and had been a perfect pest ever since. Other Andijanis from Russian territory had joined them, and together with the ruffianly Kirghiz, chiefly Russian subjects, had been responsible for many foul and brutal murders and other crimes. It was generally reported that the Andijanis were Communists, encouraged if not actively helped by the Bolshevists but, whatever they were, they could be of no use either to Russia or China.

The news was not cheering, and I was glad that our sojourn in the area would be a brief one. Daulat said that he would soon deal with any marauders, but when I glanced at the Shingshalis, I realised how heavily we were handicapped.

The mouth of the Khunjerab was not far away, and in three hours from the crest of the Oprang Pass we were in it. It is a large valley, also in peaceful times the home of many nomads but now occupied by only three tents. From the high ground at the junction of the two valleys we had a splendid view over Sarikol, over a great level pasture and low, rounded hills, with the smooth summit of Mustagh Ata quivering in the haze. It was all silent and soundless and, although we examined the ground with great care, one man on a yak was all we saw. We continued our way up the Khunjerab, and camped in a pleasant and secluded place.

I was much struck by the marmots and the primulas in this valley. We had seen neither in the Southern Oprang. Both were ubiquitous. The marmots were great buck marmots, not the skinny little rodents of Kashmir. They stood on their burrows like orange-brown gnomes, chattering furiously. Sometimes there were two or three clustered together, and they infuriated our dog, who chased them quite uselessly, all day long, till he could not move from exhaustion.

The *Primula reticulata* was everywhere, staining the ground a fine purple. The plants were small, but their flowers were beautiful, and in great abundance. The scenery, too, agreeably surprised me. The Pamirs are seldom beautiful, but here, in this corner of the Oprang, they had borrowed some of the grandeur of the Hunza mountains. The peaks at the head of the Khunjerab, and West of the Oprang were, the former especially, truly magnificent. By now it was the end of June, and it was surprising to see how much snow and ice remained everywhere. Much of the Khunjerab river, which is exposed to the North, was covered with ice—and the temperature was lower than on the other side of the pass. We spent only one night in the Northern Khunjerab and hastened to leave a land of misrule and mob-rule. It was mournful to see the empty hearths of the Tajiks ; these nomads differ from their neighbours in building a high, almost enclosed, circular mud fireplace, which is conspicuous when the tents are struck, and we were again reminded of all the good victuals of which we had been deprived.

Just below the Khunjerab Pass we found a tent, and we passed the time of day with the people. Although so remote, they had been visited by the Andijanis and looted, so it shows how thorough they were. The pass itself was easy, a gentle grassy saddle, and we enjoyed a fine view over the Hunza peaks immediately in front. On the right of the pass on the Hunza side there were two glaciers, and my followers surveyed the two vastly different scenes with evident disgust. On the side of their country all was barren and harsh, snow peaks, rocky precipices and arid slopes; on the Oprang side there was broad and precious pasture. Their remarks were, I fear, very unpatriotic. The map gave the height of the Khunjerab Pass as 16,100 feet but, although I took several readings, I could not find any approaching that, and consider that 15,355 feet is correct. Our breathing was not difficult, whereas an extra 700 feet would have made a difference to it.

We now descended into Hunza territory, and I was not sorry that our compulsory and undesired excursion into Chinese Turkestan had ended. The Tajiks were very pleasant, but they were wholly untrustworthy, and no better than the other knaves and scoundrels who inhabit the Pamirs. I knew that they were quite capable of sending a message about us to the Andijanis, who were close by. I do not suppose that we should have been harmed, but we were without food in a foodless country, and a delay would have been awkward.

We descended the pass for two miles, and were astonished to see a couple of felt tents belonging to two

Tajiks whom we had met on the other side of the pass. As we drew near, the women rushed out of their tents, bolted like rabbits and fled into the nullah, where we subsequently saw them. In the tent we found one wretched woman too weak to run, palpitating and shaking, and unable to speak. Daulat went into the ravine, after we had calmed the poor soul, and persuaded the other women to come out. They thought that the Andijanis had again found them out, and that even in British territory they were not safe. It was a most distressing spectacle and eloquent of how the rebels had behaved. This was the second party of Tajiks on our side of the frontier, but they were only temporary visitors and would soon be turned out by the Mir of Hunza. I bought a yak for our coolies who were short of food, and would be even shorter before they arrived at the nearest village.

CHAPTER VIII

DOWN THE KHUNJERAB

WE were now in the Kara Jilga, a branch of the main Khunjerab stream, and in a region if not well known at any rate partly mapped and explored by the Visser expedition of 1925. It was rather a help to have a map once more and not a mere empty space marked 'unexplored'; pioneering has certain drawbacks.

We said farewell to the Tajiks, still a little unhappy about the Andijanis and not wholly convinced that they were safe from raiders, and descended the valley. We came upon large quantities of bones and even some mummified bodies of dead animals, and were told that five hundred sheep belonging to the Mir of Hunza had died there recently from some disease, and that yaks and goats had also perished. There were some horns of the Ovis Poli in one or two places on both sides of the pass. The Tajiks declared that these animals had died of disease, but it was an evident lie, as there were no bones. In the winter these sheep are driven by snow and cold into the lower valleys and are killed by the nomads. The horns, too, were of varying ages, some almost rotten, others quite fresh. These fine sheep are now nearly extinct in the Chinese Pamirs owing to relentless slaughter.

The Kara Jilga ended at Koksel, where we reached the main stream of the Khunjerab, at the head of which was a magnificent mass of snow, with one grand snow peak dominating the rest. We passed a number of felt tents, lying packed up for future use, in different places as we went down the valley. They had been left by their owners, men in charge of the Mir's flocks, who had gone to higher pastures where tents could not be taken. Although the grazing in the valley was very poor in comparison with that in Chinese territory there seemed to be enough of it. To make sure, the Mir had reserved the entire valley for his own animals.

The weather was somewhat boisterous. The sun shone all day, a raging wind with whirls of dust roared up and down the valley, there was no shelter, and the stark rocks shivered in the sun. During the first day we saw four hares, seven pigeons, and some very thin female ibex, but the country hardly promised sport. We had sent Balti on ahead to arrange for a rope-bridge at the end of the valley, which the people of Misgar would have to make, and we had only old Sadiq with us, who pretended to know the way, and certainly did not. He said that he had been there before, and was very annoyed when we declined to follow his obviously wrong paths. I noticed on many occasions that the Shingshalis generally had a very poor eye for a track. Sadiq or others would point out some tedious way over a spur, whereas the Hunza men at once spotted an equally good one that would avoid the climb. The coolies often refused to follow us, and would toil

and moil over unnecessarily difficult tracks. In Hunza proper, the people have an infallible intuition for the best path, and this is due to their experience, intelligence, and common sense.

At our first camp in the Khunjerab, our only Kashmiri blew himself up. He was clearly ignorant of the elements of physics and learned his first lesson with pain and shock. When he unscrewed the stopper from the petrol tin of boiling water, the steam and water burned him terribly. I was much alarmed but managed to dress his chest and face, and in a few days he was well. He was an excellent man, but received no sympathy from his fellows, who merely remarked, in their callous native way, that it was all his own fault.

We had great difficulty in going down the Khunjerab. At first, we could ford it without much trouble, especially before midday, but we had, a little lower down, to keep to the right side only as the stream was unfordable. It was a truly inhuman, inhospitable valley, and I much admired the courage and resource of the Vissers who had explored it so thoroughly. They managed to ford the stream at least twenty times, but they were a little earlier or had less water than we, who had to scramble round rocks worn and polished, not by the hands of man but by the casual drippings of centuries. If only the stream had been fordable, we should have paddled comfortably from one side to the other. We passed many bright patches of grass, and a charming glen of green birch trees. We also

passed a surprising number of dead yaks, killed by disease, I suppose, since their bodies lay intact, and there were no signs of a violent end.

The main tributary of the upper Khunjerab is the Barakhun stream, which flows from the so-called Parpik Pass. We arrived at the junction of the two rivers in the late afternoon, and found an agreeable place with many groves of willows, but no sign of the shepherd or the flocks which we had expected to find. We had just begun to pitch our camp and make ourselves comfortable after our long march when Balti arrived. We had imagined that he had reached Misgar by this time, and had arranged for our supplies. All he did was to make us ford the Barakhun stream which would be, he declared, impassable early next morning. So we packed up our kit and started to ford the stream, a raging torrent and very awkward to cross. Indeed, we nearly lost little Quli Khan, who would not wait to be carried over, but plunged into the water and managed, purely by a fluke, to reach the other side. In the morning, we found that Balti's prophecy about the water was quite wrong: it was probably a trick to induce the coolies to cross, and not to think about the difficulties. Balti's explanation of why he had not gone on to Misgar was that he had turned up the Barakhun instead of following down the main valley.

From this point onward, down the Khunjerab, the abundance of trees by the river, wherever the conditions were favourable, was most remarkable. In this remote and inaccessible valley poplars, willow, birch,

juniper, and other bushes were well-grown and very plentiful: this proved that there must once have been abundant timber in the other valleys of Hunza, and that the present denudation of the land was due to human improvidence. The quantity of loose wood, branches, and even whole trunks of trees lying along the sides of the Khunjerab stream was most significant, and showed how constantly trees were being destroyed, yet also how easily they could hold their own in apparently adverse circumstances. The Hunza men were especially astonished at the trees as they had no idea that there were so many in their country, or that the whole of Hunza had once been like the Khunjerab. In one of the groves we found an old camel, as surprised to see us as we were to see him.

The very day we left Barakhun we were held up by the difficult ground. After passing an easy stretch of jungle, we were stopped by a high cliff. We climbed up a chimney to find that the descent on the other side was impossible for laden coolies. Daulat then climbed to the top of the spur, a great height, and found a way over, but it was then late, and we could go no further, so we camped pleasantly under the shade of the trees. But we had not gone far enough, and these checks were serious in view of our great need of food. We had to push on, yet we were always being delayed by the cliffs and the river. We climbed the spur the next day by a difficult but short chimney, some twenty-five yards in length. Hasil Shah stood astride in the middle, with his back to the rock, while Daulat stood

in much the same way above him. As each coolie came along, he was roped, and hauled up first by Hasil and then by Daulat. When all were over the spur, we went down again to river level and were then only a few yards from our starting-place some hours before.

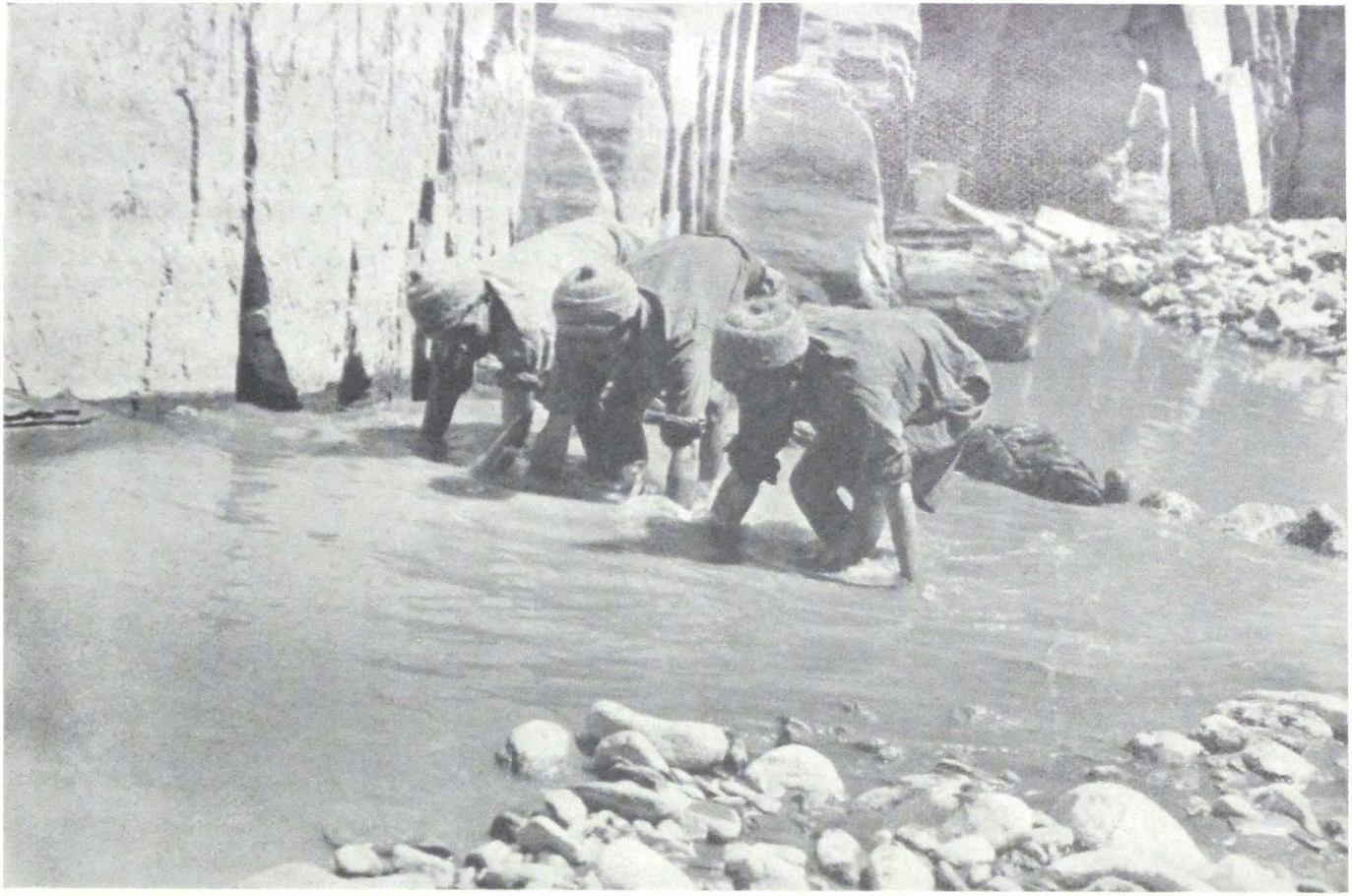
These diversions were constant and exasperating. Our days were spent in climbing precipices, descending steep shale sides, and walking askew along perpendicular clay slopes, all slow and irritating work, and very tiring. The curious thing was that the coolies did not mind at all. They made no fuss about the difficult and even dangerous places they had to pass, and showed themselves extremely agile and clever over rocks, yet the slightest hint that a detour by the river might be made was at once resented. Yet the river was often fordable at the foot of the spurs, and much useless exertion could have been avoided. The many heights up which we so unwillingly toiled gave us many excellent opportunities of viewing the valley. The sides of the river were amply endowed with trees and brushwood, yet whenever we entered these groves and thickets, woods and brakes, often so dense as to make our passage through them quite difficult, the absence of all life was noticeable. Grey horse flies and mosquitoes were plentiful, but we hardly saw a bird and, in all the wide range of mountains, we saw five ibex only.

One day was memorable for our successful poaching of fish. Two men held a blanket across the stream, with the side facing up stream weighted down with

stones. The poachers then entered the water higher up and waded slowly down, beating about them with sticks. When near the blanket the waders made a rush, the blanket was lifted out with a whoop, the stones removed, and a fair catch of fish flung on the ground. Some of us adopted the more sporting if less successful way of catching the fish in our hands. We caught a great many fish in our blanket but not enough, apparently, for the coolies who clamoured for more, and did not stop till they had caught a coolie load. They cooked the fish by splitting them, plastering them on stones, and baking them in the fire.

One day we camped at the mouth of the charming valley of Dih and found two men attending to the Mir's crops. We managed to buy a little flour from them which, eked out with fish, made a decent meal, but we were now foodless, and were rather worried in consequence. We had already sent Sadiq on, with many warnings and threats against failing us, to the nearest village with orders that he had to bring back enough flour with him. The coolies added their curses to our admonitions, and we expected every day to see him return with food. This was the only occasion on the whole trip when we really wished to see Sadiq, who had not been one of the successes of the season.

I have described this descent of the Khunjerab in some detail because it showed that, given time, these so-called impassable valleys can always be 'manœuvred' and that patience alone is needed. The problem is one



POACHING FOR FISH

of supply, and the time factor is important. After six or seven hours' tedious climbing, we could not, in justice, ask our coolies to go further, although the actual distance from camp to camp was negligible.

Far the worst piece of our journey was below Dih. We climbed a high spur, descended over soft shale to a point a few miles below our starting-place and, two hundred yards beyond, a steep rock projecting into the river stopped us. Old Sadiq had left a few stones to mark the way, but it was impossible for laden coolies. Daulat and Balti climbed to a great height but were stopped by sheer precipices, and had to come back. I really began to wonder if we should ever manage to go on, but our coolies rose to the occasion. They were anxious to escape from the valley and return home, and to have a good meal as soon as possible. We managed to find a way along. It meant hauling up the loads on one side and lowering them on the other, and although I was travelling light, I was very tired of our impedimenta. It was a very slow business. On the other side, we were delighted to find a beautiful poplar grove, but half a mile below was an even worse obstacle than the one we had surmounted. The valley was narrow, the river boiled, roared and surged, and we were all at a loss what to do. The unwearied Daulat and Balti vanished up the side of the overhanging hill, and after waiting a long time, we pitched camp. They returned eventually, indignant that we had halted for the night, but climbing was such a slow tedious process that we had no alternative.

This was only our fifth day in the Khunjerab, but already we were heartily sick of it. Indeed, it seemed more like five weeks, yet the actual distance covered was derisory. We blamed Sadiq who had recommended the route, and had concealed, chiefly through his own ignorance, the arduous nature of the country. We had, by now, become very weary of the whole valley, and were no longer intelligent travellers but bored tourists. And, of course, the food question never ceased to pursue and obsess us. That the whole muddle was none of our making was no consolation. Sadiq had been absent for several days, and still there was no sign of him.

We had been groping our way down the right of the Khunjerab, and if Daulat had not discovered a way over a spur (it was a veritable pass), we should still be fumbling about in that remote valley. We were interested in food only, so when we discovered a shale slope covered with tender rhubarb, we scattered as if a shell had burst, and started scratching up the stalks. This was the last episode I can remember near the river, for we soon left the bottom of the valley and climbed to a height of 12,600 feet, sweating like bulls as the sun poured on our backs. The pass was remarkable for a large rock, like a square church tower, with a small turret on the top. From the summit of the pass, to the left, we saw the Ghujerab valley, the main tributary of the Khunjerab, and itself almost as large as the latter, probably even more important as it holds a number of winter settlements and summer pastures of

the Shingshalis. There was a fine peak, marked on the map as 19,523 feet high, but unnamed and unnumbered. A non-commissioned officer in the army is expected to know the numbers of his men. So, too, a traveller has to recollect peaks by the string of figures attached to each. It is a serious matter, too, to make a mistake in a figure, as the peak is then beyond hope of identification.

We came down suddenly from the pass into a delightful glen with clear water, grass, and trees, and sat still, waiting for the coolies. Little lizards came and ran all over me; they sat on my boots and waited patiently for the flies which buzzed near me to come within range, when they snapped them up. The lizards would make clever springs and catch the flies in mid-air, seldom making a mistake. I noticed that these jolly little reptiles, with their gold and scarlet throats, and their grey-black sparkling lissom bodies, would watch me from afar, and as soon as a fly settled on me, would dart on to me and gobble the insect up. I wished there had been fleets of lizards to deal with the flies.

Our food now consisted of rhubarb and black tea, a meagre diet on which to do a good day's work, but we had reached the end of the Khunjerab, and knew that rations would soon arrive. We despatched Balti ahead to ginger up Sadiq, and derived much satisfaction from cursing the latter. We could even see the Misgar valley, gaping in front of us, so we had no fear of starvation.

Sadiq turned up during the middle of the last night in the valley. The situation was saved; his arrival proved that our curses had a definite value. Our journey down this long and troublesome valley was nearly at an end, but as if to tantalise us and cause us to regret our departure, we found a small nullah ablaze from top to bottom with wild roses, a wonderful sight, for the flowers glowed and overflowed the dull stony sides. In a neighbouring little glen we passed a small spring from which a tiny trickle of water stole down the hillside, and along it was a line of rose-bushes and junipers creeping down the slope. Yet close by was the wide Wadakhun plain, the feature of the lower Khunjerab, a fine potential piece of pasture or arable but dry as a bone, and with no means of irrigation. The path descended a steep slope. I looked back on the junction of the Khunjerab and Ghujerab, and it seemed that I saw only a sinister prospect of desolation, a dreary jumble of clay bluffs, shale slopes and rock precipices, wholly barren, with a useless river lashing the sides below.

A little further we were met by some men from Misgar with eggs, all, alas! bad, and a few other odds and ends, including more flour. Our coolies ate all day, and were unable to work the following morning from a surfeit of tough chupattis, crammed into their mouths and swallowed without mastication, and as quickly as possible.

Three or four miles of difficult scrambling brought us to the main Hunza valley, with a fair track, telegraph

wires, and other horrors. We paid off the coolies as soon as we reached the road, and we parted from each other most affably. The Shingshalis all went away with a fistful of silver, but they declared that never again would they undertake such a journey. Considering that the end and object of their lives is to do nothing except tend their flocks, to irrigate languidly their neglected fields, and above all to eat enormously, it was not a surprising resolution.

We managed to descend the Khunjerab without having to cross the stream once—to do so would have entailed making a difficult rope-bridge—and our success was due to my Hunza men.

Having seen the difficulties of the gorge, I greatly admired the explorations which the Visser expedition carried out.

PART II

CHAPTER IX

A NEW ROUTE TO SHUIJERAB

On reaching Misgar after our first journey to the Shingshal and Mustagh valleys, I made arrangements to go back later in the year, in the hope that we might complete the projects which had been interfered with by the unfordable rivers. It was a pity, too, to see only a part of a remote region and to leave unvisited a large area wholly unknown. True, we might again fail to reach our objective, but that was a risk which we had to face. I should certainly be able to examine the Braldu and its side-valleys more carefully, and to give an account of a country—assuming that I failed to accomplish the whole of my programme—where my only predecessors had been Younghusband and Deasy, amongst my compatriots, and of foreigners that gallant Pole in Russian employ, Grombchevski. None of these had made a thorough exploration of the country, and I did not expect to equal them but merely to bring up-to-date or to amplify what they had done.

After spending several weeks marking time in a very delightful way in the western valleys of Hunza, we arrived at Gircha, a small village in the main Hunza valley, one stage below Misgar, and there began to

make our preparations. We spent ten days there. I cannot say that I enjoyed it, as I had an overpowering bilious attack, due to complete inaction after walking twenty or thirty miles a day for over a month. The men ate and loafed; we mended our clothes, rested our feet, washed ourselves vigorously, and tied up our dog till a cut in his paw was cured. Our only trouble was that the apricots were not quite ripe at Gircha, so I sent for two hundredweight from further down the valley as the men would have no chance of any more during the season.

We enlisted two more men, Akbar Shah and Niamat. The former had been with me in Turkestan, and he would attend to the rations, whilst the latter, a relative of Daulat, would remain in the valley to send us supplies of vegetables and eggs, as well as to stimulate the coolies with the letters. The last was important as a number of men presented themselves to me for payment. They had wandered over the Karakoram with my post but had failed to find me; it was not their fault, but I was determined that such a catastrophe should not recur. Niamat would have to scour the country to earn his pay.

At Gircha, though the weather was warm and the fowls noisy, no eggs were obtainable and, instead of setting forth with three dozen, we had three. Whilst we were at this place we observed the river, which was now a black ugly powerful stream in full force, tearing down the cliff above the village, which was on the left of the river. The whole valley was covered with a

shroud of thick dust, as the angry water dashed against and tore down the soft conglomerate. Indeed, if this went on, it would bode ill for the village, but no one did anything to check this erosion which might have been remedied, or at least reduced, by flinging grass nets full of stones into the river, so as to divert the current. These wide sprawling rivers swing from side to side of their immense broad beds, and very little induces them to change direction. It was, however, nobody's business to save the village. The men were all away on the higher pastures; nothing could be done. The Mir of Hunza sent a message to say that, if the village were washed away, the beams and rafters of his bungalow must be salved. Happily, however, after several days of heavy subsidences, a slight change in the current stopped the erosion.

After endless confabulations, squabbles, wrangles, and the like, we left Gircha on 5 August 1934. We had two Shingshalis. One was Balti who had been with us before, and whose pink shirt was still on him, but so dirty as to have changed colour entirely; the other was a well-built athletic man, with fair hair and blue eyes, Abdulla by name. He had been particularly active and helpful during our first trip. Old Sadiq, with his three teeth, nodding head and pessimistic view, we left in peace, to mind his sheep on his summer pasture.

We had made up our minds to avoid the Karun Pir Pass, by which we had first entered the Shingshal valley, and the tedious journey up it, especially as we should

be obliged to return down that same valley. Our plan was therefore to reach the upper Pamir-i-tang by the Ghujerab. Morris and Montagnier had come down the Ghujerab and then on to Misgar in 1926, but we hoped to vary the route and succeeded in doing so.

We left Gircha in a veritable din. We had a varied horde of coolies, some Wakhis, others Hunza men, and a further mixed collection to help us along for the first few days when rations were heavy and passes difficult. The first day's march after a halt is proverbially troublesome, but at last we left. The stream of chatter ceased, and, all things considered, the men were very cheerful, and I hoped, foolishly, that they would grow more so as their homes vanished and were forgotten.

At Sost, three miles beyond Gircha, a very pleasant village, we left the main valley and climbed up to and crossed the pass known as the Sost-i-sar. Before doing so I visited an old friend, Daulat Beg, a fine type of Wakhi of the old school. He was very ill with a local type of dysentery which causes many deaths. I did what I could, but he died a few days later.

The pass was not high, but just below the crest the gradient was severe. We were only crossing a spur, and on the other side the track went down a real precipice so that the two donkeys which accompanied us were quite unable to proceed and had to be unloaded. We finally camped in a narrow stony nullah with little water, and that far off. We had not gone far, but the coolies had had enough.

These narrow Hunza valleys are not comfortable places in which to halt. The possible sites are limited as there is always the danger of falling stones from the steep frowning sides, and you have to choose a safe place rather than a suitable one. Our small ravine was known as the Targhin-i-dur.

One of our men had toothache, and I watched Daulat open my gun-case, thinking that he was about to shoot something. He was, as a matter of fact, looking for a piece of wire which could be heated red-hot and thrust into the decayed cavity of the tooth. This treatment was tried and was most effectual; the patient had a good night with no pain.

Our objective was the Gur-i-dur, a valley running into the Khunjerab. After crossing the pass at its head, and then over two more passes, both unknown and never previously crossed even by natives, we hoped to strike the upper Ghujerab, and avoid the difficult approach to its head by the lower winter track up the valley.

Between us and the Gur-i-dur, which was really the starting-place of our journey, there were two more ridges. These ridges are the watershed of the narrow lateral nullahs which, deep and steep, run into the main Hunza valley. They are incredibly precipitous, grim and dreary, and quite useless, and are the distinguishing feature of the Karakoram. There are similar side-valleys but none so gruesome or so enormous.

These ravines are not dangerous, and often not even difficult, but they waste a great deal of time. Progress

is slow, moiling and toiling up one cliff side and down another, and the new camp is only a short way in actual distance from the previous one.

On reaching the crest of the first ridge, I saw an abrupt frowning cliff with a straight grey scar in it. This was the descent from the Sost-i-sar, and it was a mere goat track. It was regularly used, but no one troubled to repair it, thanks to the exasperating economy of the hillmen. The coolies were very talkative, and I heard a remark which made them all laugh. It was a pungent phrase addressed to the chief chatterbox, and a good Hunza idiom, ' You have diarrhoea in your throat '—inelegant but to the point.

We came down a breakneck descent on to the huts and flocks of Gur-i-dur. So dry was the soil that the sheep and goats climbing up the hillside to their pastures raised a strong brown dust. As a rule in Hunza such a dust means the subsidence of part of the hill.

When we had come down to Khunjerab on our first journey we had seen the mouth of this valley from the opposite side, and had admired the grass, for grass is to be admired and praised in this arid land. But it proved a delusion. The grass, true enough, was green, tall, strong and abundant, but its rich tufts were useless. No animal, not even a horse, could eat this grass, which was so indigestible that any animal eating it died.

We camped high up the valley, on a green patch, a quarter of a mile square, covered with flowers and grass, and a great contrast to the boulder-strewn

slopes round it. It rained early the next day, and as no one had pitched any tents, a great deal of matutinal discomfort and scuttling about ensued. I have somewhere read advice to travellers in Hunza not to take tents: it is bad advice.

We left early in the morning, a dull threatening day, and we had several showers as we crawled for six hours to the top of the pass, where it blew hard, a cold bitter wind with driving showers of sleet. Yet the sun shone at times, and did its best for us. It was a high pass, and we descended very steeply till, after a ten hours' march, we reached the Unakyn-i-dur, one of the tributaries of the Ghujerab. We camped in comfort, with quantities of pencil cedar wood, great beams of it in fact, and the coolies, in whose land wood is precious, enjoyed large fires. The water in the stream was undrinkable, grey-blue from the deposit, and we could not clear it.

Since no one knew the way we decided to ascend the Unakyn-i-dur valley, and find a way into the Ghujerab which we knew ran parallel. Facing our camp was a wall of red rock, and it seemed as though it might be difficult to ascend the valley, but as we pushed on we found that the Unakyn-i-dur was a good valley, open, easy, and a great contrast to its neighbours. As we turned a corner, two gorgeous peaks burst into sight. In this almost unknown valley —no European had ever visited it before—I wondered which these peaks might be. Often, as on this occasion, at the head of a valley some giant mountain would stand

glistening and quivering in the still sunlight that flowed out of a calm sky. The peak would be some new aspect of a well-known mountain, or sometimes a summit that, commonplace and insignificant amongst its fellows, yet proved, when discovered in its secret loneliness, to be a peerless and undaunted giant.

We spent three nights in this valley which was unknown even to the local inhabitants, and which was certainly very inaccessible. The weather was inclement, but I had to go out and shoot a burrhel, as meat was needed. We arrived in a snow-storm close to an old ram, but not close enough. There we lay, on a shale slope so steep that we slid if we moved, and waited for a chance to approach nearer. We did not dare run a risk where our stomachs were concerned. Suddenly we noticed that the sheep was alarmed. It could not see us who were glued, sprawling like fat lizards, to the hill-side. Eventually, the beast bolted off, while we gaped foolishly at each other. There, behind, was a faithful retainer with my mackintosh, but his devotion cost us a good meal.

We continued our way up the valley to the glacier, crossed it, turned north up a narrow canyon with many waterfalls, and camped below the pass. The only fuel was a bag of yak dung which we had brought with us, so cooking was limited to boiling the kettle.

The next day we crossed the pass, which I believe was the Sho-sho-in, and was very high (18,900 ft.). In spite of this, we did not suffer at all from mountain sickness. This happy exemption was attributed to the

absence of vegetation, hillmen believing that certain plants cause the discomfort, especially the headaches, that are so common in high places. This theory is derided by the learned sages of the West, few of whom have any practical knowledge, but I believe that there are some grounds for it. In the Unakyn valley itself, where flowers abound, I and several others suffered a good deal, but when crossing the Sho-sho-in I did not experience any discomfort, except the difficulty of breathing, although both this pass and its neighbour were really high. I believe that the pollen of certain plants and perhaps too the smell, combined with the rarity of the air and the consequent unpleasant sensation, tend to aggravate conditions which in themselves may produce sickness and headache. The name of this malaise, known to Turkis, Punjabis, and all who wander over high places, is *tutek*. From the top of the Sho-sho-in Pass we had a most uninviting view, over a sombre, rugged valley filled with an equally rugged glacier which it would take days to descend. On our right was the wide, almost level head of the glacier. We disliked the prospect before us, but I derived some amusement from the name of this grim valley, as Sho-sho-in means ' wild roses '.

We decided, and very quickly, to abandon all idea of going down this valley and fighting our way to the foot, to the left of the Ghujerab, over the piled-up seracs and tumbled rocks. The only alternative was to turn right-handed, go up and over the glacier, and across the pass at the head of the Sho-sho-in. This

meant that we entered that valley by the pass over one of its branches, and left it by the pass over the other. It was a long, tiring business, as the glacier was badly crevassed. We discovered, too, that the second pass, called the Spe Syngo, was a good deal higher than the Sho-sho-in (19,600 ft.). I puffed prodigiously as I dragged my heavy legs to the top. Akbar was lying, overcome with *tutek*, behind me, dead to the world. From there we descended into the Spe Syngo valley, which led to the upper Ghujerab. Close to camp, I shot a burrhel, a great piece of luck. We were all worn out, and I have seldom enjoyed a stalk less, but the sight of the carcase cheered up the coolies enormously. I wonder what would have happened if I had missed!

It seemed incredible, but no man had ever crossed these passes before and, judging from the coolies' remarks, no one ever will again. But the passes were not difficult. Moreover, they gave easy and direct access to the upper Ghujerab; but custom had not discovered them, so they remained unused. We had saved ourselves a long, dreary crawl up an arid perpendicular valley, with the added vexation of constant ups and downs over spurs to avoid the flood water of summer, but even so the coolies would have preferred the arduous track they knew to the minor difficulties of the unknown. We, however, were determined not to experience again the exhausting switchback of the Khunjerab.

The Ghujerab proved to be a very different valley from its neighbour, and gave us little trouble as we

marched up it. It was generally open, with sloping sides of shale, much juniper, and many level stretches of grass used by the Shingshalis as winter pastures. There were numerous huts in which our coolies lodged comfortably; the disadvantages incidental to such resting-places did not worry them.

We noticed a great many ibex and burrhel horns. Many trees were festooned with these trophies; in one place I counted thirty-seven horns set up on two rocks. Some of these horns were very old, but a great many were not, and we realised the heavy and remorseless toll taken, year in and year out, by the local shikaris. It is the same everywhere in Hunza; in a very few years there will be more burrhel and ibex in the zoological gardens of the West than in the whole of Hunza, where these animals used to abound.

We enjoyed some fishing in the Ghujerab of the usual unorthodox but successful kind, catching both snow-trout and a species of carp, with bones like those of the mahseer. We found both excellent to eat. We had been solemnly assured that there were no fish in the river, and when we found some our men were genuinely surprised. Our progress, thanks to our very indifferent coolies, was slow but not stately. The men were the useless and idle hands of upper Hunza; they daily complained of the weight of the loads, the long distances, the weather, and everything else; their garrulity never stopped. Both for their sakes and ours we did what we could for them, although their complaints were frivolous. We gave them rest when we

could and humoured them, but it was consideration wasted. One reason for all this trouble was that, although I paid them their full wages in cash, they knew that they could not enjoy the full fruits of their labour; that knowledge will sour any man. But fundamentally they were a poor collection, and having sung the praises of the men of Hunza to the Shingshalis, we had now to eat our words.

Our two private Shingshalis, Balti and Abdulla, were quite invaluable in their rôle of ciceroni. They were glad to be with us, and no small attraction was the daily cup of tea. These Alpine folk are devoted to tea, and quite rightly so. I could write pages in praise of tea as the drink for the traveller, especially if he visits high altitudes. Shingshalis seldom have tea, often more from lack of opportunity than from want of means, as it is a long way from their village to the nearest source of supply.

We finally left the Ghujerab by the Boesam Pass (15,700 ft.). We turned up the Sok-sok-in, or the Yellow Ranunculus nullah, which was a misnomer, as we failed to find one of these flowers, but we did collect a quantity of that strange plant, *Corydalis crassifolia*, which grows well on damp shale and so much resembles it that it is difficult to find. The plant after flowering produces seed capsules of the size, colour and general appearance of a bunch of purple grapes. It is an excellent vegetable, and we gathered it in quantities. We did not find it, except very occasionally, in the Mustagh, Khunjerab or Shingshal valleys.

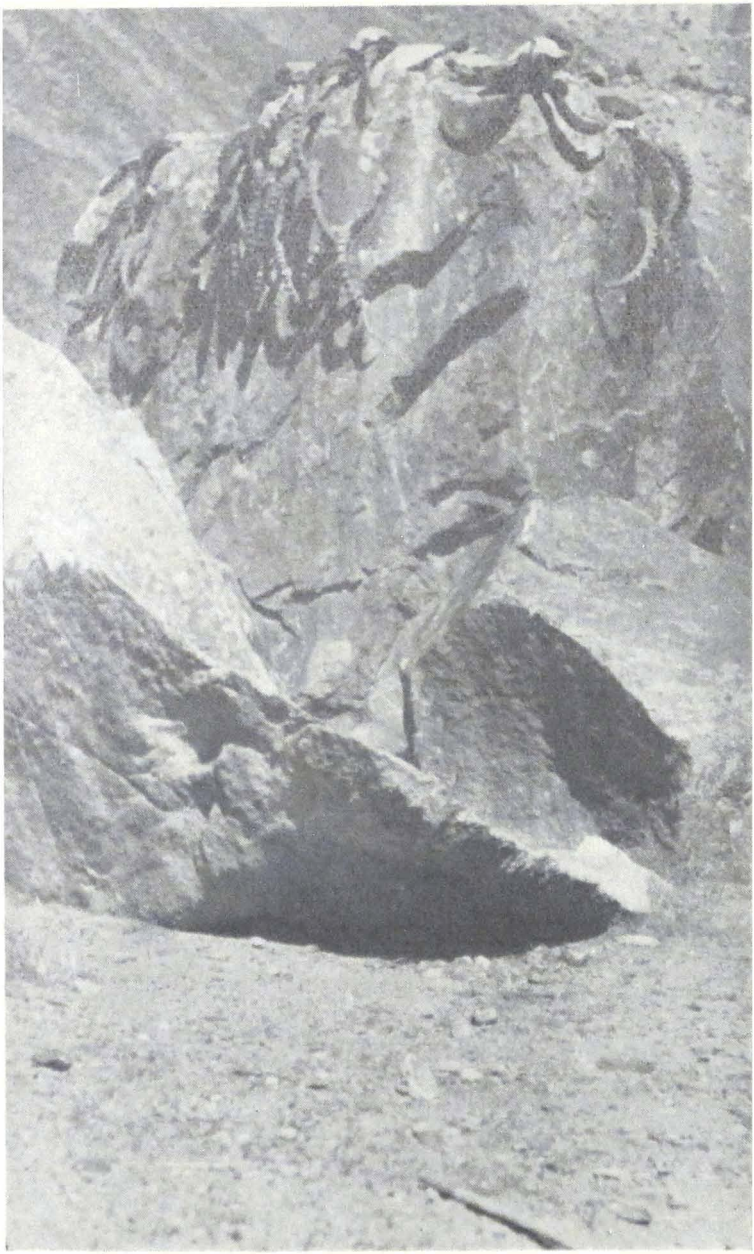
Now that we had reached Shingshal territory, our coolies were frantic to go home but, although we sympathised with their manifest distaste for doing any work, we could not allow them to go until their reliefs arrived. There was, moreover, no hurry for them to go, as the harvest was in and they had nothing to do at home. We had managed to take with us the poorest-spirited creatures that ever came out of their valley; I had not previously realised that such existed. One was the son of an old friend and shikari of mine, and had been told by his father to stay with me throughout the journey. I asked him why he now wished to return. He had no excuse to give. He was, however, a poor creature, very different from his father, a tall handsome Wakhi, tireless on the hill-side.

There is a word in Burishashki, the language of Hunza, which means the third and fourth crops of lucerne, after the two best have been gathered. The word is Iljiki, and means the degenerate offspring of good stock, and this word was applied to these coolies. I felt very sorry that they were such fools as to want to go home. They were all in debt, they would have no other chance of earning any money, and they were offered two months' employment with good pay and rations. They lacked the grit and guts to carry on, though they were physically fit and able. I knew quite well that the absorbing thought of these men was hard cash, as well it might be, considering its scarcity in their country and the conditions there. They could not, however, overcome their love of ease and dislike

of work, and so they threw away a good chance of paid employment.

On the top of the Boesam Pass was a pretty lake, and on the other side we descended to Ishpardin—'the Place of Rhubarb'—which the map calls Shipodin. Going down, we had a good view of the two fine peaks, Kanjut I (25,460 ft.) and Kanjut II (24,580 ft.). From the former a banner of white cloud streamed away towards the East, the only cloud in the blue heavens. I had hoped to have other good views of these lovely mountains, but we never again saw them so well.

From Ishpardin, where we encamped in a wide sheltered valley full of rhubarb, we crossed by the pass of the same name into the South Mai Dur valley. It was a most unsuccessful day. There was no path, but Balti, our Shingshali guide, insisted that the way was up the right of the valley and then over the right or northern crest. Daulat said that the proper way was up the left of the valley, and over the left crest. The two points were only half a mile apart laterally. After much altercation, I quite properly decided to follow the local expert and arrived, after a short but very steep climb, at Balti's Pass, which consisted of a saddle glacier. We went over this, but found it badly crevassed, and we had a good deal of trouble. We decided that the coolies could not manage it, returned to the crest, and sent Balti to inspect the other pass. This proved the right one, but it was too late to deflect the coolies, who had already begun to climb up the



AN IBEX HORN SHRINE

wrong side. They had to turn to their right and scramble to the other crest where they sat down and reviled Balti with every term in their copious vocabulary of abuse. It was pardonable, as the men had had a great deal of extra fatigue. If we had forced our way down and over the glacier, as we had tried to do, on the North of the pass we should have returned to the Ghujerab, as the valley bent round and drained into it.

Ascending the Ishpardin Pass I was much struck by the weathering of the rocks. The Western Karakoram is notorious for its still unsettled geological condition, and here the process of settlement was still going on. Rocks were insecure, stones gave way, and the formation and relief were still being stabilised. This want of permanency was very evident as we went up to the pass. The huge rocks, many feet high, were splitting and tearing, and the appearance of the ascent must alter considerably in a few years. Indeed, in many places the crags were so insecure as to be unsafe. Their ruggedness tends to disappear, as the boulders and outcrop crumble and mix with the other debris.

We descended into the Mai Dur—Valley of Ewes—down an easy shale slope with little snow. It was late when we reached the nearest camping ground where the only fuel was the roots of what appeared to be a reddish saxifrage, outwardly small and insignificant, but which had roots often 30 inches long and an inch in diameter. Balti, stimulated by the abuse showered on him, went off mysteriously with a bag and returned two hours later with a quantity of good dry dung, a

gift which restored him to favour. We had had a disappointing view from the top of the pass, thanks to the heavy clouds, and it snowed on our arrival in camp. But, although it continued all through the night, we had to move on as the fuel was finished; so we continued down the Mai Dur, camped near the mouth, and watched the snow falling, a depressing occupation. It snowed all the second night. The Hunza coolies left. They were frantic to be off, so we settled up and sent them back. There were two stout knaves whom we should have liked to keep, but they also were anxious to leave.

We were now once again at the mercy of the Shingshalis who, however, could not be much worse than the gentry who had just left. We found the remains of an old camp of the Visser expedition, and pitched our tents on the side opposite. We were now close to the Pamir-i-tang, and not far from Purien-i-sar where we had camped on our first journey.

The Shingshalis had arrived, and were only a few miles off, in a place with wood but no water, the lack of which meant nothing to them. We could do nothing till the weather improved, so remained rather miserably where we were. There are few more dismal ways of spending time than sitting in a small tent in the snow, watching the weather, waiting for it to clear, and quarrelling, grumbling and, if lucky, over-eating. Somebody, too, always catches cold: and in this case it was our Kashmiri, Subhana, who was quite ill. We rather envied the coolies who had gone ahead to a

waterless place but one which had two solid stone-built huts, warm and verminous.

It is necessary to emphasize that travellers in these altitudes are entirely dependent on the weather. There is, literally, nothing to do in bad weather except to sit and wait till it passes, and that is a melancholy pastime. At the end of a journey the case is otherwise, as observations have been made, and it is merely a question of leaving the country with all possible despatch. When snow covers everything, great patience is needed as nothing can be done.

After forty-eight hours the snow stopped, and we thankfully left. The servants' tents were a jumble of dirty sandals, damp bedding, fragments of food, and unwashed cooking pots. My own tent was only a few degrees better. Everywhere was a stale, musty smell, and the remedy was sunshine, That is the sordid side of camp life, and very nasty it is.

The sun came out and dried the frozen tents and, when we were thawed, the Shingshali coolies arrived. We recognised many old enemies of two months ago. We all smiled agreeably and saluted each other, though I am pretty sure that they all wished us anywhere but in their country. They were full of complaints, especially of the weather which would spoil their crops, but we pointed out how fortunate they were that employment with us would compensate them for their agricultural losses. We started and at once had trouble with the yaks. These surly brutes were half-wild and objected to carrying our loads. One threw its load

and bolted, dropping our precious cooking-grate; we just managed to grab the grate before the yak plunged into the river and galloped up the mountain on the other side. Yaks are wonderful animals, but quite detestable. They are unrivalled in some respects, but as luggage carriers they have certain bad points. They butt one another with their horns, and it is grievous to see a horn perforating a tent or a roll of bedding. They bang against each other, and knock the loads to pieces. They are not designed to carry the kit of the modern traveller, but they are unsurpassed for sureness of foot, climbing steep heights, fording rivers, and for being in a constant bad temper.

It took us two more days to reach Shuijerab, the summer village in the upper Pamir-i-tang. The place had not improved since we left it, but we had to halt for two days to collect supplies, as we were determined to take an adequate amount with us. Except for a constant cold wind which cut us to the bowels, the weather was brilliant, but I grudged the delay. We had to boil down large pots of *ghi* (clarified butter), some fifty-six lb. of the stuff. After simmering for hours, a thick foam-like scum, pure dirt mixed with hair, formed on the surface and was removed. We then poured the now clean *ghi* into petrol canisters, and were provided with good clean clarified butter, not the grey mass of train oil, mixed with refuse, which the Shingshalis invariably use.

Ghi is the foundation of Indian life, whether in the Karakoram or the Khyber; without *ghi* the native

pines away. It seems to lubricate and mellow him, and is often the only form of fat he uses. The Shingshali *ghi* was particularly filthy, as they are a primitive folk. I noticed one man wearing in his cap the label from a tin of Nestlé's milk. It fluttered as bravely as any eagle's plume.

All the flocks of the valley were collected at Shuijerab. They had been driven over the Shingshal Pass on account of the storm; the early and unusual snowstorm had frightened the people. Usually the animals remain longer, and it was stupid to drive back the sheep in mid-August as if one snow-storm meant winter. It was also economically unwise, for there was abundant pasture beyond and below the pass, whilst the grass in the Pamir-i-tang had all been eaten up. The episode illustrated the fear that all hillmen have of the elements, but in this case this fear was foolish as there was ample accommodation for man and beast in the Mustagh valley. These people did not know their own business best. They were hampered by routine and timidity, and the whole community showed signs of a drift towards savagery.

It was as cold as ever at Shuijerab. The sun shone all day from an unclouded sky, but the wind remained keen and piercing. Small wonder then that we left this chilly upland with delight. We started early on the 24th of August. The yaks were being milked in their enclosure, and there were plenty of them. The Shingshalis are well provided with the necessaries of life. We found the Shingshal Pass very boggy after

the recent snow, and all our men removed their long soft *pabboos* to save them from getting wet and so being spoilt. The northern slope was still white with snow, but at Shuwert, below the pass, there was plenty of good grass, and I thought once more how foolishly hasty the Shingshalis had been in driving away their flocks, and allowing themselves to be stampeded by two days' bad weather in summer. Hillmen are no observers of weather. Generations have lived in the same place, year in and year out, but they have not grown weather-wise in the slightest degree. It is partly superstition that makes them reluctant to hazard any opinion about the weather, but it is chiefly sheer stupidity. It is true that changes occur with great swiftness in this country, but there is always some sort of indication that a change is impending.

We found many dwarf gentians in the pass, twinkling in the grass, and these were the only ones that I saw anywhere in this area, though there must have been places in which they grew. The flora was, however, noticeably jejune, and few varieties were found of any plant.

We found Chikar delightful after Shuijerab. It was another world, balmy, bright and green. We camped once more amongst the willow trees, in the long grass, which had gone to waste as no one had either cut it or pastured animals on it. In the afternoon the shade was welcome, and conditions were very different from those at our last camp.

CHAPTER X

BACK TO THE BRALDU

WE spent two nights at Chikar. We revelled in the warmth and the abundant wood for fuel. The coolies, however, preferred using yak dung as well as slabs of dry stinking compressed sheep droppings, which gave a zest to their food. The weather was perfect, without a cloud in the sky, and I prayed that it might remain so. There were some hares and chikor at Chikar; I also saw a hoopoe and, more astonishing, a golden oriole which flew out of a willow thicket almost at my feet.

It will be remembered that on our first journey we had already made a tentative ascent of the Braldu. I now hoped, with more leisure and better weather, to see more of that hitherto unknown valley. There was a slight haze everywhere which I attributed to the conditions in Turkestan; in late summer the haze in Central Asia is very bad and finds its way up distant valleys. The Braldu valley was very broad and glaring in the heat, and we started up its left side, intending to camp on the left of the main glacier, at the mouth of the Shikar Gah, the lowest affluent of the upper part of the valley, above, or rather just at the snout of, the glacier. There was fuel there, and the next day, by

working up the left side, we should reach a spot where there was also a little.

We found, however, that this route was impossible. The Braldu stream was always altering its course, and although we did work up the left of the valley, we reached a place where the stream was dashing against a cliff. Although it was 10 a.m., at the end of August, the torrent was considerable and we could not proceed. The only course was to cross to the right of the valley and camp at Uchelga, a hut and sheep-fold at the right of the glacier below the snout. This change of plans did not really matter very much, and the old moraine behind us was like a wall, protecting us from the wind which blew down the Braldu. The Shingshalis told us that in winter a great gale of wind always blows down this valley, and the storms were so severe that Chikar became a bleak uncomfortable place in spite of the shelter. I noticed that the huts there were built between thick groves of willow and the hill-side, to escape the cold blasts of the Braldu.

The very day that we arrived at the snout of the glacier clouds gathered in the afternoon. These were alto-cumulus, and I told the men that the weather next day would be bad, but they merely grunted and said that they saw no reason why there should be any change. With the bad weather came the post, brought by a ' levy ', a species of unarmed, untrained militia-man. At the same time a large herd of burrhel was sighted and I was immediately taken out to shoot one. We had enough meat and I went unwillingly, but the

coolies could not be denied. These people, who are by force of circumstances vegetarians as they cannot afford to eat meat often, have an insatiable craving for it. It is difficult, after dealing with them, to believe that meat was not meant for man, as some wise men say. I was fortunate in my stalk, and returned from the hill-side with meat for the camp, being welcomed with cheers. It was a dreadful sight to see the way in which the meat was seized, hastily cooked, and gobbled up.

The next day was wretched. The hills were plunged low in mist. It blew and rained, but we were fairly well sheltered. The coolies lay lounging and sleeping, pleasantly replete with meat. Although the shepherd's hut was roofed with flat cakes of dung, an insecure shelter from the rain, there was also a good Willesden canvas tent, into which a number of men stowed themselves.

After this enforced halt we started up the Braldu valley, though the weather was still indifferent. We followed the ablation valley on the right, between the glacier and hillside, and then went over the moraine. I estimated that the greatest height of the glacier, above the two small glacier lakes which we first met, was from 150 to 200 feet. These small lakes were creamy with broken ice, which continued to fall all day. One lakelet had two teal swimming on it.

We camped just below the singular red pinnacle on the right of the valley. We should have liked to push on, but did not know the way, and felt it wise to

halt. There was a little ribbon of level soil between the precipitous reddish rock and the grey white scarp which marked the former and highest level of the glacier. There was little danger of falling stones, so we camped in safety. There was, however, no fuel. Opposite us, on the left of the Braldu, there were steep slopes covered with grass and, as has been mentioned, our original plan had been to camp there.

The next day the weather was promising, but unfortunately it did not remain so. Starting early, we crossed over to the left of the valley, passing many lakelets and pools, high conical hillocks of black ice, deep pits and caverns, and other signs of rapid melting. This unpromising ice proved fairly easy to cross, and we made a lucky cast, as had we gone above or below, we should have been delayed. On reaching the opposite side we looked back, and only then did we realise the broken, rugged nature of the right side of the valley which we had just left. Lofty pinnacles of barren brown rock, snowless and abrupt, with strange chimney-tops rising into the blue sky, contrasted with the smooth and more sedate left side of the valley, where a little grass relieved the monotony.

We now determined to push up the centre of the glacier and reach a black pinnacle on the right. It was easy enough at first, on the dead ice and fairly smooth moraine, but it was tedious and exhausting. Up and down we went, sliding and slipping, tumbling down on the shiny ice cunningly covered with a thin deceitful layer of fine sand, wholesome to the eye but

deadly to the foot. Whilst this slow, cumbrous progress was being undertaken, the head of the valley became covered with cloud and a bitter wind rushed down upon us.

At the head of the valley was the watershed between Baltistan and the Mustagh. In August and September traces of the monsoon find their way to Kashmir, and rain is usual; it strays over the mountains, even as far as these remote valleys.

We soon found ourselves amongst ice which had not experienced the rapid melting of the lower glacier. There were also two long narrow tongues of white ice from minor glaciers which had flowed over the larger one. Here we found ourselves in difficulties. The whole of the ice was badly crevassed, great and deep fissures surrounded us, and we dodged about, this way and that, searching for some way of advance. The Shingshalis soon gave up. They just wailed—'Shak! Shak!' ('Bad! Bad!') and retired to the rear. Daulat was with me, as well as another Hunza man, Hasil Shah. Seizing an ice axe, Daulat led the way, a hard and slow one, but still it was progress. He cut steps in the steep sides of the crevasses, he sat astride a knife-edge with a steep drop on either side to unknown depths. He cheerfully threw stones and lumps of ice to gauge how deep were the crevasses. Walking along a knife-edge of ice, flattened out to four inches in width, is too much like tight-rope walking to be agreeable to the uninitiated.

The Shingshalis took off their shoes to prevent

them getting wet. Wet feet or wet shoes were always their preoccupation. At last, after hours of acrobatics, we reached a good point of vantage. On our left, that is on the right of the valley, was the black stone pinnacle, a twin, but of different colour, to the tall sentinel above our camp. Before us lay the head of the valley. The wind would blow away the clouds, and reveal three pyramid-like peaks, neither lofty nor stately to the eye—we were too close—in a row before us. Below them was a snow-field, and between it and us were the undulations of the moraine-covered glacier.

We felt cheated. We were looking on into the unknown, and it was dull, extensive, and commonplace. I suppose we had expected too much, but we turned away discontentedly. I did some mapping, and then we set out for camp. It was a long way back, and we let the local men lead. Although the glacier was only half a mile wide, they managed to lose their way and led us by strange exhausting detours, glissading and falling, through great rotting hills of greasy ice and frozen puddles. We soon left the new ice, but the moraine held no surprises for us. The obvious way was to make direct for the left of the glacier, where there was a fair-size ablation valley, descend that, cross again at right angles, and so reach camp. Providence had withheld the rudiments of intelligence from our Shingshalis, so we staggered along, the blind leading the blind. Beyond finding five mallard on a small lake, there were no incidents. Four of them flew away; one crouched beneath a ledge of ice. The stupidest

Shingshali said that he would catch it in his hands, so we sat and watched whilst he worked slowly along, thinking the bird would sit down until it was seized. Of course, he never came near it. This slight but ridiculous incident happened near camp; we were thankful to see our tents.

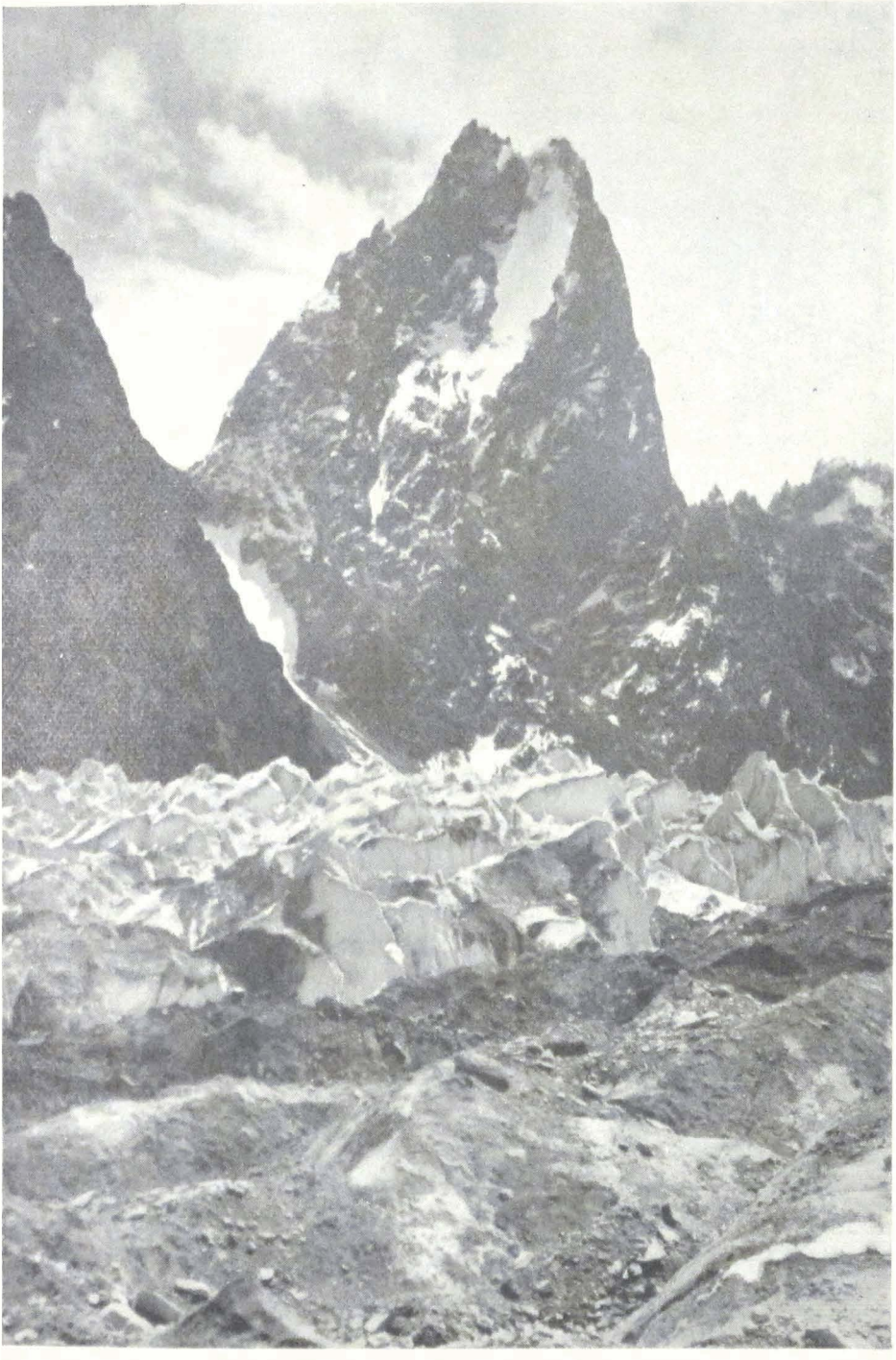
The next day, as the weather was still indifferent, I decided to go down the Braldu, and camp at the mouth of the main tributary, the Wesm-i-dur. It seemed to me that there was little inducement to return to the head of the valley as the inclement weather did not make it worth while. As we moved down we met one of the coolies whom we had left at Chikar. He was clutching a bottle of milk in one hand, and said he had an urgent letter from the Mir of Hunza. Of course it turned out to be nothing of the sort; it merely told us that the flour, our daily need as well as our constant anxiety, was on the way.

We camped under the lee of cliffs near the right side of the end of the Wesm-i-dur valley. The mouth of this valley was remarkable, as it had formed a large fan, fifteen to twenty feet above the floor of the Braldu. Over this fan, the Wesm-i-dur stream flowed in numerous small channels, but it was clear that the force of the stream was insufficient, or else the scour and constant lowering of the floor of the main valley were too great for the junction of these two considerable streams to form one level bed.

The weather continued unfavourable when we started up the Wesm-i-dur. We left Balti and Daulat

behind, as they were both laid up. Our coolies insisted that the valley was unknown and impassable, but I found that they were quite wrong; it was very easy. The stream ran from side to side; we had to ford it several times, but even this could be avoided with some trouble. On the left of the valley, at its mouth, between it and the Braldu glacier, was a rampart of points and pinnacles of reddish-brown, much lined and worn. Opposite, on the right of the valley, were slopes of shale and gravel, with many clay outcrops which water had formed into pillars. Above were singularly barren heights of rock and stone. The feature of the valley was the fine pinnacle-like peak at the head, by no means the highest point but an impressive sentry, looking down the whole length of the valley. On the left of this was a black giant with two points or fingers on its summit. Opposite, another needle, slim and sharp, rose straight from its parent rock.

As we proceeded up the valley it soon began to contract. Black shale slopes appeared on the left. We crossed a rough fan, with abundant tamarisks, and a good site for a camp, and then, fording the stream to the left of the valley, climbed up a spur from which we had a fine view of the valley, which is not, after all, a very long one. I particularly noticed the clay outcrops. On both sides there were clay slopes and clay cliffs. Below us were some good camping grounds by the river. Opposite were some grass and brushwood, and even on the left side, where we were, a little pasture.



PINNACLE ON RIGHT OF THE UPPER BRALDU GLACIER

Beyond, the valley broke up into gorges and ravines as the torrents flowed from the snow peaks and glaciers at the head.

Looking down the Wesm-i-dur towards the Braldu, the piebald effect of the alternating slopes of black shale and whitish clay was very curious. Beyond its mouth was the broad blistering channel of the Braldu river. I should have much liked to spend a week here. The scenery was fine, and the valley seemed generally accessible. It so often happens that one is caged in gloomy narrow valleys with unclimbable sides and tantalising glimpses of gorgeous but unapproachable scenery. Here it was possible to reach a high point and to enjoy a fine view. There were, too, no difficulties of wood or water. So I left with a heavy heart.

But we had to return to Chikar which we reached in a tearing gale. The wind roared down the broad valley, lifting clouds of white dust, and piercing us through and through with its freezing blasts. We forded the river, and were thankful to reach camp. Akbar had come to meet me and carried me over the numerous streams. He was an active, good-tempered, sturdy lad, and I had a great liking for him. On our arrival at Chikar our first task was to pull out a large double tooth from the mouth of Muhib, the cook. I produced the pincers (as natives call the forceps) and Daulat, who had some experience of hospital work, pulled it out. I made him go some way off that we might not hear the terrible screams of the cook. As

a matter of fact there were none, and Daulat produced the tooth as evidence of a good deed.

We found some eggs and fruit had come from Hunza, sent by Niamat whom we had left behind to send supplies. Unfortunately, the Mir of Hunza, in spite of his letters, his promises, and payment in advance, had failed us, and there was no flour at all. We had arranged for the supply of thirty maunds, or about 2,500 lbs., but not an ounce had come. The coolies were much perturbed, as they had nothing to eat. What vexed me still more was being told by the coolies that the Mir wanted me to return, and had surreptitiously told the Shingshalis to manœuvre me out of the country. At first I thought that it was merely the usual lies of the coolies, but I discovered afterwards that it was not so. The tortuous and devious workings of an Oriental mind, especially that of a half-civilised chief, are beyond European comprehension. I was not going to be bullied by the Mir, who had always pretended to be my friend, so I sent off Balti who, with his face towards home, would travel with the speed of an express train, with a letter for the Mir and some remarks. In a place where subjects for discussion are few, no secrets could be kept, and the Mir's would be no exception.

The next day I climbed the hill behind Chikar to a height of 17,300 feet. The weather was kind, the day brilliant, and the view extensive. The panorama lay before us, from the mountains above the Mustagh river to the Shingshal Pass. Immediately facing us was the Braldu and, looking up it, we saw two slender black

spires which seemed beyond the watershed and in Baltistan or, rather, certainly not in the Braldu itself. In spite of this, I still thought that the view of this valley was rather disappointing. It is true that the mountains were not so dwarfed as when we had seen them from a closer standpoint, and one of the peaks was fine. It was evident, too, that the Braldu curves to the West, and its actual head was hidden, but the main valley lay almost due South.

The Wesm-i-dur, however, maintained its reputation for scenery. Above and below the black pinnacle referred to above was a splendid rampart of snow-clad cliff, from which hanging glaciers swelled, all forming a fine stretch of ice and snow.

Turning eastward, I hoped that K2 might appear, but we were either not high enough or, more probably, too close. The main axis of the Karakoram could be followed by its mere size and splendour. In the extreme East of the prospect the mountains decreased in height and beauty: the snow line was very much lower and, instead of great peaks hanging in the distant blue, we beheld arid slopes and peaks, sprinkled with snow, dotted with little withered glaciers, all typical of the Kuen Lun mountains, north of the Karakoram, along the dry road to Turkestan.

We found Chikar pleasant but the nights bitterly cold, partly on account of the sandy soil. The three milch goats that we had brought from Shuijerab were not very successful. One, on arrival, refused to give any milk at all and, during our absence, died mysteriously

from strangulation. The coolies tried to blame Akbar, but they were wrong. One of them had charge of the goat, and had tied a rope round its neck instead of round its leg, and it had apparently hanged itself. We found the culprit. Although the coolies were Mohammedans, and the animal had died in an unlawful fashion, the meat was eaten, which made us still more suspicious.

We had to wait at Chikar for the flour. Balti's departure had produced two days' supply from Shuijerab, which at least prevented the men from starving. A message also came promising four maunds in a couple of days. It was all most provoking, as we had gone to an infinity of trouble to ensure that the flour would come. I wanted delivery of the whole supply ordered, paid for and promised over a month ago, and until we had a good supply in hand we dared not go far afield, knowing that in our absence nothing would be done to ensure its arrival.

There were compensations for our enforced stay at Chikar. It was a good place, with shelter, good water, and plenty of wood ; and it would do no harm to wait and give the Mustagh the chance of falling a little more, as it would not be fordable for some time. It would have suited us better to halt near the Mustagh and examine the country there. Daulat did some shooting for the pot, an amusement he was very good at, and I tried to stop Muhib's toothache which the removal of his tooth had not yet cured.

There were several hoopoes, sandpipers, and other

common birds, but I did not again see the golden oriole. The weather continued to be indifferent; gales swept down the Braldu with clouds of dust, and the accounts of blizzards in the winter were easy to believe. Sometimes the dust was so great that the tops of the neighbouring hills were entirely hidden. All the winds in the country seemed to forgather at Chikar.

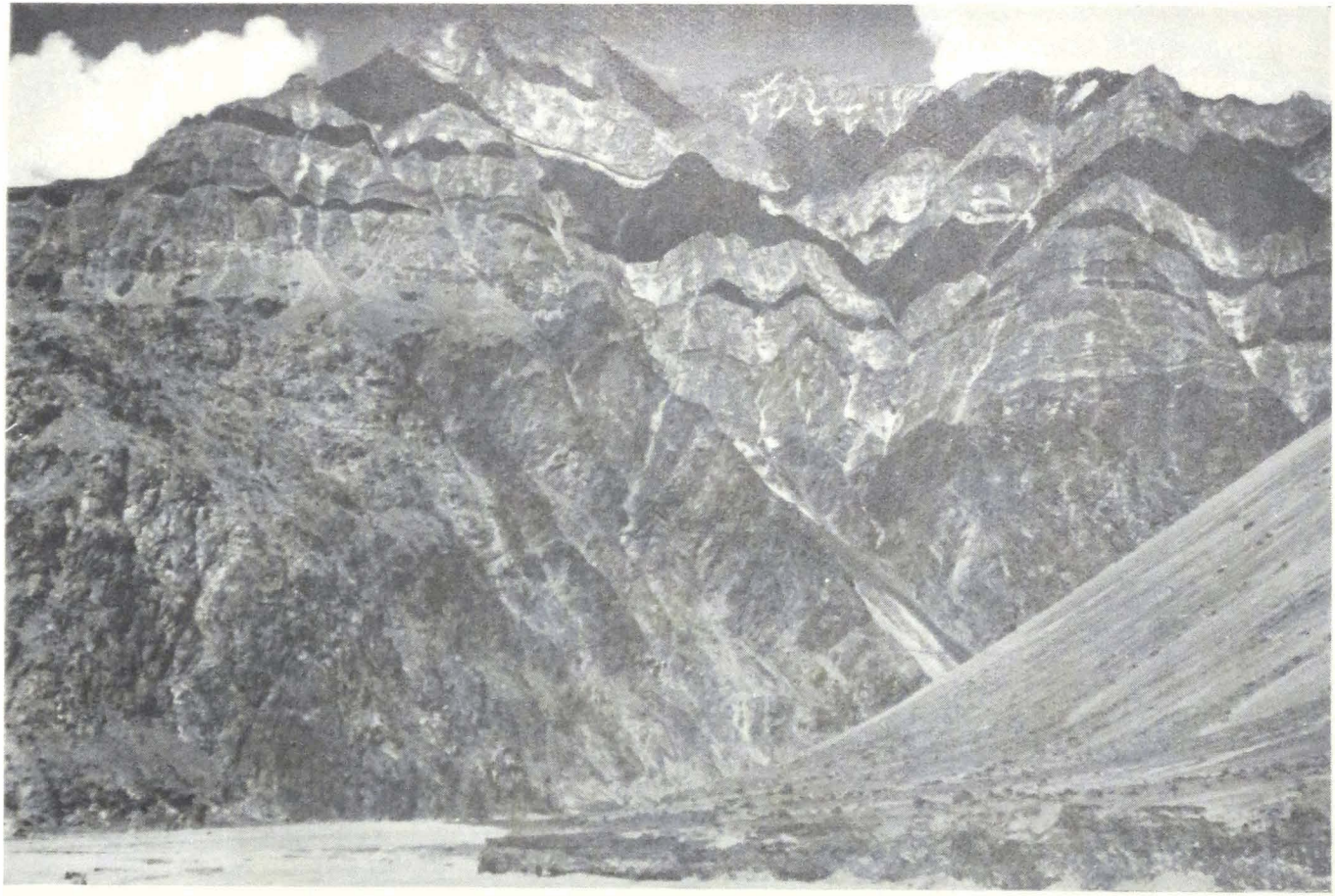
After several days some flour arrived, but it was only enough for present needs: we had to wait till five yaks came grunting and snorting into camp laden with the welcome flour, and we set out the next day. The weather was again gorgeous, and we were overjoyed. The valley was wholly deserted. Broad pastures of splendid grass were empty and wasted, although the quality and quantity were such that in Hunza flocks would be taken many miles to graze on them. The Shingshalis could not be bothered. Not only were they indolent, but they probably had enough grass for their needs. At any rate they did not worry. We passed a long grassy bank covered with yellow clematis, of the larger kind, not the rather small insignificant sort. We also poached many fish.

Our Shingshali coolies were still sad at the prospect of accompanying us, and had even gone to the Mir to try and escape from doing work for which they were suitably paid. They had nothing to do, but, being born lazy as well as being bone-idle, any work was abhorrent to them. Their idea of a good life was to lie all day in their low, airless cabins, drinking buttermilk and chattering. Deep in their natures were the

characteristics of the Shinaka Yeshkuns, the peasants of the Gilgit valley, from whom they were descended. These Yeshkuns have few good points, and the isolation of the Shingshalis had prevented the removal of their ancestral taint. Yet the Shingshalis were good men on the hill-side, if they chose to be. The provoking part of the whole business was that the Shingshalis did not want to come with us, but the men from Hunza proper did. The latter, cramped and restricted in their over-populated valley, would make good use of the empty pastures and neglected tillage of the Braldu valley; the settlement of a number of families would relieve congestion and do no harm to the Shingshalis.

We descended the right of the Braldu, went past its junction with the Mustagh river, and camped at the mouth of the gorge from which that river issues. We intended to go up the left or western bank or, failing that, we hoped to find some ford where the river was broad, and so reach the right bank. We were, however, completely frustrated. I went up the left of the Mustagh as far as I could, climbing to a considerable height, and hoping for some means of forcing our way up the valley. It was quite impossible, even with the use of ropes. There were rifts and gashes in the rocky hill-side that could not be traversed, and they could not even be ' turned '. It was a great disappointment.

Having abandoned all hope of working up the side of the gorge, we tried the river, which proved an equally stubborn obstacle. Although it was well into September, there was a considerable mass of grey churning



STRIATED HILL AT JUNCTION OF THE MUSTAGH–BRALDU

water. Hasil Shah and Akbar tried to ford and then to swim the river, but the water was too deep, and the current too fierce. The Shingshalis declined to make any attempt, alleging that the water was too cold. We then tried the yaks, as a final resource, but even they could not manage the crossing. They could have swum over like dolphins, but they could not have taken a man or a load. The wind was very fierce, blowing down our tents, and filling the wide channel with swirling grey dust which made everything unpleasant. We were defeated again by the river. There was no way of going up the gorge except by fording continuously, and it was no use therefore to make rope bridges. The only alternative was to put a rope bridge across the Mustagh lower down and, when on the opposite side, endeavour to force our way to Raskam.

I decided to retire five miles up the Braldu to Ghamerz-i-kisht where there was good water, wood and grass—in fact comfort for all—and wait there till the bridge was made. The coolies were reluctant to move back five miles even to a good camp. With their inhuman disregard of comfort they preferred sitting in a sand-storm and a cold wind to this small exertion for which they were paid. Their unhappy yaks had not been fed or watered for thirty-six hours, and our sheep had desisted from searching for grass on the rocky hills. Yet, despite all this, the Shingshalis preferred to face any discomfort rather than the labour involved in moving to a new camp. We, however, could not face the prospect of nearly a week in so odious a place,

and we insisted on moving. I sent back two men for axes and shovels, two more for rope, and for other necessaries for bridge building which had been hidden on our first journey in the spring.

Since we had been in the valley two months ago no one else had followed us, and our footprints were still visible.

The aromatic and 'leafless' plant the *chiqqan*, which grows in dry places and is largely collected and used for adulteration with snuff, was plentiful. The red berries were ripe, and the coolies ate them in quantities. We tasted them and found them quite palatable.

CHAPTER XI

DOWN THE MUSTAGH RIVER

AFTER two days at Ghamerz-i-kisht we left to cross the Mustagh river. During our halt there the wind blew like a tornado, especially at night, but we were so well sheltered by the thick growth of willows that the storm troubled us but little. In the meantime the Shingshalis had built the *dut*, or rope bridge, and we now had to entrust ourselves to it. We left Akbar in camp, which for him was a walled hut roofed with boughs and stone ; a very fair shelter. It was his job to look after the spare kit, and especially the precious flour, and to ensure that any supplies that arrived were promptly sent after us. The rope bridge was three miles below the junction of the Braldu and the Mustagh, so we had to cross the former stream. It was an interesting lesson in the rapidity of changing conditions due to water. In the spring we had forded the stream quite easily, although the water had been high. Now, although there was less water, the crossing was difficult, because the flood water had scoured a deep, if narrow, channel near the left bank. This made it an awkward business. Everybody removed his trousers, and all loose articles were placed in the capacious if unappetising seat of those garments. Boots, socks,

field glasses, cameras and the like were bestowed there. The trousers were then tied round the owner's neck, and with this original form of rucksack, each man forded the stream. This was an ingenious and simple dodge though it might not be welcome in the conventional West.

We had several yaks and most of us crossed on them, but even so they had to swim for some yards, and we were all more or less wet by the time we reached the other side.

We found that all the clematis was in seed, but at the base of the seeds, in the carpel, was a small yellow caterpillar which had devoured nearly all the actual seed. I collected a few seeds that showed some hope of germination. There are three yellow clematis in Turkestan and in the Mustagh. I found two kinds, a dwarf and a large one. The ordinary variety of the Turkestan plain, that known as ' the wild grape ', we never found.

The weather was fine but decidedly autumnal, with a keen nip in the air, but it was disappointing to see that there had been no decrease in the volume of the river, apparently as yet unaffected by the longer nights and colder temperatures.

At last we arrived at the rope bridge, which was of a form not uncommon in the Himalaya, though only used in certain primitive or, I had almost said, courageous districts. For instance such a bridge is unknown in Kashmir. My Hunza men even had never seen such a contraption before, and poor Subhana, my excellent

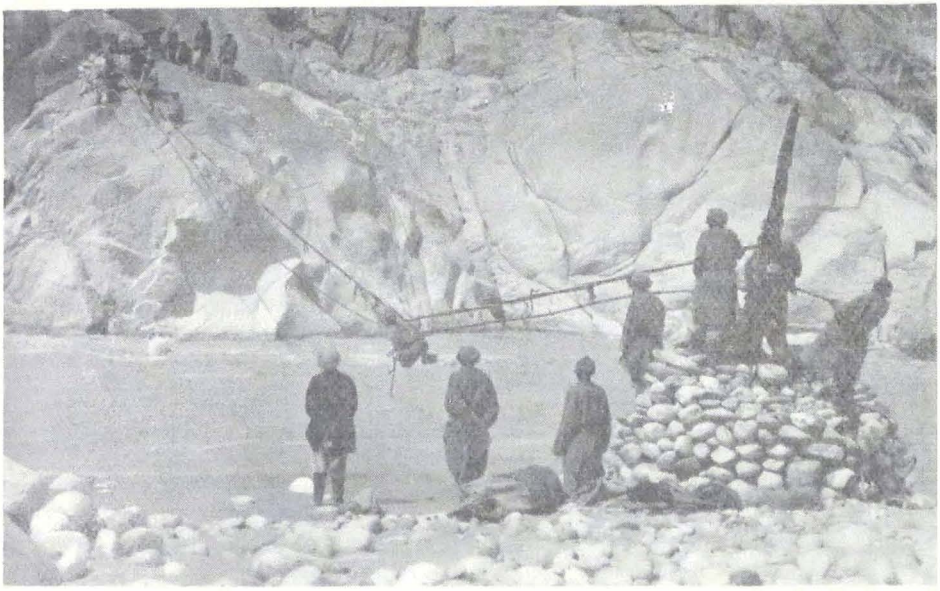
Kashmiri, was terror-struck. It was, however, a safe and simple affair, though alarming to behold, and far preferable and, indeed, safer than the detestable rope bridges or *jhulas* common throughout the hills, where a slip means a fall into the stream below. A *dut* consists of a thick rope, usually, as was ours, of four smaller ropes twisted into one. This rope is fastened firmly to both banks of the stream, usually twisted round a tree-trunk which is then buried under quantities of stone: and it is this cable which is, in fact, the bridge. The first man gets across the rope either on an inflated skin or lashed to the back of a yak, which is pushed with its living bundle into the river. A yak is almost undrownable, so that somehow or somewhere the beast reaches the other side, with the man drenched, cold—but alive. A wooden runner of horse-shoe shape is placed over the rope. The two ends of the horse-shoe are tied together, and the horse-shoe is fastened to a long single rope. From the horse-shoe depend two small loose hanging ropes. The passenger is first tied firmly round the waist with one of the hanging ropes. He is then made to kneel, and is tied round his legs with the other, so that he now resembles an ungainly, ponderous trussed fowl. He grasps the wooden runner with both hands, and is ready for the crossing, being careful to hold his head well back so that it cannot be cut. The men on the other side seize the single rope, and pull, and over goes the human bundle, at first quickly as the main rope sags, and then slowly as the upward curve of

the rope is met. It looks and sounds far worse than it is. The main rope, being knotted in places, produces many jerks as the wooden runner jumps them, which is not pleasant. If the passenger lets go the wooden runner he merely hangs head down, over the river, and is hauled along in that uncomfortable position. Our coolies were expert on such bridges, and tied the single pulley-rope round their waists only. They twined their legs over the main rope, their heads hung down over the river and, partly by hauling, partly by pulling themselves hand over hand, they crossed over with indifference and speed.

After watching the Shingshalis cross I followed, and certainly found the experience much less disagreeable than I had expected. One's complete helplessness is rather an advantage than otherwise, but the strangest sensation was sliding down the rope at the start. The friction might cause nasty cuts, but with a little commonsense, this is easy to avoid.

Daulat rocked with laughter whilst I was being pulled across, and I was not surprised, as the spectacle must have been ludicrous. ' Like a sheep being dragged to the butcher's ', was my men's description. Poor Subhana, the Kashmiri, turned a delicate green, shut his eyes, and looked like death.

We all crossed without mishap. Our dog was trussed up like the rest of us, and came over, a truly absurd bundle, but he made no fuss about it, as he had previously had many worse experiences. The live sheep and the lunch basket came over together and,



CROSSING A DUT

SHEEP AND TIFFIN BASKET CROSSING DUT

after two hours, the whole party was safely on the other side.

Both at the crossing of the Braldu and of the Mustagh, our Shingshalis had worked capitally. I could not discover whether it was the effort of despair or the efficiency of resignation. They hated the whole journey, but they realised by now that there was no means of avoiding it, and had decided to make the best of a very bad job. The Shingshali horror of labour was shown in their insisting that a large but very light tent should be left behind here. This tent I had brought solely for their comfort, and very comfortable it was. I paid a man to carry it, and I knew that every night the tent had been full, but, nevertheless, they all declared that they would far sooner sleep in the open than have the trouble of carrying the tent. It was their affair, but it meant a loss of comfort to a dozen men just to save bother to one. I agreed, and the tent was left.

We now continued down the right of the Mustagh valley, and I was thus able to enjoy a good view up the Ghorjerab from the opposite side. There is a large *yailaq*, or grazing ground, at the head, and all the yaks are sent there at the beginning of the winter, and stay till its end. There is a track from the head of the Ghorjerab into the Braldu coming out at Sar-i-laksh. Both these pieces of information had been previously concealed from us.

The weather was exceptionally fine as we made our way down the great trough-like channel of the Mustagh ;

but there was no view, so shut in were we. The broad grey-white stony bed glittered and quivered in the sun, and the glare and heat were trying. The vegetation was abundant but little varied, and of a distinctly desert nature, and it was impossible, owing to the lack of moisture, great insolation and, often, sandy soil, for an alpine flora to exist.

At first the track was straightforward enough. There were two awkward bits of cliff where I had to be tied round the waist with Balti's cummerbund, a dingy but strong piece of stuff used for all purposes from a handkerchief and sweat-cloth to a gun-cleaner and dish-clout. It fulfilled its unusual purpose. The rocks were very slippery and dangerous, and roping was necessary. From above the river looked very deceptive, and it was hard to credit that the insignificant ripples over the stones were formed by a fierce river with a fiercer current. Often we thought the river seemed some water passage from a mill, which one could paddle across.

A number of very high water-marks on the gravel and on the side by the river puzzled us a good deal. It was obvious that the river could never normally, even in the season of high water, reach such prodigious heights and, though clear and definite enough, the markings were often faint. Our coolies explained that the river was liable to sudden and very high floods. As they phrased it, it was a ' mad ' river and, even in the depths of winter, a great flood would sometimes descend. They were always very careful about the

site of a camp, and often insisted on our choosing a higher and so safer spot than we first intended, in case the river came down in spate during the night. There must be some truth in this as, in addition to the fringes of debris that mark high-flood levels, there were deposits of sand and other detritus that could only come from a flood.

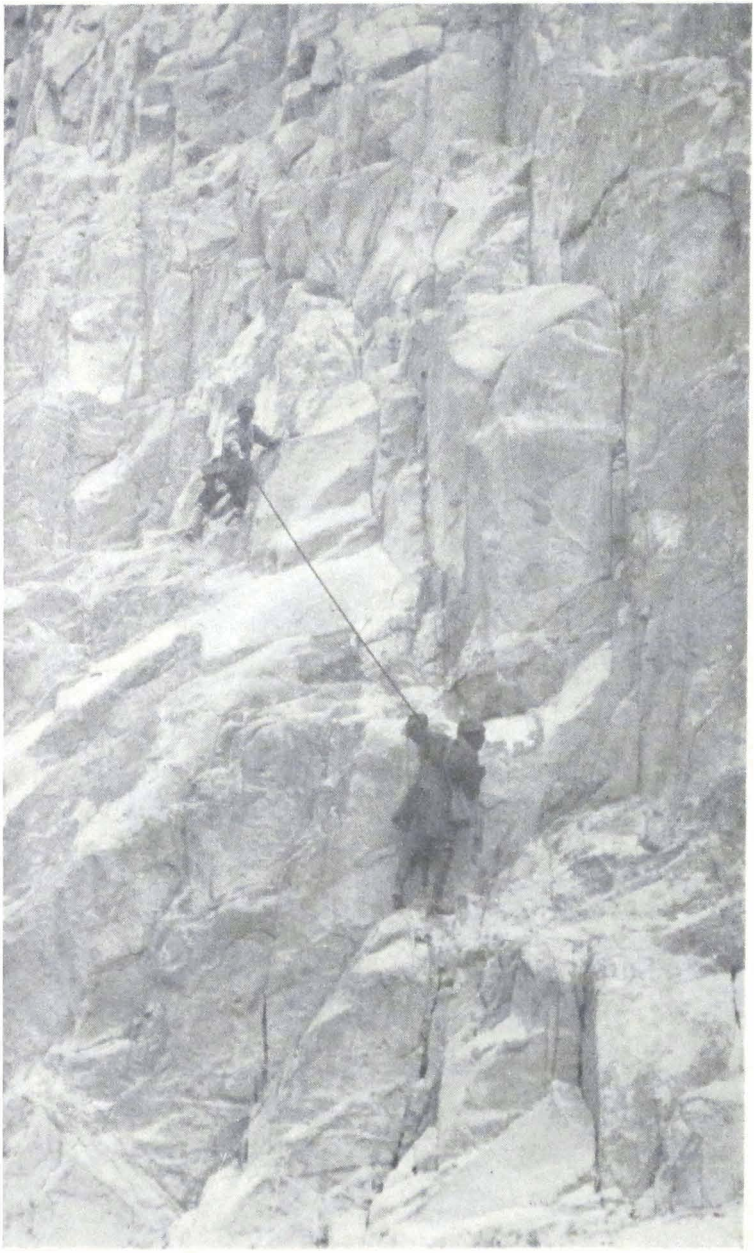
We passed opposite Shor Bulak (10,745 ft.), the Sokh Bulak of Younghusband. As I have remarked, the place is now of no importance, and with its steep bank covered with brushwood and its spring of undrinkable water is of no use to the traveller. There was no reason to revise our low opinion of the place. Facing it was a broad stretch of plain, covered with great rocks from the high steep hillside above. Many of these rocks showed glaciation on one side, that is on the face exposed to ice action before they had been torn from their place in the living rock. Many, too, of these monster monoliths were lying fantastically balanced, sometimes even on two small rocks at each end, forming a natural arch. It was amazing that these huge ashlars could tumble down, and adopt such positions by hazard, yet whoever has seen rocks and stones lying *in situ*, will recognise the frequency of such accidental positions.

We camped at Shutur Washk, or the 'Weary Camel' (10,420 ft.). It was a charming place, with clematis and many bushes, a clear rivulet, and ample wood. Before us was the most difficult place in the whole of the lower Mustagh, so we left it for the morrow when

we should be fresh. We could not discover whether the camel was weary before or after that piece of the march. It was remarkable how many names in the Shingshali country ended in *Washk*. The word means worn out, exhausted, tired, and the like, and its frequent use as a place-name sheds considerable light on the Shingshali character. There must be few countries where places are commemorated merely because someone was tired.

On the previous day, two of the coolies had been ill, and had enjoyed a good dose of calomel. As they still complained of bellyache, the next day we told them to leave their flour behind and carry only our loads. They both had had a large meal the previous evening, so we felt cold and unsympathetic in consequence. The truth was, of course, that they had both recovered.

We were not surprised that the camel had been tired if he had had to climb the precipice which we had to cross after leaving camp. First we were all pulled up the face of forty feet of sheer rock. We then had to climb over 500 feet up the face of a perpendicular cliff, with a sheer drop to the river below, so that, as the men said quite naturally, ' if anyone falls, not even the bones will be found '. The real difficulty, and the real danger, was the nature of the rock surface, which was not hard honest stone, but a detestable variety undesirably common in the Mustagh valley. Worn smooth and glabrous by the action of water, it was covered with flakes or thin plates which shaved off when trodden on. Consequently there was no



'THE WEARY CAMEL'

foothold at all on such a laminated surface, soft and crumbling on top, hard below. I have written many harsh words about the Shingshalis, but on ground like this they were splendid. They went up like lizards, and my Hunza men frankly admitted that none of their countrymen could beat these Shingshalis on such ground, or indeed approach them.

I was thankful when it was all over ; we all sat and rested at the top of the precipice, perched rather like gargoyles on a building, though not nearly so safely. We congratulated ourselves and told each other what fine fellows we all were. Five yards of swirling river had caused all this trouble. The Mustagh below flowed with violence across its broad bed and dashed against the foot of the spur. Then, having caused infinite toil to man, it abruptly flowed away from the cliff.

Our path down the rest of the valley was now very easy, for we came to wide stretches of level *dasht*, the desert of Central Asia. It danced blindingly before us. Just as we entered this desert at the foot of the evil cliff, we saw prints of the hoofs of many horses which had come as far as this obstacle and had retired baffled. A little further on was a horse with its throat cut. The hoof marks of this mounted party were about two to three months old, for had they been earlier than that the river would have been fordable when they found their way blocked by the cliff.

We were not a little disturbed as, owing to the anarchy in Turkestan, we thought that these riders

might be Andijani Communists, the curse of the revolutionary movement, whose work we had witnessed early in the year in the Oprang. We were still in British territory, but that fact would not help us if we met them. We were alarmed, too, lest the cultivators of the Mir of Hunza had been killed or kidnapped. Thus it was a relief, when crossing a narrow deep nullah, to find a quantity of property stacked by the side of the nullah and, judging from their footprints, placed there only a few days before. These peasants were due to return to Shingshal, and had carried some of their spare gear there, to be ready when they left. The nullah was the Tang-i-dur, invisible from afar, in the level desert, for it was a mere gash in the flat ground. It was very deep, with a beautiful clear stream and masses of luxuriant brushwood clasped secretly in its folds.

We continued over more desert, covered with heaps of rotting shale which gave the plain the appearance of a graveyard. This shale had once been solid rock, fallen down a steep slope from the hill above, and it had weathered and disintegrated, much in the same way as masses of snow would slowly melt in the sun. In a few years all these lumps would vanish, and the plain be covered with a level layer of shale. This Tang-i-dur nullah appealed strongly to my Hunza men, who pointed out to me that the whole of the plain could be irrigated from the stream, if a little trouble were taken.

We came next to a stretch of scattered brushwood

with good water, called Chinderikin or clematis but, as the camping ground was inferior, Balti persuaded us to go on another 1½ miles to a place called equally simply tamarisk. Here we found very old well-grown willows, dense brushwood, and a burn of clear cold water. The place had been used years ago by the Sarikoli nomads, and their clumsy shelters and underground recesses for storing milk were still there. I could not discover why they had abandoned so delectable a place. Hanging in a tree we found a shallow wooden bowl, as well as a clumsy tool, and on the ground the roughly shaped stock of a gun. Apparently the wood here was a regular source of supply for gun stocks, and very rough and clumsy they were, if we could judge from the beginnings of others we saw.

There was also a Shingshali fireplace with its large flat stone, and smaller round ones. These latter were heated in the fire and the dough plastered round them. The stone dumplings were buried in the ground, and the bread was soon baked. The flat stone was used to cook the larger and more massive lumps of indigestible dough which the natives were accustomed to wolf.

In a remote and uninhabited region these signs of man were absorbingly interesting, and we were quite as excited by such remains of former occupation as Robinson Crusoe was when he first saw the footprints of Friday. It is remarkable, too, how quickly the eye notes any traces of man in an uninhabited area.

We found curious evidence of the floods of the Mustagh river in the heaps of driftwood piled up

against, and held firmly by, the tamarisks. In some cases these heaps were nearly ten feet high, close, compact, entangled accumulations of drift wood. In time their weight would destroy the resistance of the tamarisks, and the trees would perish.

The Mustagh river, a few miles lower, joined the Raskam river at Toquz Bulak (9,900 ft.), the name given to a piece of wooded slope on the right, just above the junction. Here the Mustagh had left its old bed. It was a singular sight, and an eloquent proof of the power of a river. The old wide original channel lay dry and deserted. The river had turned left, had torn a way through the projecting and retaining ground which was a very low ridge, and so flowed on into the Raskam. What was the urge that had driven it to abandon its adequate and natural channel and carve a new and unnecessary way through the containing left side of its valley? Except for the chance and scanty overflow the former channel never received a drop of water.

Looking down over the junction of these two rivers we saw, beyond the old bed of the Mustagh, a dreary expanse of sand. Behind this was a wilderness of stone, flecked with stray tufts of herbage, and behind again, were the greyish brown hill-sides, all smudged in a reddish haze, so opaque that vision was soon ended. At our backs, in the surprising and inconsequential way of nature in Central Asia, were the Toquz Bulak or Nine Springs. Wandering in the sand was a stream fringed with willows of considerable size, and above was abundant brushwood, holding hares and partridges

which Quli Khan, our dog, chased excitedly. The contrast, the efficacy, and the secrecy of such springs never failed to delight and impress us. The ' Nine Springs ' was a well-chosen name, as the barren slopes above were seamed with long green streaks where the springs flowed out and let the herbage grow in their trickles.

Looking West, down the valley of the united Mustagh and Raskam rivers, which now became the Yarkand river, we could make out a dark patch on the right. This was Chong Jangal, or the Big Jungle, marked on all maps, and spoken of with respect. It was an expanse of wood and scrub on a large scale. Adjoining Toquz Bulak was a piece of utter desert, which emphasised the limited range of water, and the intense aridity of the whole region. Not a trace of humidity could be seen, and the controlling effect of sand, holding back the moisture, and allowing no seepage, was very significant. On this patch of *dasht* there were even tamarisk cones, those sinister mounds of rotted wood, dried leaves, and parched living plants, ugly aggregations of vegetable dust and rubbish, so often met with in Central Asia.

CHAPTER XII

IN REMOTE RASKAM

We now turned East and ascended the Raskam river, a much smaller stream than the Mustagh and of a pleasant green colour. A comparison of the two made it evident that the Mustagh was the real source of the Yarkand river. A marked feature of the Raskam valley was the signs of abandoned occupation to which I shall frequently have to refer. At Toquz Bulak there were considerable remains of houses and traces of old fields, and a little way above its union with the Mustagh the Raskam river flowed through a narrow gorge with the remains of a bridge.

Our introduction to the Raskam was somewhat disappointing, as we entered the valley through great sweeping slopes of bare gravel. On the opposite side the prospect was equally unalluring. By the river's edge, there was abundant brushwood, and higher up a few bushes had caught the scanty moisture of the thin snowfall; but above was the eternal aridity of bare mountains. The peaks rose up and up, into cold and snow and a climate unsupportable to man or beast; the whole vast arena was useless, without vegetation or any hope of nourishment, a great futility, not even sombrely impressive. It was very hot, and the glare was intense.

Fortunately matters soon improved and in four miles we neared Shaitan Jilga, or the Devil's Valley, which had fine pasture at its head, as indeed had most of the others, unpropitious though their entrances were. In this valley was a delightful brook of clear water rushing through thick bushes. I failed to discover why so fair a glen should be called by so harsh a name, but I was told primly and reprovingly that it had always been so named.

The valley now widened, the green river glided in several channels amongst ample brushwood, and we came to Oi Bulung, ' the House at the Side '. This was one of those strange masses of vegetation which nature produces as if to show what water can achieve in dry land. There were thistles six feet high, reeds over ten feet, brakes of impassable thorn covered with scarlet berries, rising fifteen to twenty feet high. There were wild roses and clematis, and indeed the whole of this mass of dense entangled greenery was festooned and bound with long ropes of clematis, the little yellow-flowered kind, and not the large sort we had met with in the Upper Mustagh. This clematis was now in seed, and was sprinkling the whole area with little tufts of white fluff.

The Kirghiz had tried to clear away some of this jungle by burning the thorn so that their animals could reach the grass, and there was a wide tract covered with the tall black trunks of the wasted wood. There were now no Kirghiz to reap the reward of their crime which had been committed several years before.

In this land wood is always valuable, and such wanton destruction was deplorable.

Just beyond, on the opposite side of the valley, were two or three Kirghiz women scaring birds away from the barley. The path then passed through the numerous ruins of old Oi Bulung, and, beyond a low spur, we saw before us Bash Andijan (10,705 ft.), the former capital of the Raskam valley. It lay on the left of the river, where the stream had bitten a huge half-moon out of the level plain. Our coolies howled joyfully, and four men, Shingshalis, came out to greet us. They must have been pleased to see some fresh faces after having been separated from their homes for six months. Every spring four men come here to attend to the Mir's crops, leaving their village before the rivers rise. They are then cut off till the autumn, when they can return home.

The Mir of Hunza has cultivated the land at Raskam for a considerable number of years. At a most favourable estimate, not more than about 40 to 50 maunds of wheat and barley are annually harvested, and of this nearly all is eaten by the cultivators, so that it is difficult to see how the Mir benefits. This cultivation, however, is intended by the Mir to emphasise his claim or right to the land. It is a great nuisance to the Shingshalis, who only till the very minimum of the land available for crops, both here and higher up at Koktash. However, the men cannot complain, as in their village they have little to do, and their service to the Mir is less than in other villages of Hunza.

MIR OF HUNZA'S POST IN RASKAM

The great advantage possessed by this part of the Raskam valley is that it lies East and West, and thus receives the fullest benefit from the sun. At the back of Bash Andijan was a long nullah, which I ascended and found very pleasant with ample brushwood and a clear stream. There were, too, the remains of a large irrigation channel which, although abandoned many years ago, was still undamaged by erosion, in spite of its being at the edge of high conglomerate cliffs. Dead tamarisks still remained erect along the sides of the dry conduit. The mud deposit in the bed of the stream was covered with little seedlings of the tamarisk, most of them barely an inch high. It was improbable that many of these survived, but it illustrated the energy and aggressiveness of the parent plant and explained why, if any brushwood were found, there was always tamarisk amongst it.

The Kirghiz from across the river near Oi Bulung came to see us and gave us the local news. Apparently the horsemen who had to turn back at the cliff of the 'Weary Camel' were chiefly British subjects, merchants of various towns of Turkestan, who thought it wise to return to India, and had mistaken the way. The dead horse was the result of an attempt to ford the Mustagh. On their return to Bash Andijan the party had taken what flour they could from the Mir's men there and had left their oldest horse in payment. The Andijani Communists had also swept up the Raskam valley, and had carried off 200 sheep and goats. It was reported also that most of these rebels had been

slain, but although we were given most detailed accounts of all that was happening in Turkestan we could not believe most of it. Rumour and fact are as divorced from each other in Central Asia as elsewhere. All the same it is remarkable how quickly news does travel, especially such as affects the local folk.

This Kirghiz was half a Turki, and he was very friendly. He gave us some excellent turnips, welcome and unexpected in that region, and a small enamel jar of firm black cream. He promised us better things on our return, and he went off delighted with a good knife, and a small round looking-glass for his wife.

We continued up the Raskam valley and reached Koktash, or the Blue Rock, the next day. The valley grew less attractive and there were many stretches of the inhuman *dasht* of Central Asia; thick undergrowth and brushwood were now confined to the river's edge. On crossing the Bash Andijan nullah, we found that its stream had scoured a circle of high conglomerate wall at its mouth and that the broad nullah bed ran into a narrow orifice through which the stream flowed. We passed Ak Terek Jilga, or the Valley of the White Poplar, and soon reached Koktash, a deep, wide delightful valley, thickly wooded. It was remarkable for its three tiers of conglomerate cliffs, on both sides, but especially on the left. The two upper layers were level terraces which in former days had been well cultivated. The lower of these two was, indeed, still ploughed by the lazy Shingshalis in a feeble desultory fashion, for they are miserable cultivators.

Ruined houses were abundant everywhere and even on the right of the valley there were abandoned fields.

Opposite the mouth of the Koktash, on the far side of the Raskam river, was the settlement of Azghar. It was now occupied by one Kirghiz family. I looked down from the high cliffs at the mouth of the Koktash on this deserted place, over the wide plain covered with ruined houses and on the dry lonely fields ; and it was very clear that natural causes had had nothing to do with the ruin of the valley. The Shingshalis insisted that the water was inadequate and gave that as the excuse for tilling so little land. I took great pains to verify this statement and I tried to connect the empty fields and fallen houses with the water in the valleys. I came to the conclusion that there was no defect at all in the water supply, and that the men who were supposed to till the soil, were lying. My Hunza men envied the dry plains over which we sweated, and said that all the land could be brought into bearing, and that there was enough land to feed the whole of Hunza.

I went up the Koktash valley, and found that the remains of former settlements extended up it to four miles from the mouth of the valley. It was evident, as we went up the Koktash, that the water supply was abundant. Indeed, it was a singularly beautiful valley, with well-grown willows and birches, and masses of tamarisk. There was good grass, too, and all this lavish greenery was wasted. After six miles the valley grew narrower, but we pushed on towards the sugar-loaf peak at the head. There was ample snow, and

glaciers kept the stream full. We moved up carelessly, and disturbed two herds of burrhel without being able to fire a shot at them, so that there was no meat for the coolies, though they were in need of it. At the head of the valley there was good pasture.

On our return to camp we found two visitors, sprung from nowhere, out of the ground, as visitors do in Asiatic wilds. One of these was the gold washer who had accompanied us in the spring on our way to the Mustagh. He said that he had not been successful and that, although he had washed and washed for gold wherever he could, he had never managed to win more than a rupee's worth a day. His companion had long before left him, ostensibly on a pious tour to visit the shrines of Kashgaria, but incidentally to take advantage of the disturbed state of the country to collect what pickings came his way.

With the gold washer was an even more pious man than his late companion. He was a *Seyyid*, a descendant of the Prophet (on whom be peace) and originally a dweller in the little State of Ishkoman in the Gilgit Agency. A few years before the *Seyyid* had crossed into the Pamirs, where the flocks were abundant and where, as a Man of God, he received gratis many of his neighbours' animals. In fact, so profitable had the excursion proved, that he settled down in Chong Jangal, and lived a life of ease and plenty. But the rebellion in Turkestan had affected him adversely. His descent from the Caliph availed him nothing. 'I have been looted on all four sides and I wish to go back. I am

a relative of the Mir of Hunza. May I come too?' I told him that he might come, but I warned him that, if his story were not true, he would be sent back across the frontier.

After seeing the Koktash valley, I climbed a high peak beyond it. First we went up a soft and utterly barren clay slope, then along a ridge, and finally up to the peak. It was a beautiful day, with no breeze at all below in the valley, but with cold gusts of wind higher up. A whole panorama was unrolled before us and the stark barrenness of the country was astonishing. We were accustomed to thinking of deserts as level regions or, at any rate, as gently undulating surfaces, but here the deserts were leaping up the mountain sides, and had thrust themselves even into the snow line. For it was a poor snow line, so thin was the snow layer that it could not hold back the desert rushing up to it. The silence was complete except only for the murmur of the Koktash stream which stole faintly up to us, and even weaker still was the voice of the grey-green sinuous Raskam. Had it not been for the narrow tongues of green that shot out of the mouths of the ravines, and the dark patches of vegetation along the river, the whole country would have been a wilderness indeed. Our view showed us the glaciers at the head of the Koktash, the snow-covered hills behind the Bazar Dara to the East, the Raskam river flowing between steep banks and then entering a gorge, and, to the West, the regular brown slopes of the united Mustagh and Raskam valleys, discreetly veiled in a slight film of brown haze.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RETURN

I HAD now to decide what to do. If I were to go up the Raskam valley and reach the Aghil Pass, which leads to the Upper Mustagh valley, I should nevertheless have to retrace my steps by the way we had just come. I had wished to go down the Mustagh to the mouth of the Braldu, the stream which we had descended from below the Shingshal Pass. I realised, however, that the Mustagh river, above this junction, was unfordable, and would remain so for several weeks. So if I did push on to the top of the Aghil Pass, I could make only a very cursory examination of the country there, and then come back.

The Raskam river, a smaller stream than the Mustagh, had risen lately, which meant that even to reach the Aghil Pass would be very difficult. I decided, therefore, to return, as it was not worth while pushing on with such a faint hope of completing my project. I was not a little influenced by the attitude of the Shingshalis, whose whining, moaning, and general laziness were daily increasing. Their horror and their loathing of a job of work were more evident every day, and it would have been difficult to keep them with us. We were also heartily sick of them.

Most of the task of dealing with these savages fell on Daulat, who began to show signs of exhaustion, for the ceaseless lying and swindling were wearing him out.

The food problem was also a complication; our elaborate arrangements for flour which, profiting by the experience of our first journey, we had carefully made, were far from working well, thanks, of course, to the Shingshalis.

Accordingly, we set forth on our return journey. When a mile from Bash Andijan the Kirghiz met us. He spread his long coat on the ground, and on it a Turkey-red handkerchief. On this improvised table-cloth he put cheese, sour milk, curd and turnips, and bade us eat and be filled, for such was the custom of his race when strangers visited his land. With him was one of his sons, a jolly, rosy little boy, with a plum-coloured coat and brightly embroidered skull cap.

We continued our walk and waited for the coolies at one of the two houses of Bash Andijan. The Yapa (headman) had come back from some mysterious errand and we entered his house, which was small and scantily furnished, for it was, after all, not his abiding dwelling-place. I noticed his talisman hanging up on the wall, for he had taken it off for some reason or other. It consisted of verses of the Koran written on paper, sewn up in silk, and fastened firmly to a silver label (complete with chain) which had once hung on a decanter, and bore the word 'Port'. I did not stay long, as the weather was warm, and there was every

chance of bugs coming out to sample the new fare provided by visitors. The Yapa told me that both settlements, Bash Andijan and Koktash, provided eighteen maunds of wheat or barley in a year between them, which seemed a wholly inadequate return for so much labour and so much bother and fuss.

We continued down the river until we came opposite the Kirghiz's house, where we sat down under a thorn bush and talked. His conversation was lively and intelligent. He came from Opal, near Kashgar, and had married a Sart or Turki wife. He laughed at the idea of any failure of water. True, the Koktash stream came down twenty days late, but the difficulty could be overcome by sowing the ground at the beginning of winter, and fine crops would then be reaped. He said that in this part of the Raskam valley there was no snow on the ground in winter, and very little on the lower hills. He said, too, that the soil was most fertile, and that the yield for wheat and barley was twenty-fold. Melons and maize did well, apricots ripened, and the trees we had seen at Azghar had been allowed to die for want of water, by sheer neglect.

It should be borne in mind that the height above sea-level of this part of the Raskam valley is only about 10,000 feet, and that the luxuriant growth of the trees and brushwood, as well as the reeds and grass by the side of the river, confirms the truth of these remarks. Unfortunately, he could give no reason for the desertion of the valley. One account was that one winter two Kirghiz had died of starvation, and in consequence

the others had become frightened and had left. Another story was that the river was an obstacle. He had lived twelve years in the valley and knew it well, but was ignorant of the country beyond the Aghil Pass which, after all, was quite out of his beat. There were now only eight families living in the valley, as conditions were unsatisfactory and the people disliked settling there. That was obvious enough, but it did not seem an adequate reason for this wholesale abandonment of a fertile tract. The Kirghiz repeated that there was no failure of water, and that the Bash Andijan stream flowed vigorously throughout the year.

Although the Raskam river was high several of the Shingshalis waded across to cadge off the Kirghiz, and I was much vexed. In the same way, when the Kirghiz brought me a goat as a present—which he could ill afford, having been looted pretty thoroughly by the rebels—the Shingshalis tried to seize it for themselves. I object to the poor being robbed, so I stopped them. Our parting gift to the Kirghiz, who, as I have said, was really half a Turki, consisted of tea, chintz, a necklace, and a good pen-knife. We also gave him a handful of beans to sow. It was not much use giving him money, since the nearest bazaar was six days' distant, and most of the shops had been plundered. I should say that, normally, he lived very comfortably. His domestic animals supplied most of his wants. Certainly, judging from the curd or *qatiq* that he brought us, which was firm and thick, the milk products were excellent.

I collected a considerable quantity of clematis seeds, of the variety with the small yellow flowers, and insignificant compared with the larger kind. Not that the plant itself was in any way stunted or dwarf, but was rather of a very vigorous habit, growing in abundance everywhere. The same trouble with caterpillars eating the seed was noticeable here, and only some five per cent. of the seeds had escaped. Perhaps it was a wise provision of nature to prevent the entire valley being choked with a useless plant.

This time we camped at Chinderikin, under a fine willow tree. We noticed how the hares had caused great damage to the trees by nibbling off the bark round the base of the fresh shoots, and so killing them. These little beasts—for the hares here were no larger than rabbits—were very plentiful. They were good to eat, and I used to revile my servants for refusing good, clean meat and yet not scrupling to eat a dirty feeder like a duck. I had three kinds of Mohammedans with me, Shiah, Sunni, and Maulai. The Shingshalis would eat hares, and this was one of my few points of agreement with them.

From Chinderikin I climbed up the left side of the valley, and found it easy going. We used an old path, and passed the remains of watercourses, abandoned because a flood, which brought down with it many stones, had destroyed the fields. After some time we came to a very easy saddle, at a height of 13,200 feet, 3,000 feet above our camp, and on the other side, below it, was the Tang-i-dur. This proved to be a long valley,

with a peak (20,650 ft.) at its head. It ran from the S.E. and was a deep narrow ravine, with its stream running below low cliffs. At this time of the year it was certainly accessible, and the only trouble would have been the continuous fording of the river as one went up over the bed. We did not see much grass, but by the water's edge there was fair vegetation, with well-grown brushwood. The old path, the numerous marks of sheep and yak, and other signs showed that the valley had been much used at one time, but whether in winter or in summer I could not determine. The view was marred by dust. During the night the wind had risen, and in the morning it was impossible to see even three miles up or down the river. To some extent this haze disappeared, but not enough for a good view or for good photography. I have already alluded to the haze, a regular and very disagreeable phenomenon in Turkestan. We all longed to ascend this valley, and find out if there were not a way to the head, and over into the Upper Mustagh, but it was late in the season, and my poor home-sick coolies would not have welcomed the plan.

The night before we left our camp at Chinderikin a regular gale blew; in the morning the lower hills were powdered with snow, and a thick pall of yellow haze, exactly like a London fog, swirled up and down the Mustagh valley. Later on the day improved. The *Seyyid* and his family had not arrived, as, hearing that Chinese rule was re-established in Kashgar, he had decided apparently not to exchange the land of plenty

for the nakedness of his fatherland. If his premise were correct, he was a wise man. The gold washer, also, had made up his mind not to go back. Such was the optimism inspired by the rumour that the Chinese had arrived in Kashgar: it was a very real and proper tribute to the merits of Chinese rule.

It was just as well that these people did not turn up, as lowering the wives and children of the *Seyyid* down the precipices of the 'Weary Camel' would be a delicate and disconcerting job. This cliff, in fact, proved even harder to descend than to ascend. All native cragsmen and mountaineers prefer the latter to the former, though I believe that, in Europe, it is considered easier and safer to go downhill; but the people in Asia are greater experts than those at home, and their opinions are worth considering.

As we were crossing the first part of the cliff face my haversack fell, and with it much valuable photographic gear, which was smashed to atoms. Among the casualties was my telephoto lens. The haversack was in Daulat's charge, and he was to blame. His face was blackened, he was soundly cursed for his carelessness, and we did not speak for several days. I have, otherwise, been fortunate in having comparatively few losses amongst my belongings, considering the disagreeable places which I have visited.

It took us a long time to work our way down the precipice, and all the loads, as well as the coolies, had to be lowered. We were thankful when we reached the bottom. As I still cherished a hope that

it might be possible to force a way up the river I was disconcerted to find that the water had not diminished at all, and realised that there was now no hope. The Mustagh was unfordable, and consequently in the narrow gorge further up matters would be worse. I do not believe that there is any chance of penetrating through that passage till November.

I noticed again the determined efforts of the tamarisk to establish itself. Even in the cracks of the bull-dust or dry clay small seedlings were growing. Judging from the larger plants, its success was not great. If undisturbed, the tamarisk forms a considerable but coarse humus which must be valuable in the unfavourable surroundings in which it exists. Its struggle for life and its tenacity are alike severe.

Our crossing over the rope bridge was carried out with safety, but it was harder than before owing to the incline on the left bank. We had also to land on a slippery cliff. The first man who went over was unassisted and had to haul himself across, pulling the rope, hand over hand; Daulat tried to copy him, and did not make a good job of it.

I deeply regretted leaving the Mustagh valley and abandoning my project, for, to the end, I had hoped against hope that it might be possible to ascend the river at the last moment. But it was not to be. We left the Mustagh and turned up the Braldu, but this time by the left bank as far as Ferok-i-deor. It was not a good path, in places it was an extremely bad one,

but it saved the coolies a wetting in the river, although the volume of water had decreased.

From the left side I had a good view of the lateral nullahs opposite, and certainly the great rents or gashes torn in the hill-side by furious torrents were singular features. They showed how the formation of the Karakoram was still changing, and how nature had not yet decided on the final shape of this gloomy but magnificent region. These chasms often occurred in clean-cut faces where the force of the water, falling from a height, had split the slope. In course of time there might be a further alteration in these features, and the present precipitous defiles would develop into steep valleys.

We had left Akbar behind among the willows at Ghamerz-i-kisht, and he now rejoined us. His only company had been our two sheep. So lonely was it, he declared, that, if a man died, there were no worms to eat his corpse.

We had expected to find flour left for us in this valley, but the Mir of Hunza had failed to give the necessary orders. Although Major G. V. B. Gillan, C.I.E., the Political Agent, had personally asked the Mir to give me every help, and although he had been assured that it would be forthcoming, we had received no help at all. The flour, ordered and paid for, was not there. We had twenty hungry coolies, and nothing to feed them with except air and hope, but the fault was not ours.

We crossed to the right bank of the Braldu by a

remarkable bridge built ingeniously but dangerously at a spot where two slippery rocks overhung. To build up piers of unmorticed and undressed stone on this smooth surface, and then lay a fair-sized foot-bridge upon them, showed great skill. I rather doubted the endurance of the structure, and was not sorry to reach the other side. Our return journey up the Braldu was in unfavourable weather, and a sad contrast to the conditions a few weeks previously. We were much hindered by snow, and the lower slopes of the valley were white. Autumn tints were in their full but brief glory. Tamarisk bushes had turned a rusty purple, the wild roses were over, but had bequeathed their colour to their leaves, the grass was brown, the clematis leaves a dull red and, to cap all, the reeds were a beautiful yellow-gold, which stood out in the sunlight brilliantly against a clear blue sky. At Chikar the willows had lost most of their leaves, which were lying dry and yellow on the ground. Down the Braldu, below the glacier, a bitter, powerful wind drove great clouds of dust, to our great discomfort. Large flights of teal whistled along the river. I was surprised to see so many hoopoes in this cold upland, but in spite of the weather they seemed to prosper.

It was evidently time to leave this region, although I regretted turning my back on much untrodden ground. We had now to cross the Shingshal Pass for the last time. There was considerable snow everywhere, especially on the Hunza side ; not the heavy sloppy nourishing snow of Kashmir, but the fine dry useless variety of

Central Asia. We reached the crest of the pass on an unpropitious day, and looked back on the Mustagh valley where black clouds were rolling up from the South, and lighter clouds were either lurking in the valleys or entangled on the pinnacles of rock. We went along the right side of the approach, past the village of Shuwert, where deserted filthy huts, half buried in snow, looked grim and unpleasant. It was hard work, as the snow was considerable, and we were glad to meet a party of men and yaks on their way to help their fellows. We pushed on, as it is unwise to loiter on the top of a pass 16,000 feet high in bad weather. The small lakes near the crest were full of teal and spoonbill and, in spite of the raging wind, Daulat shot four, and Hasil Shah waded up to his waist in the half-frozen water, and retrieved and, later, ate them.

Shuijerab is always cold, and on a day like this the temperature was arctic, with snow on all sides and a wind from all quarters. The place was still inhabited, and the dwellers crawled like gnomes out of their low dark huts. The coolies had sat down to eat and gossip when the relief arrived, so we had a long chilly wait, and could only shiver and curse them. We squatted in the lee of a rock, the bug-infested lairs were only fit for troglodytes. I thought with yearning of Turkestan, where there would have been a decent felt tent, or at least a hut to shelter in. But my experience is that everything south of the watershed between India and Central Asia is dirty, squalid, and

detestable. Travel resembles war, in that it is the discomforts, and not the dangers, that exasperate and harass.

We spent a cold night on the snow-covered ground, and the following day the coolies suggested a halt. They wanted to enjoy a spell in the stuffy dim twilight of the huts, with wives and children, fleas and flocks, all cosily jumbled up. It was a very different prospect for us, on a snow-covered windswept plain with no fuel, and we flatly declined the proposal, and continued our journey down the valley. The weather fortunately improved, and became almost genial so that, thanks to our descent to a lower level, conditions were better. Not indeed that the snow left us, but the temperature was higher and the cold wind more tolerable.

On our way up we had been unable to ascend the Pamir-i-tang from its junction with the Shingshal river near the village, but reached its upper part by crossing two high passes. Now, however, the water had subsided, and we were able to follow this remarkable defile to its end. The water was now a clear deep green, and the fords gave no trouble, except that they were numerous and filled with boulders, so that we often fell sprawling into the stream.

Leaving our old camping-ground of Phurzin in the Pamir-i-tang, we descended the face of a composite cliff of rock, shale and clay and entered the bed of the defile. There was a pleasant variety of rock both in colour and in substance. Red sandstone, black shale and granite were all mixed up, whilst in some places

cliffs of clay rose to over a thousand feet, sheer and straight, looking like the crenellated walls of a castle.

After three miles we came to some hot springs on the right of the valley, where it opened out. There was a grotto dripping with warm water, and abundant maidenhair fern (*Adiantum*), a strange sight in a snow-bound land, eleven thousand feet above sea-level. The warm water had made an oasis, and the face of the cliff was clothed with dense vegetation.

After leaving this place the gorge grew very narrow, with only room for the green ice-cold stream, which we forded uncomfortably. There was much ice and no sun, and the frigid vapour of the night rested heavily at the bottom of this chasm. On the left rose a sheet of rock 1500 feet high; on the right a black precipice leaned over the straightened river. We passed a large cave, squeezed through some boulders covered with ice, and Daulat fell headlong into the water. At last the gorge grew so contracted that further progress was impossible. We were not sorry to leave the bed of the channel with its deep pools of freezing water and its worn rocks, smooth as glass and coated with a film of ice. European boots, and still more European feet, unused to going unshod, were very unserviceable in such surroundings.

It was not easy to climb out of the bottom of this deep, sunless abyss. First we clambered up a rough and clumsy ladder leaning loosely and insecurely against a smooth cliff; then we went along the side of a polished rock sloping slyly to the water but

passable, thanks to a few wooden pegs thrust into its cracks. Next the path rose steeply over rough supports, usually a pole laid against the hill-side. Finally, after a long toilsome climb, we rose high above the stream, which was out of sight in the tight snake-like canyon. Personally I thought that the Pamir-i-tang was as difficult as the two passes, but it was shorter; and every hillman prefers the shorter and harder track to the longer and easier. The Pamir-i-tang was, nevertheless, well worth seeing, a remarkable defile in a land of defiles.

We reached the Shingshal river just where the Pamir-i-tang joins it, and camped there, as, though the village was in sight, we had all had enough exercise. It was a dazzling autumn afternoon, and the view up to the head of the valley and down the whole of the Shingshal was beautiful. What a God-send such weather would have been to us during the previous few days!

We forded the Shingshal river the next morning and found that the stream, in spite of the cold night and the proximity of its parent glacier, was waist deep. This meant that, instead of being able to follow this river down as we had done the Pamir-i-tang, we should have to cross the Karun Pir, a climb which we hated to contemplate. If we could not ford the Shingshal river higher up, we could not do so lower down, when it was augmented by several large tributaries. It was the Mustagh difficulty over again.

We reached the village, and camped under the

same apricot trees. A house had been prepared for me, but when I saw its dark and stuffy room, I fled to the open, though I believe it was clean enough. The next day we halted, and the whole time was spent in an interminable wrangle with the Shingshalis, who were as avid as ever to overreach us in every way: but by this time we knew what to expect, and our hearts were hardened. Our apricot orchard was strewn with fruit-stones, to the grave scandal of my Hunza followers, for in their country they always break the stones and eat the kernel. Their saying is 'Never eat apricots without the kernels'. Such a refinement was lost on the Shingshalis, who did not even bother to eat the apricots, a number of which were lying wasted.

We left at last with a band of new coolies, who were quite as useless and troublesome as the previous assortment. We camped below the Karun Pir, just where the stream of that name joins the Shingshal, and the next day we marched as far as Chukurt (more properly Chukwert). This place is rather less than half-way up to the crest of the pass, but the climb is very severe, and it is difficult to go further. It is true that there was no water, which had to be fetched from the Karun stream, a long way off. There was, however, some fuel, and above there was none; Chukurt is consequently the highest possible halting-place for a party of any size. A large rock marked the camping site, and just below was a bluff of yellowish clay, on the smooth surface of which travellers had scratched their names. Amongst these graffiti I noticed the names of

Johann Perren and Afraz Gul, of the Visser expedition of 1925. It was a proof of the dryness of the climate that all the marks were as legible and unworn as though they had just been made.

As we toiled up the pass the coolies bewailed their empty stomachs. They had left their flour two marches behind and, although one of their number had come from that very place, he was not going to carry it. He was without a load and had deliberately left the rations behind, although he knew that the men had nothing to eat. Eventually, after a long starve, the flour arrived. It was an example of Shingshali stupidity and chicanery: they hoped that they would force our hands and compel us to feed them, as they never managed to realise that my boxes were full of books, maps, and photographic materials, all of which was highly innutritious. We did give them ten pounds of flour, and it was more than we could spare, but the Shingshali is not a delicate eater, and this amount of flour was as useful to them as a handful of corn to a buffalo. It was unsafe to halt on the pass, but I sent on a man to the other side to collect what food he could. The muddle was none of ours, as we had seen the flour leave the village; but it shows how persistently dishonest the Shingshalis were. I felt sorry for the men, and we all suffered. It was their silly cunning that had caused this inconvenience.

We found the northern side of the Karun Pir deep in fresh powdery snow. The wind was piercing throughout the day and blew the snow about in long

wisps. Clouds had come up from the South and had spoilt the view. The general prospect was indeed bleak, wintry and uninviting. We reached the huts at the bottom of the pass, and greatly enjoyed the abundant juniper wood. The snow was only a few feet off, but the Karun Pir was behind us, and that was all that mattered.

We reached Morkhun village the next day and there we settled up with and dismissed all the Shingshalis. They were most amiable, and showed no resentment nor ill-feeling—for why should they? They had been well treated and well paid. We parted with them without regret. It is usual for travellers to grow sentimental over their partings with their coolies. It is also usual to find fault with travellers who do not get on with their coolies, on the well-known recognised modern principle that the European is always wrong. Our Shingshalis had done everything they could to swindle and annoy. Day after day they had shirked their duty, lied to us, deceived us, and fawned on us. Why then should these men, who had behaved like the savages they were, be given a valedictory blessing which it would stultify us to bestow? I trust that any future traveller to this region will avoid having anything to do with these folk.

We continued our journey down the Hunza valley, and I saw the Mir of Hunza on the way. Our meeting was not particularly cordial, we soon parted, and I went on to spend the night in great and unwonted comfort at Aliabad with Colonel and Mrs Lorimer. I was both

amused and annoyed to hear that the Mir had said in open Durbar: 'Why do old men like Schomberg and Lorimer wander about like this? What use can they be? It would be better if they died.' This was a somewhat uncalled-for remark, as the Mir was old enough to be the father of both of us, and Colonel Lorimer had been his Political Agent and a good friend.

We had a good journey down to Srinagar, and soon forgot our worries, both of mind and body. After all, a journey such as we had undertaken was no ordinary one, and we could not expect to escape with only a few disappointments and rebuffs. Although we had not carried out our entire programme we had had a very great measure of success. As we floundered along the greasy track into Bandapur, where a house-boat awaited us for the last stage into Srinagar, we felt fairly satisfied with ourselves. We cast back our thoughts to rope-bridges, empty bellies, quarrelsome coolies, and capricious chiefs, and realised that we had not done so badly.

'When at the blithe end of the journey at last
Who the de'il ever thinks on the road he has passed?'

CHAPTER XIV

FORMER ROUTES IN THE MUSTAGH VALLEY

THERE has been a great deal of discussion regarding the caravan routes in the Karakoram region, so far without arriving at any agreement, and I do not suppose that we shall ever acquire any certain knowledge of these abandoned tracks. It is remarkable that routes so ancient and so frequented should, although in use up to recent years, be shrouded in obscurity. I venture therefore to set forth my own views in the light of my journeys in the area.

The caravan route used to-day from Leh, Ladakh, to Central Asia is by the Khardong Pass, the Nubra valley, the Sassir Pass, and the Karakoram Pass. This last pass is by far the easiest. All caravans, no matter what their destination may be, cross the main axis of the range by the Karakoram Pass (18,290 ft.). To reach that pass there are minor variants of the route given, but all routes now focus on that one pass. From the northern or Turkestan side of the pass there are several routes to the different marts of the country. Caravans to Khotan diverge to the East, those to Yarkand and Kashgar to the West, and there is besides a further choice of routes depending largely on the season of the year.

All routes north of the Karakoram keep together as far as Aktagh, at the head of the Yarkand river. Here the Khotan route turns away East to the Suget Pass and the caravans for Kashgar and Yarkand follow the Yarkand river for some way, and proceed either by the Yangi, Sanju or other passes. The Khotan caravans also sometimes take the Sanju route. Indeed, it is by no means easy to lay down the definite route followed by caravans, as the deciding factors are the water in the river and the amount of snow on the hills.

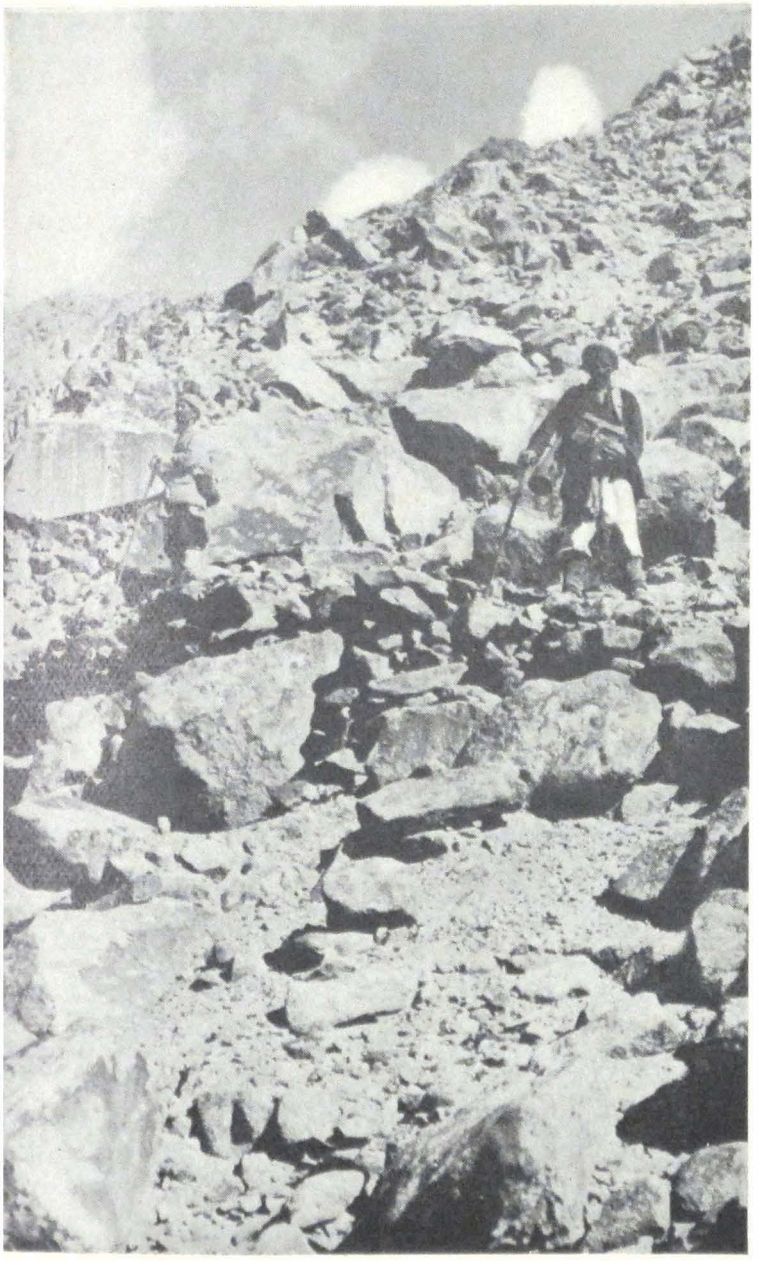
In former times, however, as the previous chapter shows, the caravans to and from Central Asia and India were by no means restricted to the Karakoram Pass. I believe that so long as was possible, the present route was avoided. It always has been a merciless track, going for days down stony nullahs devoid of fuel or grass, with little or no shelter, and without help in case of catastrophe. From what I saw of the Mustagh valley, there was certainly a frequented route down the left,[1] for the carefully made and well-graded road which we found was intended for pack animals, and it was not made by the light-weight Kirghiz for his attacks on the Hunza men. Again, the Kirghiz are too indolent to take such trouble over a path for their horses. They would prefer to abandon their expedition than spend days of toil in making a good stone road over the spurs of the Karakoram.

It should be remembered that when Younghusband crossed the Mustagh Pass in 1887, this pass was then an extremely serious obstacle, and his performance was

[1] See page 87.

a fine feat. But previously it was a well-known route and crossed by animals and perhaps even by caravans, in the days before the glaciers had destroyed so many of the mountain paths. In my opinion caravans from the North came as far as the Yarkand or Raskam river, which they reached by the Yangi or Chiragh Saldi Pass, and then crossed by the Aghil Dawan into the wide open stretches of the upper Mustagh or Shaksgam valley, which they gained at Suget Jangal. Here there was fuel and grazing for the animals, and the Turki name for this remote place is significant. It must be borne in mind that nowadays the only way of reaching Suget Jangal is by the Aghil Pass from the North or the Mustagh from the South. Sir Francis Younghusband in 1887 came by the former route; the Italian expedition of 1929 by the southern route. The Mason expedition of 1926 found the glaciers of the Kyagar region, in the upper Shaksgam, so serious an obstacle that they did not push on.

The question now arises, how the merchants who chose the well-graded road, the traces of which we found in the Mustagh valley, reached their destination in the South. I do not think that the defile above Phurzin-i-dasht, or Shingshal Aghzi, was ever passable by caravans, except so late in the year as to make forward movement over the passes extremely hazardous. The nature of the gorge is such that only at low water could it be passed, and even before the glaciers had grown active and the volume of water from them had increased, it is highly unlikely that this defile could be



BALTI STANDING IN OLD CARAVAN ROAD
LOWER MUSTAGH VALLEY

traversed even late in the caravan season. It might be used by one or two lightly laden or belated parties, but if that were so, there would be no need to make a well-graded track lower down, because the river would be everywhere fordable. It appears to me that the merchants who used the lower Mustagh above its junction with the Raskam or Yarkand river followed the stream as far up as Shingshal Aghzi. They then turned up to Chikar at the mouth of the Braldu and crossed by the Braldu Pass, descending on the other side either by the Nobundi Sobundi glacier or else by the main Biafo or some near affluent. At any rate, they came down into the main Indus valley, but exactly where it is impossible to tell, on account of the subsequent great increase in the glaciers. I heard several traditional rumours of an old, long-forgotten track over the Braldu. The name, the only one it has, is a Balti name, and even if this theory be far-fetched I see no reason to regard it as improbable. There is, moreover, ample evidence of frequent and easy communication between the Shingshal proper and Baltistan. The Braldu, on the North or Mustagh side, is now a tedious and exhausting valley to ascend, thanks to the great glacier that chokes it. But apart from this mass of ice, there are no other serious difficulties, and my remarks apply to the period before the activity of the glaciers began. When Younghusband crossed the Mustagh Pass in 1887, his guide Mir Wali told him that the ice was far greater than it had been twenty-five years before.

Colonel H. Wood of the Survey of India has compiled a most valuable memorandum regarding disused routes in the Karakoram. This officer was attached to the de Filippi expedition of 1914,[1] and he has consulted a number of authorities. After reading all that has been written, and after comparing a great many vague, confused, and often improbable accounts, it is natural enough to dismiss the problem as insoluble. When, however, it is realised that a hundred years ago or so all the passes, which are now so doubtfully referred to, were then open to any hillmen, and that even in the time of Younghusband men said ponies had been taken over the dangerous Mustagh Pass, the riddle is capable of solution.

Indeed, it may be summarised as follows: About a century ago, before the period of intense glacier activity, there were a large number of possible ways of crossing the watershed between the Hunza and Mustagh rivers and the Indus. Some of the passes over this watershed were practicable only to unladen men on foot, others were easily negotiated by laden coolies, and even by pack animals. The only constant obstacle was the rivers, which were as now unfordable during the height of summer. That this is true the old track already referred to on the left of the Mustagh river proves. Consequently, caravans a hundred years ago had a much greater choice of routes through the Karakoram than they have to-day.

[1] See *Explorations in the Eastern Karakoram*, Dehra Dun, 1922, pp. 31 *et seq.*

In a previous chapter I have mentioned how a party of refugees tried to reach India by the Mustagh river but turned back at the rock of the 'Weary Camel.' That they did so was due partly to ignorance, partly to lack of enterprise, but chiefly to the water, though with difficulty they could have surmounted the obstacle. In former days they would have accomplished their journey by a different but neighbouring route.

G. T. Vigne, who was at Shigar in Baltistan in 1838, mentions that, when seeking a way out of the Indus valley into the Nubra, the men who went to examine the route reported that the snow and ice on the pass had greatly increased.

In considering unusual or unknown routes in the mountains, the secretiveness of the local population must not be overlooked. Many travellers are apt to pooh-pooh this, and believe that money or abuse will open all mouths and so all passes. This is by no means the case. An informer is always nervous of his fellows, and it is only a man of considerable moral courage who will deliver the secrets of the glen. I have experienced many instances of this kind of concealment. Hillmen are in many ways timid, and they like to know that there is a bolt-hole of which the outside world is unaware. For example, I am certain that there is a way from Shingshal village direct to Nagir, coming out in that happy land by the Lak or Kunyang glacier or somewhere close by. There is also, as we discovered too late, a comparatively easy way from the lower Mustagh into the Braldu valley, striking it well above Shingshal

Aghzi. Other travellers must have met instances of this same exasperating secrecy, and have suffered occasionally from it: it is well to recognise it as a by no means negligible factor in exploration.

Little more need be said on the vexed subject of the disused routes of the Karakoram. Colonel Wood has produced an excellent summary, but the final elucidation is likely to elude the inquirer. I must, however, mention that it is most probable that many caravans from the Pamirs, Badakhshan, and what is now Russian Turkestan reached the Mustagh river by the Oprang Pass. That is to say, they left Sarikol at Ghijak Bai (Ghujad Bai or even Ujad Bai; the spelling is protean), ascended the North Oprang valley, crossed the pass of the same name, and so reached the Mustagh river. In other words, they came in the reverse way from that which we took. This route is still regularly used by the Kirghiz, Tajiks and other nomads of the Pamirs, and in the old and happy times before political complications had stopped the caravans, and when the easygoing and kindly rule of the Chinese extended far beyond their present frontiers, this must have been a popular road. It cut off a great detour, and meant that only two easy passes had to be crossed between Badakhshan or Western Turkestan and the main pass into Baltistan.

No reference need be made to the political boundaries of the Karakoram, for the simple reason that the actual frontier between Chinese territory and Kashmir or Hunza has yet to be demarcated.

If and when demarcation is decided upon, it will be a truly difficult and thankless task, and I do not envy the unfortunate party which sets out to do it. The Pamir Boundary Commission had an easy piece of work compared with that which awaits a similar enterprise in this region.

I should like at this point again to refer, at the risk of some redundancy, to the extremely unpleasant conditions of travel in the Karakoram, as a consequence of which it seems to me that this remarkable region, though it will always interest, will seldom attract any but the most hardened or adventurous travellers. Too much stress cannot be laid on the great problem of transport and victualling. It is the old story of the pack animal eating its own load. Marches are so arduous and conditions so unfavourable that any failure in supplies is bound to entail the failure of the expedition. It may be objected that the system of establishing caches of supplies overcomes the difficulties to some extent. But even granting that, yet when these dumps grow further and further from the base of supply, the time occupied, the uncertain weather, and the unavoidable delays offer undoubted complications which may ruin the most careful plans. Of course, it can be done, but it entails good management and considerable expense.

But is it worth it? From my own experience I am not so sure. It is well to be candid, and I often wondered as we toiled along the shale slopes,

and paddled through the strenuous icy burns, with our view frustrated on all sides by the stark black mountains imprisoning the stone-filled valleys, whether the Karakoram was worth troubling about; and whether this inhuman mass of sour, lifeless mountain and ravine was not meant to be denied to mankind. And then suddenly the sun would shine, the view unfold, and we would not exchange our lot for any other!

Taking it as a whole, it must be admitted that the Karakoram is eminently one of those places through which one passes hastily and nervously. The one known track from Ladakh to Turkestan, the main caravan route between India and Central Asia, a veritable charnel-house of a path, is used but execrated; yet it does possess, at least, a way out. Where we went, however, there was always uncertainty about finding an exit, the doubt, and a real one, whether we should have enough food for our bellies, and the chance that some roaring river would confine us to one bank and frustrate all our hopes.

These worries are inevitable to all travel in such a region, but they do help to explain why the Karakoram has been so neglected, for the prizes that it offers to the pioneer are more theoretical than actual. All the same the Karakoram has its compensations. It was our good fortune to see some of its unknown fastnesses, and to wander through its hidden and unexplored valleys, and we had the satisfaction,

too, of finding new routes and of solving some of the problems that had baffled previous travellers. We had had a valuable and unique experience and our hardships had been rewarded by a substantial measure of success.

CHAPTER XV

THE RAIDS OF FORMER DAYS

I HAVE mentioned already how, on our way down from the Shingshal Pass to the Mustagh, we came to the old position erected by the Hunza people for the convenience of their raids. This primitive fortress served as a protection against pursuit as well as a safe and convenient place from which they could watch the caravans coming and going. There is ample evidence to show that these raids were a most serious affliction to the merchants trading between India and Turkestan.

In *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 41, the 'Mirza', in giving an account of his journey, in 1870, mentions how the people of Hunza were noted for their plundering excursions into Little Tibet, and how they would suddenly appear above Shigar by a very difficult road. Shigar is in the Indus valley in Baltistan, and this remark is interesting because the Bullock Workmans in *Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh* mention the Hunza raiders as coming over the Nushik La, which is the pass that leads from Hispar, via Arandu, and down the Shigar river to the Indus.

According to Grombchevski, M. Bogdanovich, a well-known Russian mining engineer, was rather hampered by the fear of the Kanjutis. In 1889

Bogdanovich was on his way to the Raskam district. He was not very successful, as although he made two attempts to cross the Yarkand or Raskam river, and even the smaller Bazar Dara stream, he failed to do so. (*G.J.*, Vol. II., 1893, p. 55.) We managed to ford the Raskam river below Bazar Dara, i.e. at Oi Bulang, with considerable ease, but higher up, where the Russian tried to cross it, the valley is narrow, the stream deep, and certainly very difficult to ford in the height of summer. Incidentally, Bogdanovich says that Raskam comes from Ras = much and Kau (*sic*. Query Kan) a mine. Sir Francis Younghusband, in *The Heart of a Continent*, says it is derived from rast = true, kan = a mine, and mentions the copper smelting (p. 181).

To deviate briefly from the discussion of the Kanjuti raids, Bogdanovich came on the remains of iron smelting works at Ishdebeh near Chiragh Saldi—I have failed to identify the place. The Arab geographers of the eighth to eleventh centuries mention that Eastern Turkestan supplied the Western Mohammedan world with iron and iron ware. It certainly does not and cannot now do so, and I rather question the statement as far as Chinese Turkestan goes. If Badakhshan be included, it is a different matter, and the whole of this area from Raskam to Badakhshan was often loosely lumped together under the name of Belor or Bolor. Bogdanovich discovered no deposits, but the clay schists had highly ferruginous deposits. I cannot believe that Younghusband describes the same place as that mentioned by the Russian. Certainly the mines

that we saw in the Raskam valley were copper ones, unless both Sir Francis and myself, not being mining engineers, were mistaken.

Although pasture was abundant, Bogdanovich was told that through fear of the Kanjuti raiders the Turkis did not dare to go and graze their flocks, as the robbers came regularly every winter. Presumably, there were certain exceptions to these disagreeable visits, since when this traveller was in the Raskam no freebooters had come for four years. Yet the fear of them still lingered. No attempt, it appeared, was ever made to resist these robbers, who were paid at once whatever they demanded—anything was done to induce them to clear out. So terrified were the Turkis of the men of Hunza that Bogdanovich had the greatest trouble in persuading any to come with him.

That intrepid traveller Grombchevski had a wholesome respect for the raids of the men of Kanjut. He observes :[1] 'I proposed to explore the Ruskem river up to Karakorum and thus to connect my survey with that of the British. But we soon learned that the Kanjutis had plundered a rich caravan which was marching from Yarkand to Ladak, and had also kidnapped the whole of the scanty population of Ruskem. The land was now a desert. My guide, who was afraid of also being taken prisoner by the Kanjutis and wanted to compel me to return, managed to drown all the sheep I had taken with us for food as we were crossing the Raskem Daria.'[2]

[1] *Proc. R.G.S.*, Vol. XI., 1889, p. 174.

[2] Two different spellings of Raskam in this passage.

Grombchevski also says that the Kanjutis are indefatigable and merciless brigands who have devastated the whole valley of the Raskam from end to end. Traces of habitation prove that this region was formerly well populated.[1]

The Polish explorer also says that when he was in Raskam a small band of the Kanjuti brigands lay hiding in the brushwood to intercept Lieutenant Younghusband and his caravan, but they were afraid to carry out their intentions.[2] Younghusband says (*op. cit.*, p. 179) that the Kanjutis used to levy blackmail as far as Kugiar (i.e. Kokyar), and (p. 227) he tells the tale of how a band of eighty-seven men of Hunza came from the Shingshal Pass, 190 miles away, and suddenly appeared at Shahidulla. They captured twenty-one Kirghiz, both males and females, whom they later released on payment of Rs.80 a head. The same Kirghiz complained bitterly to Younghusband of the misery that these incursions caused; and cheered him up by adding that the first of his party who entered Hunza would assuredly be killed. It was at Darband or Darwaza, already referred to, that the first meeting between Younghusband and the Hunza people took place.

The procedure of the Hunza men in carrying out their raids was as follows: There were usually two or three raids every winter, before the intense cold began, as the caravan season stopped when the weather

[1] That is so, but it is more probable that the majority of the population did not leave on account of these raids, as the inhabitants were numerous enough to protect themselves. But that was long ago.

[2] *Proc. R.G.S.*, Vol. XII., 1890, p. 423.

became severe. It was when the work in the fields at home was finished, and the streams were low and fordable, that the raiders were free and able to carry out their project. A party usually consisted of ten or twelve men, armed with swords. Let me remark that I do not believe in the gang of eighty-seven raiders described to Younghusband by the pavid Turki of Shahidulla. The number is manifestly a gross exaggeration, and a dozen Kanjutis can terrorise half Turkestan.

The men sometimes carried matchlocks, but not often, as they were clumsy and unwieldy weapons. They travelled lightly, leaving some supplies of food on the way for use on their return, if they failed to hold up a caravan. When they reached a convenient place on the main route, they lay up in an ambush.

They fell on the Turkis when in camp and during the night, and then made their captives carry the loot themselves. When I was at Kuddi Mazar in 1930—the place is between Chiragh Saldi and Kokyar, and is known by many names, all wrong—I met a Turki who had been two and a half years a prisoner in Baltit, the capital of Hunza, after being taken in one of these raids.

Again at Khotan, there was a Turki called Rustam Beg, who had been for years in Hunza. Both these men, especially the latter, were delighted to see their old captors, and could not do enough to befriend them. There seemed no resentment at all. In many cases, of course, there is little to choose between being a captive

in Hunza and a freeman in Turkestan, as anyone who knows the conditions will agree.

I have mentioned the powerlessness of the Chinese to stop these raids, and I again refer to it. For one thing, the authorities in Turkestan did not know of a raid till long after it had taken place and all the parties concerned had vanished, and pursuit was out of the question. Moreover, it was undesirable to offend the people of Hunza for very natural reasons, which both parties thoroughly understood and appreciated. The caravans looted were nearly always those going from Turkestan. The Hunza men in those days needed Turki goods. The iron and copper utensils, the long *chappans* (Turki coats), the boots and other Yarkandi goods, appealed enormously to hillmen. The produce of the bazaars of India was far less useful to them. The instances given show how persistent and continuous were these maraudings. The Chinese never attempted to protect the caravans of their subjects who were thus pillaged, not because the Turkis failed to complain, but because the Chinese were powerless to do so. It was only during the reign of the Khokandlik, Amir Yaqub Beg Bedaulat, that the Turki merchants enjoyed a respite.

The Hunza forays were probably made in two different areas. I have described how we found the remains of a very well-built caravan track which led up the left of the Mustagh valley to Shingshal Aghzi. I am certain in the period before the increased glaciation took place, when the Mustagh and other passes were

easily crossed, that the caravans frequently came by the Mustagh river and the Braldu over into Baltistan. This was the time when the men of Hunza crossed the Nushik La and raided Shigar, when they swooped down on the men of Nagir in revenge for the attack on Shingshal village and when, generally speaking, access to Baltistan was easy. Caravans to Ladakh from Khotan and the East would still use the present route by the Karakoram Pass, but the Raskam and Mustagh route was much easier for merchants from the West and North, from Kashgar, and even Yarkand.

It is quite true that the possibilities of being robbed acted as a deterrent. Caravans, however, prefer to run any risk rather than take a longer route, and especially a route which was so inhuman as well as devoid of fuel or forage. Later on, as the glaciers closed all traffic direct with Baltistan, and as the Karakoram Pass became almost the sole means of communication between Turkestan and Kashmir, the men of Hunza were compelled to extend their sphere. I have explained how they were still 'based' on their fort at 'Darwaza' described by Younghusband (*op. cit.*, p. 259).

From here their route would be down the Mustagh river, to its junction with the Raskam, and up that river to beyond Bazar Dara, whence they could take their choice. They could tap the caravans by crossing over the pass to Shahidulla, or wait as they came over from Kokyar and the Yangi Darwan, or merely lie up anywhere along the valley at Kulan Oldi or the like.

It was really all too simple. To the men of Hunza, active mountaineers unimpeded with bedding or baggage, leaving a few hunks of bread in holes in the cliffs on their outward journey to eat on their return if unsuccessful, the whole enterprise was a joyful adventure. The statement made to Sir Francis (*op. cit.*, p. 263) by the Hunza robbers that their chief took all, is probably an exaggeration. Certainly in those days the authority of the Thum or Mir of Hunza was far less than at present when the ruler of Hunza is a complete despot, for he is no longer threatened by neighbouring chiefs ready to attack him, as history shows, whenever there is any sign of disaffection or weakness.

In those days, before the blessings of British suzerainty had dawned on Hunza, the men were free and adventurous. No doubt they were savages, perhaps they still are, but they were freebooters of necessity. Now all that is gone. Their lives are devoid of incident or adventure, they are the very obedient vassals of their chief, and, if they are lucky, they find work cleaning knives and washing dishes for British officers in Gilgit.

Quite apart from the interest of a small community who for generations were able to plunder the caravans of their neighbours without punishment, a considerable light is thrown by the extensive scope of these raids on the geographical conditions prevailing a century ago. It is quite true that even now the men of Hunza could, and would, if needs be, cross the Nushik, Mustagh and other passes. These passes, once presumably so easy, have now become difficult, and even hazardous. But

it is clear that when they crossed them, e.g. the Nushik La to raid Shigar, the route was easy. If this pass were not easy, how could the raiders return swiftly, safely and unpursued to their own country, although impeded with loot consisting of slaves, cattle, and heavy goods of all kinds ? It was easy enough to go, but it was the return journey that mattered. It is this fact which demonstrates more powerfully than anything else that the glaciers have advanced enormously of recent years, and that even if the British occupation of the Gilgit Agency had never taken place, the danger zone, so far as raids from Hunza were concerned, would by now have been considerably reduced.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME GEOGRAPHICAL AND LINGUISTIC REFLECTIONS

AMONG the geographical points on which my journey threw some light, there is first of all the question of where the Braldu glacier finally terminates. Difficulties prevented us from the thorough exploration of this large glacier. Not that the difficulties lay in the ascent of the valley itself, but transport and rations failed us. I had imagined that the promise of sufficient flour, made to me by the Mir of Hunza, would have freed me from all anxiety, but the Mir did not keep his word. As to transport, when there were no rations for the men, that was bound to break down, and so I was disappointed. I twice visited the Braldu, but twice, through no fault of my own, we had to give up the project. I trust that someone will explore the head of this valley but he should, as I have indicated in the Introduction, be wholly independent. ' Put not your trust in Princes ' is the motto for the traveller in Hunza.

The map at the end of this volume gives my idea of where the glacier ends, but if I am told that my idea is quite wrong, I shall not be surprised. Looking up the valley, the visitor sees in the distance two conical peaks which are most certainly beyond the main axis of the Karakoram. My view is that the head of the Braldu

lies between the Virjerab and the ' Crevasse ' glaciers of Younghusband, but I admit that this opinion is based on general and not particular observations. According to the sketch map of the Italian Karakoram expedition of 1929, the heads of these two glaciers flow from a common watershed. From what I saw of the Braldu and its neighbourhood—and from the high ground at Chikar I enjoyed a peculiarly favourable view—I do not believe that this is so. The Virjerab Glacier has been explored and a map drawn by the Visser expedition of 1925, and my suggestion is that the so-called Crevasse Glacier is quite wrongly marked.

To clear up this problem, two different and almost irreconcilable pieces of exploration have to be carried out. The first and simpler, and that which will produce the more valuable results, is the investigation of the head of the Braldu. If this piece of work be successful, the result will prove more or less where the Crevasse Glacier lies. Sir Francis Younghusband (*Heart of a Continent*: London, 1896, p. 251) estimates the length of this glacier—which he has so named—as twenty-four miles, but I am rather doubtful whether it is quite so long.

The Duke of Spoleto, who was the leader of the Italian expedition to this region in 1929, remarked (*G.J.*, Vol. LXXV., No. 5, p. 389) that ' a large tributary filled to near its end by a glacier [was] the Crevasse Glacier of Younghusband '. This rather implies that the valley was not quite so long as its discoverer imagined; had it been so, the Italians could hardly have seen its

head. The expedition (*op. cit.*, p. 393) also found that the Trango Glacier was much longer than it had formerly been believed to be, and it is probable that other modifications of the still unsurveyed parts will be made.

If the Braldu really rises between these two valleys, then the pass at its head will lead into the Nobundi Sobundi or Drenmang Glaciers and down the Punmah, eventually reaching Askole. If local tradition, admittedly vague and jejune, counts for anything, then the Braldu must take the course suggested, for no other route could possibly lead into Baltistan if the head of the Braldu were closed by the Virjerab and by the Crevasse.

The solution of the second part of the problem requires a visit to the Crevasse Glacier. This is a far more difficult project than any examination of the Braldu, if the traveller wishes to continue from the Shingshal district. I have dwelt on my own woes and worries, and I see no way of overcoming the obstacles of an ascent of the Mustagh above Shingshal Aghzi or Phurzin-i-dasht unless by a wide detour or by rope bridges, of which latter several would be needed.

I do not think that it would be possible to 'turn' the route above Shingshal Aghzi by an attempt to cross the head of the Wesm-i-dur. The country about there is extremely rugged, and it is doubtful whether, on arrival at the other side, further progress would be possible.

The detour from the mouth of the Braldu to the Crevasse Glacier would be down the Mustagh, up the

Raskam, and over the Aghil Dawan. This is certainly a long one, but it offers far fewer problems in transport and victualling than any other way of approach. There would be at least one *dut* (rope bridge) needed in the Mustagh, but if animals are taken from the Raskam valley, it would be possible to cross the Mustagh Shaksgam, or at least, with the help of a couple of yaks, to take a rope across, and secure it on the other side for a bridge. A few good *zaq* (bladders) would also mitigate the difficulty.

Any expedition to this region would have to make separate arrangements for two completely different tasks. The first, which while the easier is also happily the more important, would be the Braldu. The second, completely subordinate though very interesting, is the examination of the Crevasse Glacier. It is more than likely that a complete exploration of the Braldu would make this journey superfluous.

I can only repeat that anyone proposing to undertake this attractive piece of mountaineering should satisfy himself that his arrangements for food are immune from local interference. Travellers in these regions are regarded as easy and nutritious fruit, sent by a kind Providence for the benefit of poor but worthy aborigines. This is no doubt very proper. The only vexatious feature of this point of view is that the local inhabitants do not feel called on to honour their promises and fulfil their side of the bargain. Until these preliminaries have been successfully completed, no attempt should be made, and by successfully

I mean when at least supplies of flour for six weeks have been taken to the mouth of the Braldu. There is no difficulty in taking the flour there. There is enough, but to have it taken and stored is where the crux of the problem lies. I have dwelt in detail on this, and have perhaps repeated myself, but I wish to emphasise the point as I should not like other travellers to be made fools of, as I was.

Good luck, but I confess to being dubious about it, might enable the traveller to cross the axis of the Karakoram and come out on the other side, but that seems to be expecting too much.

Colonel Kenneth Mason, M.C., the famous explorer and distinguished Professor of Geography at Oxford, has given a valuable account of his explorations in the Shaksgam in 1926. I have already indicated that his views on the Mustagh river as being the true source of the Yarkand Daria are completely corroborated by what I have seen. Although the Raskam river is later on identical with the Yarkand, and although it is often so-called in its upper waters by traders, the name Yarkand should not be given to it until it has left the whole of the Mustagh-Raskam area, that is until below its junction with the Mustagh river. Although so much has been said by different travellers about the fords and crossings of this river on the way to Turkestan, the volume of water is always far less than in the Mustagh area. I have visited the parts of the valley where the caravans cross, and there is no comparison between the two streams. In early autumn,

the river about Chiragh Saldi, Kirghiz Jangal, and Khufelang offers few obstacles to the traveller, whereas at that time the Mustagh river cannot be crossed anywhere, although its channel is as wide in places as the Raskam. It is, of course, unwise to dogmatise about these rivers being fordable, for quite apart from the volume of water the channel of the stream is always changing, and in some years the flow of the water to one side with a consequent scour may turn a popular and easy ford into an extremely perilous, and even impossible, crossing.

Central Asiatic nomenclature is always sparse and inadequate, and in Turkestan it is particularly simple and unoriginal. It is a pity, however, that so many names have been allowed to be given to the features in this area. The Mustagh river is also called the Oprang and the Shaksgam, two redundant and complicating terms. 'Oprang' adds to the confusion, as the name should be reserved for the stream which flows from the north of the Oprang Pass, joins the Karachukar river in the Pamirs, and forms the Tashkurghan river. The name Shaksgam must also be regarded as an intrusion. It is a Balti or Ladakhi word, and there are now no Baltis in this region, so that nobody from Hunza, Turkestan, or the countries whose inhabitants visit the area, has ever heard of it. The river should be called the Mustagh, its tributary should be called the Raskam and, if the word Oprang be introduced, the name Southern Oprang should be applied to the river that joins the Mustagh on the left, and up which

we travelled. Far better, however, to banish the name from this region and confine it to the pass. Every endeavour should be made to reduce the confusion in the maps of the Karakoram caused by this redundancy of names. It is not the case, as I found, that every race gives a name of its own to places. On the contrary, the most usual names were employed by all, irrespective of origin. The Balti word, Braldu; the Tajik name, Oprang; the Turki, Oi Bulung; the Wakhi, Shingshal, and so on, were used without any alternatives. It is true that the Shingshalis repudiated the word Shingshal Aghzi for the very good reason that that place was *not* the mouth of the Shingshal river but of the Braldu, and the name had been mistakenly given. An appendix of Wakhi names—which very naturally predominate in the Shingshal area—has been added at the end of the book.

Place-names in the country described in the narrative are Balti, Turki, or Wakhi. Originally, Turki names most probably predominated, before the Wakhi-speaking Shingshalis settled in the country, and when caravans from Turkestan and Baltistan passed to and fro. The Turki names are now rapidly disappearing. A few do survive, and will continue to do so, but generally speaking, since natives of Sinkiang seldom come to the Mustagh, Turki names cannot last.

Among the interesting names are the old names of Balti origin. I say 'old' because most unfortunately the Italian expedition of 1929 gave a number of Balti names to features in a non-Balti-speaking country, and

it is improbable that they will be naturalised. It may be urged that in a country which is uninhabited it does not much matter; but the upper Mustagh and Shaksgam are visited by occasional Kirghiz and Shingshalis but never by Baltis, and if Turki or Wakhi names had been given, there would have been a remote chance of their acclimatisation, whereas there can be none in the case of Balti names, which must remain as useless encumbrances on the map.

The value of the old Balti names lies in the proof, as I have already mentioned, that in the old days people from Baltistan did visit this area. Now they do not come, because they cannot cross the passes since the glaciers became active.

No Shingshali had ever heard the name Shaksgam for a river which he always called by its Turki name of Mustagh. Shingshal Aghzi, or the Mouth of the Shingshal, was always called Phurzin-i-dasht, or the Birch Trees in the Desert. Quite a number of these Shingshalis know a few words of Turki, but not one a syllable of Balti or Ladakhi.

Balti names have been given by expeditions just because there were Balti coolies in the expeditions. Such names are as useful as the names given during the war by the Army to local features. Giving artificial names to peaks and mountains is quite a different matter. The names applied to mountains, peaks, glaciers and so forth, are meant for the use of European travellers and cartographers. They are of academic value. Names for places on the ground floor, so to

speak, for camp sites, streams, and for what may be called everyday use, should be in a language intelligible to those who go there. No native ever dreams of visiting the remote glaciers, distant summits, and dangerous passes which attract the foreigner, so what the mad European cares to call such barbarous features, does not matter. It is the places used in the ordinary way that require ordinary names. One of the best examples of the acclimatisation of an artificial name is found in Chitral. The late Lieutenant Burn, of the Survey of India, called one of the peaks near Tirich Mir by the name of Istoro Nal, or Horse Shoe. These two Chitrali words can be understood by the people, and also indicate the shape of the mountain. The Chitrali has begun to use this name as he hears officers always calling the mountain by it. It is most regrettable that more names of the same kind have not been given. In the Introduction to this book, I have referred to this subject, and also in various places in the narrative.

With regard to the meanings of the Wakhi place-names in the following list, it is well to observe that there is a considerable variation between the Wakhi dialect as spoken in Shingshal and that used in upper Hunza. Some of the meanings given are tentative, but the majority will be found correct. It is of interest to note that with very rare exceptions all Wakhi place-names have a meaning, and the Wakhi is not so miserly in giving names to places as are his Central Asiatic neighbours. I sometimes found it by no

means easy, when words are almost alike in pronunciation, to determine which was actually meant, but I have generally taken the commoner as the meaning. For instance, Zhit or Shit with a long 'i' means white, but the same word means *Burtza* in Shingshali Wakhi.

A word like Ben, pronounced like the English Bane, although primarily meaning a rise, or upward slope, is often used by extension for a pass, or for the crest of a hill, or even 'below'. There is a 'th' in Wakhi, and it is a trap to many. The word for a path or road is Fithek, which is corrupted by non-Wakhis into Pidek.

The names in many maps have suffered from the very real problem of transliteration. There is, however, no excuse for spelling the Wakhi plural 'in' as 'yn'. This is a literary or cartographical genteelism.

The word for pass in Wakhi is uwin, wiyin, or varieties of those syllables, and each Wakhi I have met pronounced it in a different fashion. It is curious that, although this word is often used to describe a feature, it is not employed as a place-name, so far as I know, in compounds where Kotal, Dawan, and La are used in their respective languagés. The preference is to use Sar, frequently pronounced Ser, or even Sir, and at times Ben, to identify the pass.

The D sound is nearly always a corruption for 'Th' in the beginning of words. Dur, a dry nullah, is strictly Thur. The most interesting word is Jerab. This is really Zheraf, the 'Zh' being pronounced like

the 'Z' in Azure, a common sound in Chitrali, but the word is said to be really old Persian.

I can only repeat that there is a marked divergence between Shingshali and other dialects of Wakhi and, generally speaking, the Wakhi spoken in Shingshal is bad, both in pronunciation, construction, and misuse of words. The people, too, being an isolated community, have words peculiar to themselves, and have often borrowed from other languages. They were not, we found, very particular about pronouncing 'Th' correctly, and were apt to be slovenly in substituting 'D' for it.

APPENDIX OF PLACE-NAMES

Aghil or Oghil.	The Turki for a sheepfold, but see the word Ghil below.
Bara khun.	The house of Bara. Bara, a man's name; Khun, a valley.
Baspur Yart.	The eagle's nest. Baspur = eagle; Yart = nest.
Ben.	Pronounced like the English word Bane. It means a slight ascent or rise, and sometimes a col, or even a pass. It also means by extension 'below'.
Boesam.	Pronounced Boy-i-sam. Sam = a water course where the water collects in pools but does not flow. Boy = narrow in Shingshali. Elsewhere Boy = cave, hole, but uncertain.
Chikar.	Willow.
Chinderik.	Wild clematis.
Chot.	Near or by the side of.
Chot Pert.	'Near the grassy slope'. This name is given to a peak with a square top that rises from a grassy 'alp'.
Chuk.	Set up, fixed, erected, dug in.
Chukurt.	The millstone that is fixed. Chuk, see above; Urt = wert, a mill-stone.
Dastoghil.	See Disteghil.
Dest, Dist.	A dist or dest is the edge of a plain or level surface against the side of a valley. A shepherd would choose a level place and build his sheepfold, a circular pile of stones, against the hillside for shelter.

Disteghil.	The *gh* is a guttural. Pronounced disteril. The sheepfold in the Hill.
Dur.	More correctly Thur. A valley or nullah, usually dry.
Ferok-i-deor.	The abode of Ferok. Ferok, proper name; Deor = village, settlement, cultivation, estate.
Ganj-i-dur.	The valley of plenty. Ganj = wealth, treasure; Dur = a valley.
Gar.	A small valley.
Ghash.	A mouth, an opening, especially of a valley.
Ghil.	Anything round, circular, or curved, e.g. the round circle of stones of a sheepfold.
Ghim Ghim.	Ghim, to slip; slide; slippery. A place where people slip. A good name for this perpendicular peak.
Ghorjerab.	The stony valley. Ghor = stone; Jerab = valley.
Ghos Khun.	Ghos = grass; Khun = house. The house in the grass.
Ghujerab.	The cow valley. Ghui = cow; Jerab = valley.
Hel-i-yup.	The water or stream from the summer pasture. Hel = Yailag, summer pasture; Yup = water.
Hupgarch.	Hup = Seven; Garch = hut.
In.	Sign of plural and of abundance, e.g. Phurzin. Many birch trees.
Ishpardin.	Rhubarb. Plural of quantity.
Jaffer Bask.	Not Jachfar. Bask, corruption of Washk = exhausted. The place where Jaffer became exhausted or tired.

Jerab.	More correctly Zheraf. It is a valley, with a stream, not so large as a daria or river, of perennial water in it.
Jujur.	A waterfall.
Kămush.	A place where the water is close to the surface of the ground and wells or bubbles up.
Kărchin.	A plant.
Khunjerab.	The Red Valley. Khun = blood: or red.
Kor-i-sar.	Above the cliff; top of the cliff; or head of the cliff. Kor = cliff; Sar = head, top.
Kosh-i-dur-i ghash.	Kosh = meeting; Dur = valley; Ghash = a mouth, opening.
Kunj-i-lakhsh.	Kunj = vestibule, corridor, passage in a house. The plain of the passage.
Kus = Kuz.	A sort of grass that grows in damp, swampy places. Also = shade.
Kushturt.	Kush = junction of two valleys; Turt = crossing over. The crossing at the junction of two valleys.
Kut.	Small. Also shorter sound means roof.
Kut-i-dur.	The small valley. Dur = nullah; Kut = small. The small re-entrant above the Mulungutti Glacier.
Lakhsh.	A small flat place or plain under a hillside. In Hunza called Butz.
Maidur.	The valley of the female (wild) sheep. Mai = female sheep; Dur = a valley.
Momhil.	The grazing ground of the old woman. Mom = Mother, old woman; Hil or Hel = summer pasture.
Niltek, Niltekh.	Onion in Shingshali Wakhi. Kāch is the word used elsewhere.

Parpik.	A proper name of a plant or flower (Sarikoli).
Paszard.	Pas = below, lower ; Zard = yellow. Below the yellow (cliff, stone, etc.).
Pert.	A grassy slope or ' alp '—a smooth or level grassy place.
Phurz.	The birch tree.
Phurzin-i-band.	The birch trees that are inaccessible (band), *or* that block the way.
Phurzin-i-dasht.	The birch trees in the desert (Dasht).
Purien.	Steps, ladder, stairs.
Purk Jerrikh.	Purk = mouse ; Jerrikh = trapped. The trapped mouse because a mouse was caught here by the rising snow water in a small valley just above Ziarat.
Putput.	Put, local name for the Chiqqan of Turkestan, an aromatic plant.
Rasansgar.	The place of the rope, i.e. where a rope is used. Rasans = rope ; Gar = place.
Rezigin-i-ben.	Rezig or Resig (or with k) is salt deposit in the soil. The Pass of the Salty Earth.
Sar.	Head, top, summit.
Sarghiz-i-sar.	Sarghiz = clay, earth. The top of the earth.
Shach Mirk, Shech Mirk.	Shach or shech = dog ; Mirk = dead. The dead dog. Name of pass.
Shao Khun.	The House of Horns. Shao = horn ; Khun = house.
Shillim.	A particular kind of grass or plant with a flower like lucerne.
Shillim-i-dur.	The valley of the shillim grass.
Shīt.	White.
Showert.	See Shuwert.

Showertsar.	The peak of the Black Millstone. The name given to the summit above Shuwert hamlet.
Shuijerab.	The black valley. Shu = black; Jerab = valley.
Shuwert.	From Shu = black, Wert = rock, stone, especially a millstone. The black millstone.
Sirikh.	A maidan. A level or smooth slope with no grass, as opposed to Pert, which is a grassy slope.
Sar-i-laksh.	The top of the plain. Better Sar-i-lakhsh, but pronounced as given.
Tang-i-ghash.	The narrow mouth or valley opening. Tang = narrow; Ghash = mouth, opening.
Tapeskyn.	Tapesk is a low grayish bush with an insignificant greenish flower. An Artemisia, unidentified, but perhaps Southernwood. Good fuel. The 'y' is an unnecessary refinement.
Targhin.	The Tamarisk.
Teghyn.	See Tughin.
Thur.	Correct for more common Dur, *q.v.*
Tughin.	Tugh. A shrub or small tree.
Tung-i-sar.	The difficult peak. Tung = hard, difficult; Sar = peak, point, head.
Uchzard.	Uch = high or upper; Zard = yellow. The high yellow (place, rock, etc.).
Unmusar.	Misprint on survey map for Uwin-i-sar. Head of the pass.
Uwin.	See Wiyin.
Virjerab.	The long valley. Vir, more correctly Thir, means long.
War wahr.	A heap of stones (Koram or Kurum in Turki).

Washk.	Tired, worn out, exhausted. Often corrupted to Bask in place-names.
Wesm-i-dur.	The precipitous valley. Wesm = precipice.
Wiyin.	A pass. A word very variously pronounced.
Yarz.	The Juniper.
Yarzindur.	The valley of the Juniper.
Yaz.	Ice, snow; especially a glacier.
Yazghil.	The round or curving glacier. See Ghil.
Yemukin.	Singular—Yemuk: an aromatic plant.
Yerlakhsh.	The sunny slope. Yer = sunny; Lakhsh = slope.
Yumushk.	Name of plant used as a vegetable. *Corydalis crassifolia.*
Zan (or Than).	Desert.
Zard-i-gar Ben.	The yellow valley, pass or ascent. Zard = yellow; Gar = valley; Ben = rise.
Zhīt.	More correctly Shīt (Long ī.)
Zhīt Badav.	White sand. Zhīt = white; Badav = sand.

ERRATUM

Page 241, line 18: Morris, Major R. J., *should read* Morris, Major C. J.

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