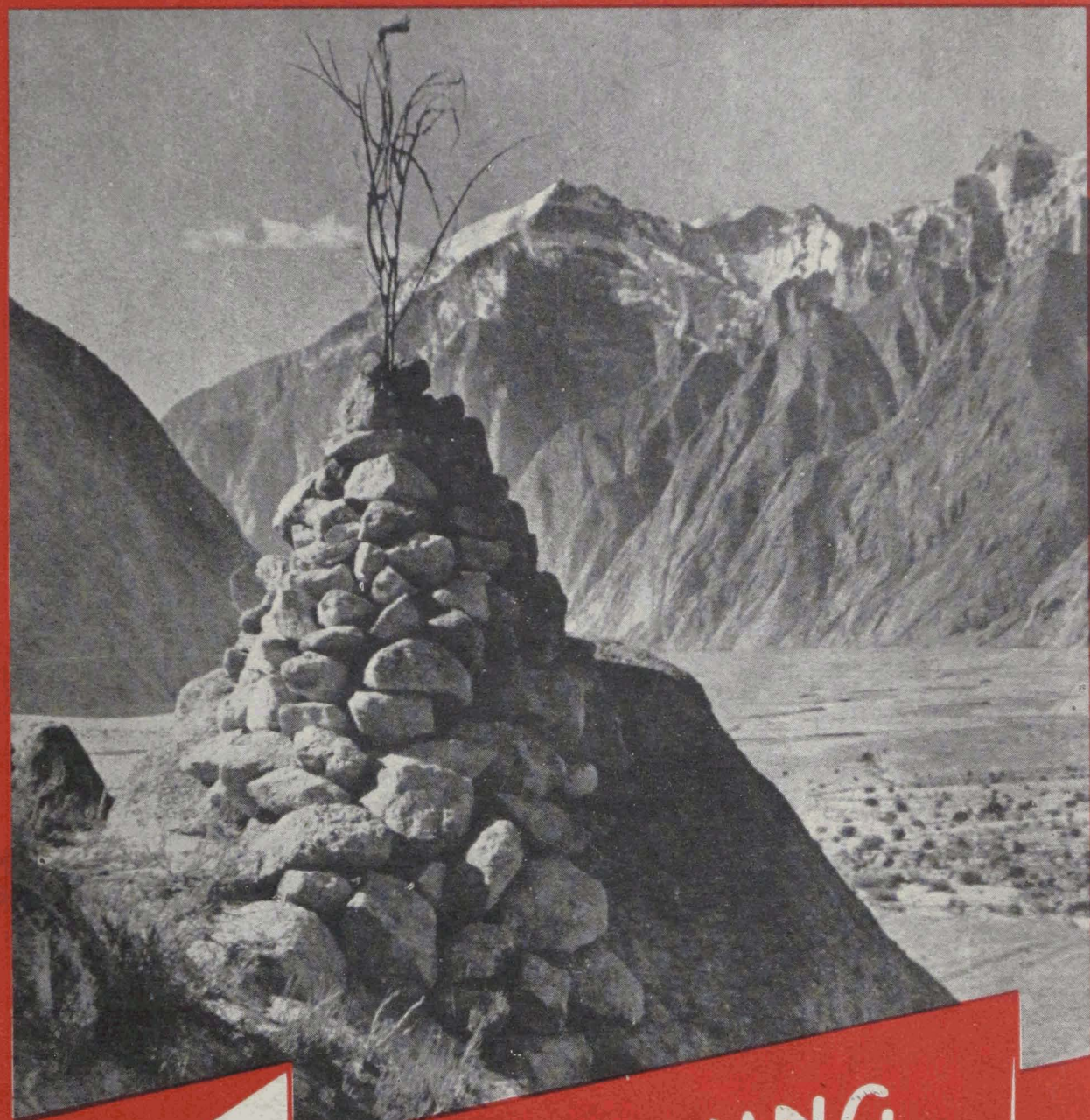


# HIMALAYAN HOLIDAY



PETER YOUNG



COOLIES FORDING THE NUBRA RIVER, WAIST DEEP IN THE MIDDLE. JUNE 14TH, 1939.

# HIMALAYAN HOLIDAY

*A TRANS-HIMALAYAN DIARY*

1939

by

PETER YOUNG

WITH A FOREWORD

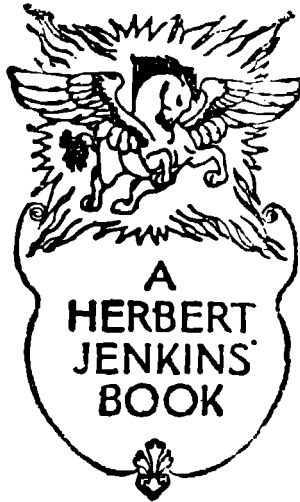
by

WING COMMANDER BENTLEY BEAUMAN

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*First printing*

TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE  
JAMES WOLSTAN YOUNG, O.B.E.

FOUNDER MEMBER  
THE HIMALAYAN CLUB

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED  
IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH  
THE AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARDS.

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## FOREWORD

by WING COMMANDER BENTLEY BEAUMAN

**T**O the mountaineer the vast ranges of the Himalaya will always conjure up many brilliant visions : of giant unclimbed peaks and passes rising to immense heights ; of fine glaciers and rough moraines larger by far than anything known in Europe ; of green tree-clad foothills and valleys carpeted with flowers in which dwell rare beasts, birds and butterflies ; of wild and mysterious hillmen and smiling courageous porters—and many other wonders, all as yet unspoilt, for which the traveller would search in vain on this crowded and sophisticated Continent.

In fact, no other region in the world offers the explorer, the mountaineer or the wanderer such glorious opportunities—and all these pleasures to be gained with little trouble or expense by those in India.

Unfortunately, there are few working and living in the British Isles who can afford the time or the money to travel so far as the Himalaya. And so it has always seemed remarkable to me that those who have the good fortune to be on the spot do not take their chances more often.

But here, at any rate, is a lively and entertaining story by an R.A.F. officer who on his leave had the good sense to carry out a journey into the great Karakoram range. During this trek, as will be seen, he was well rewarded for his initiative.

In his Preface Squadron Leader Young denies that he is either a mountaineer or a crack shot, although some of the incidents he relates would seem to refute such modesty. It is true that, unfortunately, he did not succeed in one of his main objects—the finding of a new route to Gyong La—but, nevertheless, he was wise not to persist in his attempts with such a small and inexperienced party. And at the same time he has the

satisfaction of knowing that he broke fresh ground and his experiences now told may help future explorers of this region.

May many others follow Squadron Leader Young's good example, and also bring us back accounts of their wanderings and photographs of the beautiful country through which they pass.

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## PREFACE

THIS is not a mountaineering book. Neither does the amount or quality of game shot warrant its description as a book of shikar. I prefer to know it as a scambler's book, as it is this class of climber and walker into which the writer falls.

A great many shikar treks are made into the Himalaya ranges every season, by serving officers wishing to spend their accumulated leave in an original and healthy manner. Of all the books about the Himalaya that I have come across, there is barely a single one written by one of these officers. There are plenty written about the major and expensively organised scientific expeditions, and some on the science of shikar ; but it seems to me a pity that none of the many officers who have made an extended tour in the mountain ranges of the Himalaya has left an account of his tour, from which amateur scientists, shikaris and others could obtain some perspective of the routes and difficulties to be overcome.

This, then, is the excuse for the publication of this diary and these photographs. I, myself, found that I was up against this difficulty and could glean my information only from the accounts of major expeditions. To the writers of these books I owe a deep debt of gratitude for their unwitting assistance ; for by reading their books I equipped myself the better for my trek, more particularly into those areas which otherwise I would have left severely alone.

Whilst reading one of these books I was greatly struck by the moral underlying the tailpiece to this preface. On my return from Kashmir I appreciated it still more, and now I am indebted to Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton for permission to re-publish it from Mr. Eric Shipton's *Blank on the Map*. I wish to thank, also, the Royal Geographical Society for allowing me to base

my end-map on the map of *The Karakoram*, published by them ; Messrs. John Murray for the extract from *The Heart of a Continent*, by Sir Francis Younghusband ; the Editor of the *Himalayan Journal* for Map 2, re-published from Vol. 12 of this Journal. I am very grateful as well to Dr. T. G. Longstaff, Colonel Kenneth Mason, M.C., and Mr. Marco Pallis, for allowing me to quote their names. There are many other officers who, like myself, were out on shikar or walking tour and whom it has been impossible to contact under present conditions to obtain permission to use their names. I would crave their indulgence, as also of those sportsmen of other countries whom I have mentioned, declaring that my encounters with them or their achievements are an essential part of the story. There are many others, too, all of whom I wish to thank for helping this novice author !

I wish to emphasise that any names adopted or invented by myself and not quoted on the quarter-inch maps of the country are shown in inverted commas. On occasion, too, I have used the apparent phonetic spelling of the village names, as I heard them spoken, when the names shown on the maps have borne little resemblance to the spoken word. The reader must bear in mind as well that I did not have with me the latest map of the Siachen Glacier and Nubra valley, and that it did not become available until after I had returned from my trek ; the map I had to use was only very sketchy and not altogether reliable, in fact the word "Unexplored" was written across the approaches to Gyong La.

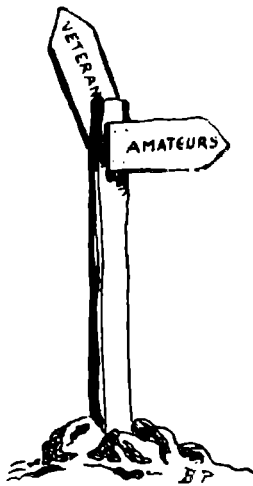
As regards photography, a filter was never used. My "miniature" camera was a Kodak Retina II with a Kodak Ektar f. 3.5 (5 cm.) lens, and the film used was Kodak Super XX, 32° Scheiner. Being a very amateur photographer, I avoided the complications involved by using a filter, and regretted it on only one occasion. I used a small exposure meter for almost all the photos, most of them being taken around  $\frac{1}{100}$ th second with

aperture f. 11. Owing to the intense brilliance and clarity of the atmosphere, photography is very easy at these high altitudes. I took, also, an 8 mm. Kodak cine-camera in which I used both black and white and "Kodachrome" film with astonishingly successful results. The only exposure meter used with this was the cardboard one supplied with the camera, and which was found to be perfectly adequate.

A most important thing, and one which no Himalayan traveller can afford to overlook, is the question of sound sleep at high altitudes. Until one has become acclimatised to camping at these heights it is foolhardy to lighten one's equipment at the expense of sound sleep; not knowing how I would fare in this respect I allowed myself the one luxury of a camp-bed and a canvas bath. Yakdans make adequate tables; any other furniture is unnecessary, only adds to the encumbrance of the party, and in the end is generally broken by a hamfisted ponyman and finally thrown on the fire!

P. Y.

RICHMOND PARK,  
SHEFFIELD, 9.  
*December 1943.*





## PROLOGUE

**A** DANK humidity hung over the plains like a sheet of wet blotting paper, producing a lethargic feeling of exhaustion in me as I gazed at the empty "In" tray in front of me with some self-consolation. It was one of those rare moments when I could definitely claim to be right up to date in my administrative job. My gaze wandered round the office from the safe to the confidential file drawers, past the C.O.'s office door and outside, to halt on a minor that was washing itself in a puddle of irrigation water on the grass. It was a long time since that bird had had a bath ; dust came in clouds from its fluttering wings. Suddenly, the silence was rent by an unusually large roar from an aero-engine. The minor curtailed its bathing, to be resumed in more peaceful surroundings.

The aero-engine, I knew, was one of the three special Siemens engines fitted to a Junkers Ju. 52 transport 'plane. I could not help but envy the crew of that aircraft. In a day or two they would be co-operating with the climbers of the German Expedition to Nanga Parbat (26,620 ft.) flying amidst the cool beauty of one of the most dangerous Himalayan peaks. The story of the German attempts to climb this disdainful mountain have proved this to be so in only too disastrous a manner ; twenty-six men have been killed by avalanches on its slopes.

I wandered over to the large-scale wall-map and looked at the position of the mountain, up in Kashmir. Kashmir ; a name of some wonder to me, as I had never visited the country. My thoughts went to the wonderful photographs in a book I was reading about an expedition to the Karakoram mountains. I looked for them and saw a space to the north of them marked "Unexplored". From there, I traced southward along the largest rivers, which seemed to afford some

hopes of access to the area. Gradually, a scheme evolved itself ; it did not seem so impossible to reach that country. A thin red line labelled " Central Asian Trade Route " seemed to cross the head of a river, the Shaksgam, which flowed down to the unexplored country where it was represented by a broken line, evidence of doubt concerning its true course.

I became fired with an intense desire to be free of the monsoon-ridden plains of India and to enjoy the fascination of travelling into unknown country, plotting the true course of the river with the help of a prismatic compass. It was an opportunity not to be missed. I would plan the trek in detail and apply for leave during the coming cold weather season.

The following May I set off, not on the trek originally planned, but on one very similar to it. My little Morris " eight " tourer carried me up from the plains and over the Banihal Pass, on the rim of the Vale of Kashmir, without complaint. At last Kashmir was no longer merely a wishful attainment ; from the summit of the pass it seemed that I was plunging downward into a new world, of mountains and adventure.

# HIMALAYAN HOLIDAY

## CHAPTER I

### Trans-Himalaya

**A**FTER four fairly hectic days arranging stores and equipment for the trip, we left Srinagar by hired bus at 11.15 a.m. on May 9th, 1939. The drive to Woyil Bridge went without incident and, after taking a few photos, I pushed on ahead with my bearer and tiffin coolie, leaving the shikari to organise the making up of loads for the pack-ponies which we picked up here.

Before going further, let us introduce the party. First place must be given to the shikari,<sup>1</sup> who is responsible for all the bandobast<sup>2</sup> made for transport on this trip and who shows me where to find the game. Ahmed Lone is a shikari of some repute, and is a very quiet fellow having very little to say. Faultlessly and most suitably dressed, he comes of a good Kashmiri family living near Srinagar. Ahmed Lone's brother, Khaliqia, is my bearer<sup>3</sup> and a cheerful little chap. He understands and speaks English quite well, whereas Ahmed Lone is not so good at it. Next in order of caste comes the cook, or "khansamar", whose name is Abdullah. He arrived at only the very last minute, so I don't know him yet; but he neither speaks nor understands English. Lastly comes the "tiffin-coolie",<sup>4</sup> Rastaman. He speaks no English at all and does not understand a word of it. He's rather an old man and I was very doubtful whether I should take him into the blue. In fact I was doubtful whether he was necessary at all, but I was assured by my agent that he was essential.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Strict meaning—hunter.

<sup>2</sup> Bandobast—organisation, arrangement.

<sup>3</sup> Personal servant.      <sup>4</sup> Special coolie to carry lunch.

<sup>5</sup> Experience showed that he was not. A pony-man can always do the job.

The march from Woyil Bridge was uneventful—an easy eight-mile walk over a third-class motorable road to Kangan, and then two miles farther on to the camping ground, which is by a good spring on the right of the road. It is a lovely spot, very pretty, with the Sind River roaring along a few yards away and a background of dark, wood-covered mountains, on either side of the valley, surmounted by the snow-covered peak of Sarbral (13,261 ft.) shining like a jewel in the sunset.

As far as I can tell from the map, the snow-line starts at about 10,000 feet ; so in a few days' time, apart from the effect of the as yet unexperienced altitude, the Zoji La pass should provide little difficulty.

On arrival at camp we saw that someone else had camped about a hundred yards away. He was out at the time, but dropped in later and asked me over to share a trout he had caught. So I took my supper over and had it with him, while we listened to Strauss waltzes played on his gramophone.<sup>1</sup> He was from an army unit stationed at Ambala and had to stay within forty-eight hours recall from leave.

I didn't sleep well that night owing to the unaccustomed sound of a swift-flowing river and the pack ponies emitting the most incredible noises just behind my tent, which seemed very frail as they shook the ground with stamping hooves. There are eight of them and they carry enough for four months—travelling light ; even so, it seems to me amazing that no more are needed.

An early start was made at 6.15 a.m. next morning in order to reach Gund in good time. It is here that the bandobast must be made for coolies to be taken over the Zoji La, the pass by which we cross the Himalaya Range and which is still covered in snow at this time of the year.

The thirteen miles march from Kangan was uneventful and we camped in the Dak Bungalow compound on arrival.

<sup>1</sup> A thing I regret that I did not take.



At about eleven o'clock an Indian lady and gentleman moved in and pitched camp. I've not called on them and do not intend to do so. There are three principles I have formed for this trek : (1) Not to touch alcohol as a drink. (2) Not to accept offers of meals with other trekkers, as they only make the offer out of politeness and really need their own food supplies as much as I need mine. I'm flat out to feed with others if I take my own food. (3) Not to call on trekkers with mem-sahibs<sup>1</sup> in the party unless invited to do so ; there may be honeymooners about and I don't want to drop a brick by pushing myself on to them !

The country round here is really lovely—I've never seen anything like it. It is difficult to stop taking photos as there is a subject round every corner ; with difficulty, I restrained myself from taking too many and, folding up my camera, retired to my " flea-bag ".

Sound sleep prepared me for a rather eventful fourteen-mile walk to Sonamarg. It is on this march that the real climb up towards the Zoji La pass is encountered. The road became steadily worse and worse, the hills gradually closing in on the valley until we came to a deep gorge formed by ridges running down from Shutlyan (14,341 ft.) on the north, and Basmal (15,638 ft.) on the south. Here the valley, which has been running north-east so far, suddenly twists to the east and then sharply north-east again, with the result that sharp draughts whistle up, down and across the valley among the trees and rocks.

It was here that we struck the first snow—enormous great avalanches which had carried down big trees and huge boulders to the banks of the river. All this made very rough going indeed and it took the ponies a long time to scramble and slither over a barely worn track. Sonamarg is a tiny village and seems to derive its importance merely on the strength of its being a stage-

<sup>1</sup> Ladies.

village on the route to Ladakh.<sup>1</sup> The scenes on the way along the route to-day were really beautiful and I thoroughly appreciated them although I was extremely tired, not yet being fully acclimatised.

After a long rest two letters were written and sent off. Then Ahmed Lone came and fitted me up with grass-rope shoes for to-morrow, in case my climbing boots were not a good fit. The Rest House chowkidar<sup>2</sup> then came and asked me to fill in the Visitors' Book. Then to-morrow's bandobast had to be fixed. Finally, taking advantage of the hour of daylight, I wrote up my diary. Contrary to most people's ideas, life in camp when by oneself is not really boring—there's always something to be done.

Having stayed last night in the Rest House at Sonamarg, we started off at 6 a.m. for Baltal, the last stop before crossing the Zoji La. The small track led over nine miles of level going over snow-beds and drifts, quite a decent march after yesterday. In some places the snow had broken away leaving tiny crevasses about a foot wide and in other places had avalanched slightly, all of which meant slow progress at times. But as we started early, we got the benefit of the hard snow which had frozen during the night.

On arrival at Baltal, Khaliqia pointed out the summer road over the Zoji La, which opens in June. It looked an easy one, but is now only just visible where the snow has melted slightly. That road, of course, is impossible for us: we must go by the valley and have a very steep climb up over a snow-drift to the top of the pass at 11,578 feet.

At about half-past three clouds came up from the south; big, dirty looking ones. Soon after, the thunder started and it began to hail pretty heavily, whilst a bitterly cold wind blew down the valley off Razdam

<sup>1</sup> Ladakh . . . a district of Kashmir, sometimes called Western Tibet, where all the inhabitants are Buddhists and speak Tibetan. Baltistan, another district which I visited, is inhabited entirely by Hindustani-speaking Mohammedans.

<sup>2</sup> Chowkidar . . . watchman.

(15,376 ft.) to the south. Now and again I heard a rattling sound like a distant train. Once, when it was louder than usual, I looked around and saw a lot of snow and stones slipping down a gully in the sheer mountain-side ; interesting—and a forewarning not to get too close to such places.

I woke at about 3.30 a.m. to hear a howling wind tearing at the tent and whistling among the ropes. I lay in bed listening to it, thankful that I had a warm "flea-bag" round me, for about half an hour. Then, remembering that we had to cross the Zoji La to-day, I got into my clothes as quickly as possible, pushed a steaming hot breakfast inside me and struck camp at 5.0 a.m. As we were taking ponies over the pass it was essential to start early, in order to get the benefit of the hard snow.

The first 300 yards were easy going, then we struck the snow-beds and drifts. The going was very steep and cold with a sharp wind booming down the gully, which took my breath away as it burst around me and made me duck over my ice-axe to stop being blown back and to protect my face which, in the past few days, had not grown much of a beard. The snow, though, was hard and the only real difficulty was climbing up a gradient of one in two or three at that height (10,000 ft.). Soon the sun gilded the mountain-peaks, and as it rose the wind died away, so that I found myself gazing at the fluted walls of the gorge as though I was in the nave of some gothic cathedral where a golden sun-beam lit up the details of its architecture. There was an impression of sanctity in the silence of that sunrise of gold, blue sky and black and white mountains which made me almost catch my breath with wonder.

After two and a half hours steady climbing, which included the usual halts for rests and one or two photos, we reached the top. Well, this is the highest I've ever been ; it is fairly hard work, but that is only a matter of practice. These tough Kashmir people walk straight up the steep snow-drift in all but the worst places. I

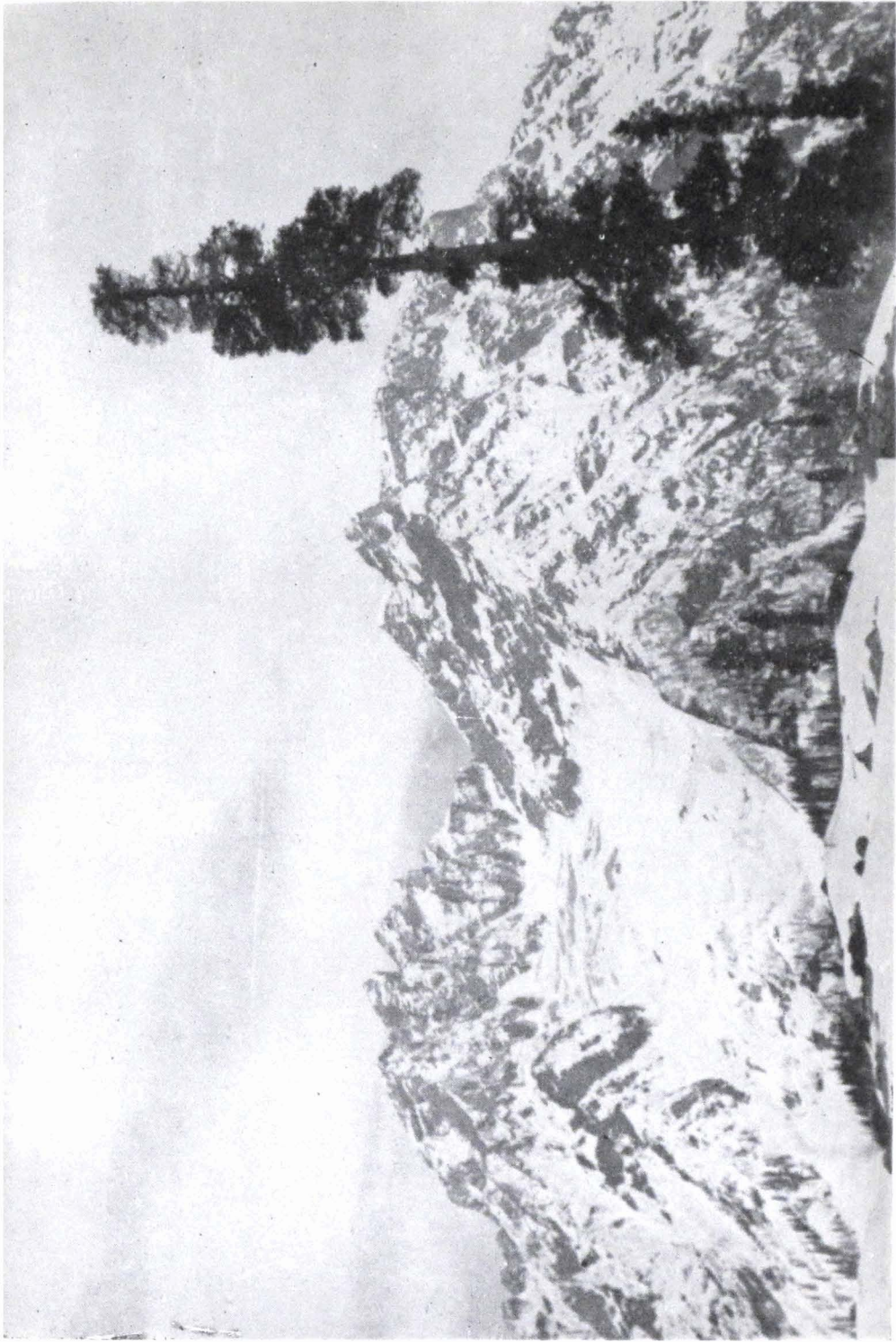
tried to follow suit, but soon gave up and started to traverse—a very much easier and less tiring way of climbing.

All went well until we got half a mile or so from Machhoi. Here we had to traverse a very steep drift and the snow, by this time, had thawed out on the surface, making going very slippery. Several ponies fell and slipped right down the slope towards the river, but nothing actually went in and after several anxious minutes we got on and at last arrived at Machhoi, nine miles from Baltal. On arrival the “ghorer-wallah”<sup>1</sup> was most anxious to stay the night here and was eloquent with his reasons for doing so. So far as I could see it was plain common sense to stay as it would be foolish to carry on in such soft snow conditions.

After lunch I had a visit from the Telegraph Office clerk—an educated Indian. He was most courteous and very interesting. His life must be a very dull one; he spends the entire winter here living in a hut which he considered a death-trap owing to its situation in relation to potential avalanches. His hut was partially damaged this winter by a small avalanche from a large glacier, on the south side of the valley. Above this glacier is a rather impressive mountain, point 17,685 feet on the map. He never sees a newspaper and, consequently, rarely knows what is going on in the world; he was very eager to hear the latest about the various wars and the possibilities of wars. But my own news was five days old, though he said that, to him, was stop-press news. The clerk told me that we were the first travellers to bring ponies over the pass this year and he was surprised to see them coming along so early. The Zoji La is open, officially, only on June 15th every year.

The Zoji La pass is one of, if not the most, important pass in this range—the Great Himalaya Range. The rivers on the northern side are nearly all tributary to the River Indus. It may sound a much greater effort

<sup>1</sup> Ghorer-wallah—native in charge of ponies.



IN THE HIMALAYA RANGE, UPPER SIND VALLEY.



RASTAMAN, KHALIQA AND AHMED LONE WITH THE RED BEAR SHOT AT DRAS.

than it really is to have crossed this range ; there is little in it at any time, but in June it is crossed every day by caravans of ponies belonging to merchants from Ladakh, mountaineers, explorers and the ordinary fellows out on shikar or trek. Ladies cross it regularly as well and think nothing of it. It remains open from the middle of June to about October, depending on how soon the first winter snowfalls set in.

In the popular imagination, the Himalayas are those mountains which stretch from the Pamirs in the west to China in the east, and from the Takla Makan and Gobi Deserts in the north to the Indian plains in the south. This is true in so far as the range of mountains nearest India has automatically given its name to the entire system of mountains. But this system of mountains is made up of a very great many different ranges. Of these, perhaps the greatest is the Karakoram Range, which holds the second highest peak in the world—K2, or, to give it the incorrect name, Mount Godwin Austen, 28,250 feet high.

I was just checking through to-day's entry in my diary when Ahmed Lone suggested I should try the telescopic sight of my rifle, which I had never used before. He produced a cardboard target about twelve inches by nine inches and put it up against the hillside at 100 yards. A lucky shot hit it—and again at 200 yards, but I failed by some two feet at 300 yards ; however, he was satisfied. Everyone was watching—coolies, Ladakhis and some mail-runners who promptly snatched up the empty cases. It was the most critical audience of hillmen that I could have had, as I've not touched the rifle for over a year and natives demand a high standard of shooting from " sahibs ".

It froze fairly hard in the night, which made the track for the ponies next morning pretty good, and in the first hour we did four miles. The march was mainly over snow and most of the morning was easy going on the shady side of the mountains.

Of course, I, Khaliqia and Rastaman travel faster

than the ponies, and about a mile and a half before reaching Pindras we stopped for a rest at the bottom of a very big snow-drift. It was well we did so, for the ponies soon caught us up and Ahmed Lone announced that one pony had slipped, a short way back, and had given my gun a wetting in the river. I called back the pony carrying the rifle and sent on the others to Pindras, where the snow ended. Then followed a quick dry of the shot-gun. I felt a bit anxious as it was about ten o'clock, the sun was getting high and the snow was rapidly becoming very soft. However, we got the gun dry quickly, rather overloaded the pony with rifle and gun and, with one pony-wallah holding the pony's head and another its tail, slipped and slithered the next mile or so to Pindras. Hereabouts the valley bends suddenly to the east, with the result that there is very little snow there as the sun is on the valley all day. After a short rest at Pindras we carried on, the ponies going high up the hillside to avoid what snow there was. I was dead tired that evening on arrival at Dras—after a twenty-mile walk, half of it over snow—and went to bed (or perhaps I should say “flea-bag”) early. We stayed here for a day or two to try and bag a red bear.

#### BEAR HUNTING

I had a long sleep and got up at eight. Ahmed Lone had found the local shikari last night and made him sleep in our camp in order to go with him early the following morning to look for a bear. Ahmed Lone was up at five o'clock, but the local shikari would not go, saying: “There is no bear; all time sahibs coming and look in nullah sometime three, four day, but never see bear.”

Ahmed Lone went off in disgust by himself. After breakfast I was writing up my diary, when Ahmed Lone appeared, came up to me and quietly said:

“Huzzoor,<sup>1</sup> I see bear—big fellow.”

<sup>1</sup> Huzzoor—master.



He was not excited, as he had a perfect right to be. Khaliqia was amazed at this luck, the local shikari openly disbelieving and Rastaman enthusiastic. I asked Ahmed Lone what he proposed.

“Leave here twelve o’clock, Huzzoor,” he said.

He went on ahead to try and locate the bear ; I, Khaliqia and Rastaman left at about twelve. Ahmed Lone had not been able to see the bear, but after going up the nullah-bed a little way Rastaman stopped and pointed up. He had seen the bear ’way up at the top of the mountain. Like all hillmen, his eyesight was like that of a pair of field-glasses.

Then followed a quick climb up the very steep shale-covered mountain. With few rests and myself absolutely whistling with breathlessness and gasping for air we reached the top of a ridge at about 14,000 feet at 2.0 p.m. The bear wasn’t where he’d been seen. We then climbed up to another ridge over which we could see the other side of the mountain. After dead slow and quiet going we got there. Shortly before, however, the rifle was got ready, five cartridges in the magazine, one up the spout and the telescopic sight fixed. Ahmed Lone peeped over the ridge and after a long time quickly swung down and round and whispered :

“Huzzoor, udder hai.” (It is there, master.)

“Shabash—kitne yard ?” I said. (Fine—how far away ?)

“Hundred,” whispered Ahmed Lone.

After setting my sight to one hundred yards I wriggled up alongside him and he pointed out the bear. Well, well ; so that’s a wild bear—a real live red bear in his native land. I examined him closely through the field-glasses. He was sleeping on the edge of a snow-bed, his back towards us. This was all against the rules ; he should have been in his hole at this time of day ; surely not even a bear would choose a hole of snow ! I wriggled up into a comfortable position, gradually got settled in, rifle trained on the bear and waited, Khaliqia supporting my feet and stopping me from slipping back

to Dras. Once or twice the bear altered his position slightly, but not enough to shoot. After waiting about ten minutes, during which time I had quite got back my breath, the bear suddenly got up and faced about, so that I had a three-quarter front view of him. I aimed for his right shoulder. The first two shots parted the hairs on his neck and thoroughly roused him. He turned his head this way and that looking for me ; had he seen me he would have charged. Ahmed Lone got worried and shifted the ball-loaded shot-gun, ready in case of emergency, if the bear charged me. The third shot was wild—due to mishandling the hair trigger. The fourth shot was a mis-fire. The bear was thoroughly angry now, still standing, a lovely target against the snow, turning his head this way and that very quickly. With the fifth shot I aimed well down his right leg, hoping to get his neck or shoulder, fired, and killed him with the one shot.

The strain of waiting was suddenly broken by loud cries of “Shabash” and “Atcha Huzzoor”. We climbed down to the bear and the coolies started skinning him while I had a spot of tea, looking down on Dras thousands of feet below and admiring the panorama of little cumulus clouds chasing each other round the snow-peaks all around me.

We got back at about six after I'd fallen into a large stream. As the light was going rapidly, I cleaned the rifle straight away. Later the others arrived with the skin ; the whole village turned out to see it ; it measured six feet. I wish I could have taken a photo of the scene, but I couldn't as I had only my pants on at the time ! The entire population were utterly amazed ; Khaliqia couldn't stop laughing with joy and surprise. Even at half-past nine, just before I went to bed, he came to me laughing heartily, tears in his eyes ; “Oh sahib, but what luck,” he said, “you come here yesterday evening. To-day Ahmed Lone going five o'clock to the nullah, coming back nine o'clock—he seen big one ; oh sahib what luck ! Then you going

twelve o'clock seeing him sleeping on snow—plenty time getting ready. You shoot him good shot—you get him just below neck, bullet go inside, break heart. I open him and see. You come back six o'clock having shot big bear. Areh ! sahib but what luck ! *Many* sahibs coming here, staying *many* day, looking *all* nullah, never see bear. Oh Sahib ! ” And he went off shaking his head. Khaliqia's English is very picturesque sometimes.

A lie-in again next morning and while the bear-skin was being salted, my diary and a few letters were written.

At about one o'clock another fellow came in from the Zoji La just about lame. He'd lost his chappies<sup>1</sup> and had come from Machhoi in felt grass-shoes only. He had an enormous blister on one foot, but he was determined to go on next day ; I gave him some iodine which made him howl. He's going shooting up Skardu way, in Baltistan. About the same time two others came in, also from the Zoji La direction ; they are on a walking tour to Leh and are not shooting.

I woke up with a bit of a cold next day ; due to yesterday's wet feet, I suppose. A strong dose of quinine cured it. I went out this afternoon to see if I could hit a pigeon and saw six in three miles walking.

We pushed off at about seven o'clock and made a good pace, reaching Dandal in two hours. It had been reported that there was a bear on the hill on the left bank of the river near here ; but on arrival we were told that it must have moved as it had not been seen for two days. Hearing this we moved on to another series of nullahs at Somat, where there is nearly always a bear. The total march was about twelve miles. We arrived at about twelve o'clock and pitched camp on the hillside at about 10,200 feet. Ahmed Lone at once set out to look for a bear and returned at 6.30 p.m., having drawn blank. He is going out to another nullah to-morrow morning and if he draws blank again we'll

<sup>1</sup> A type of heavy sandal.

go on to Kharbu, the next stage-village after Dras. We must push on as quickly as possible.

The blue skies have gone. There was some slight rain in the night and this morning showed thick, dark clouds rolling round the mountain-tops. Ahmed Lone came back at eight o'clock ; he'd seen a bear, quite a big one at that, but it had gone up the mountain into the clouds and he had lost sight of it. We will wait a couple of hours to see if the rain and clouds clear ; if so, all well and good, but I very much doubt it doing so.

However, it cleared quite a lot by 10 a.m., and as the weather looked promising, I decided it might clear by the evening or to-morrow morning, so we'll stay one more night. But by mid-day the clouds had cleared from the top of the mountains almost entirely, and the hot sun was making the ground steam. Optimistically, we pushed off, I in khaki shorts, shirt, coat and topi. Up we went and after about a thousand feet the clouds came over—and then the snow. We went up another thousand feet. I was perishing cold—I'd never been so cold since I left England. Snow-flakes whirled past us, an icy wind took our breath away and our hands froze stiff and blue. I packed up ; Khaliqia and I sheltered behind a rock while Ahmed Lone, more sensibly dressed than either of us, went to see if he could find the bear. The weather got worse and worse, the wind blew at almost gale force, while snow-flakes blurred the mountains as they whistled past us in the teeth of the wind. I was chilled—frozen through and through, and so was poor little Khaliqia whose teeth chattered like a wood-pecker. Ahmed Lone would be mighty lucky if he saw the bear through this muck. Finally I revolted. Not all the bears in India were worth double-pneumonia. I told Khaliqia to tell the others to pack up too. We pushed some tea and biscuits inside us and fairly shot back to camp. I arrived warmed up and promptly changed.

Soon Khaliqia came in bewailing the fact that he could not stop me ; he'd seen the bear. He pointed

it out—I could see it easily from the camp, straight up the nullah.<sup>1</sup> He was a big chap, larger than the one I had shot at Dras and very red. If only I had stayed with Khaliqia, who has eyes like a telescope, the stalk was an easy one. Everything was to our advantage and in particular the bear was up-wind of us. The only consolation is that I'm positive that I could not have shot him. I could not feel my fingers, so how I could have held a rifle, let alone handle a hair-trigger, I don't know. After some tea and cleaning, and drying both rifle and gun, I watched the bear through my glasses.

Mention of the hair-trigger reminds me that I am open to criticism by some, amongst the sporting fraternity, for using a rifle so equipped. I had little or no choice in the selection of a rifle and count myself lucky to have become the owner of this very light Mannlicher-Schonnauer 8 mm. I could have hired a rifle from my agent, but, like many another I think, I was loth to use an untried rifle. Big-game shooting in the Himalayas is an expensive sport: for this reason, and because the vision of a "side of mutton" going over the ridge at full gallop is apt to make one feel hungry in that country, one need not, and should not, have any compunction about the "lack of sportsmanship" in using a telescopic sight. To my mind, the collection of a good head is incidental to the collection of good fresh meat. The hair-trigger is a mistake, as I demonstrated to myself only too well; one with two pressures is ideal. I will not discuss the merits of ballistics; I know opinion will differ. The red bear was killed—admittedly, very luckily—with one shot, which seems to bear out the efficiency of the .315 bore (8 mm.) soft-nose bullet; but I will have to have a convincing demonstration before I part with this ideally light rifle for shooting in hill-country.

The next day broke badly. Ahmed Lone, neverthe-

<sup>1</sup> Nullah . . . Any indentation in a hillside that cannot properly be termed a valley.

less, went out with a coolie at five o'clock—he didn't think it worth my coming. He came back after a long time having drawn blank as the clouds were still drifting about the top of the mountain.

During the morning, before Ahmed Lone came back, I made a devastating discovery. I was reading all my game licence and permit papers, when I discovered I was allowed only one bear. On Ahmed Lone's return I asked him how many I was allowed. "Two, Huzzoor," he replied. I asked Khaliqia and got the same answer. I then produced the bombshell. Their consternation was amazingly funny. Ahmed Lone's face was a picture. After all his years of experience this was too much for him.

"But Sahib, every year all people know, all sahibs shoot *two* red bear," he said.

Still, there it was in black and white over the State Game Warden's signature, though I believed Ahmed Lone and was tempted to wait for the weather to clear. But I packed up and went on to Kharbu, rather to Ahmed Lone's disgust. I rather sympathised with him, but still, I could not take his word for it against the official licence. He saw sense in the end; for if I *were* allowed only one, not only would I be fined, but he would lose his shikari's licence. I was very annoyed about all this; the bear was a good one, seven or eight feet, and had a very red coat. (It was shot later by Lt. French on his return from Chang Chenmo, and measured seven feet). Later, I checked through the licence and also found that whereas Ahmed Lone declared I was allowed two Markhor, the licence allowed only one. Poor Ahmed Lone was most upset at missing this bear and at the realisation of the discrepancies in the licence. I told him I would telegraph to the Game Warden on arrival at Kargil.

Very soon after starting for Kharbu I felt dizzy. I wondered what on earth it could be due to and finally decided it must be due to the height at which we were travelling—around 10,000 feet. But I couldn't under-

stand it coming at this stage, after I'd crossed the Zoji La (11,500 ft.) and been up to 12,000 feet and more. I took the eleven-mile walk to Kharbu very steadily.

Last night on arrival at Kharbu we camped in a very pretty orchard full of blossoming trees and here I met the Jemadar Game Warden of this area. I told him about the game licence and asked him what I was entitled to. "Two red bear," he said.

On arrival at Kargil, on May 20th, after a sixteen-mile walk through a country which frequently gave very good views and pretty scenery, I telegraphed to the Game Warden about the red bear and markhor. Then the Tehsildar came over and explained that the British Joint Commissioner's office in Srinagar thought I had not got my pass to proceed beyond Kargil. Actually I had, and produced it to his satisfaction, though they had sent another by mail. If a traveller wishes to go farther than Kargil, on the road to Leh or elsewhere, he must hold a permit to do so issued by the office of the British Joint Commissioner for Ladakh, in Srinagar. This rule, which applies to several routes in the country, thus splits the State into what might be termed Inner Kashmir, permission to travel within which is not officially necessary, and Outer Kashmir, which is more inaccessible and in which, for this and other reasons, one must have official sanction to travel.

A very long march on the 21st, twenty-two miles, to Mulbekh, took ten hours and at the end I was very tired. I think I've rather overdone it and to-day's effort was too far for me, especially as I still had a bad head. To-morrow I'm taking on a riding pony, and I'll probably continue to ride till we reach Leh. So far I must have done about 150 miles walking—anyway, 134 miles of marches. One hundred and fifty miles in 13 days at 10,500 feet, when one is out of training, is apt to be a bit tiring.

## THE ROAD TO LEH

East of Kargil the pretty villages began to disappear and the country became more grim, having little vegetation. The people this side of the Zoji La gradually become more Tibetan-like in their dress and their features much more of the Chinese variety than the Indian. We are now in Ladakh ; in fact, we've been in it since we crossed the Zoji La which, politically, is the boundary between the districts of Kashmir proper and Ladakh. Although Ladakh is politically a part of India within the Kashmir Native State, from the point of view of religion, mode of living and other customs it is essentially Tibetan, and even now Ladakh is sometimes called Western Tibet, as it was a century or so ago before Kashmir annexed it. Undoubtedly, the influence of Kashmiri administration and law will affect the character of the Ladakhi, and especially of those who live on the trade route to Leh and Sinkiang, though even now some eighty years of life under the Kashmir Government doesn't seem to have spoilt them to any noticeable extent.

Here, at Mulbekh, we found the first Lama monastery which, in Ladakhi-Tibetan, is called a Gompa. The appearance of this Gompa, and the fact that all the people were now talking and most of them understood only Tibetan, emphasised the fact that we were really in a new country. This gompa is on the top of a high buttress of rock immediately above the Rest House, just where they catch the worst of all weathers ; I'll bet they feel cold in winter.

Since leaving the Zoji La, I've seen quite a number of birds which one does not usually see in India—robins, swallows and others, less common and of striking colouring. But in particular, the magpies are the most noteworthy. They are enormous great birds with long and very wide, lyre-like tails, compared with the English ones. One or two of the larger ones I saw must have



been at least eighteen or twenty inches in overall length. Their colouring is similar to the English bird.

To-day's fifteen-mile march from Mulbekh, most of it ridden, was not very difficult. The road was a good one and we arrived at Bod Kharbu at about two o'clock. Khaliqia took a cine-shot of me as I was coming down from Namika La on the pony—I must have looked a funny sight as the pony was not much bigger than a large Shetland. Poor thing, it may be very tough as all these hill-ponies are, but how it coped with me on its back I don't know. I walked almost the whole way up to Namika La, and only rode downhill or on the level.

When we had reached the top of the pass, someone called out "Huzzoor". I turned round and saw an enormous great Ladakhi coming towards me with a huge grin on his face. It turned out that he was a coolie and wanted a job. He produced some chitties,<sup>1</sup> and I was surprised to see what good ones they were. One was signed by Marco Pallis, a well-known explorer of Tibet, and another was signed by Dr. Visser when he was leading the Netherlands Karakoram Expedition of 1935. Ahmed Lone immediately recognised the man, whose name was Nurbu, and said he was a very good coolie. I told him to come to my camp in Leh in ten days' time and I'd tell him if I was going north or not; but he immediately chose to return to Leh with us as he expected to get a job.

Another fifteen-mile march, through very similar country, to that which we came through yesterday, and over Fotu La (13,432 ft.). The climb up is very easy and the only feature of the pass, as one goes up from the west, is the tower buttress, a mile or so to the south. The clouds came over just before we reached the top and a high wind blew. It was pretty chilly in shorts, shirt, sweater and wind jacket. The march was uneventful and we finally reached Lamayuru where there is a fairly large Gompa, situated, as usual, on the top

<sup>1</sup> The Indian's name for a character reference.

of a rock, just where it gets all the wind, hail, snow, dust and heat. These lamas must be "bats in the belfry". I took a cineshot of some lamas by the camp. There were four of them and as usual they wanted backsheesh.<sup>1</sup> I had three annas in my pocket. I gave these to them and then pulled out the insides of my pockets to show them I had no more. They thought this a huge joke and thereafter were most hospitable in their attentions.

While I was having my bath Khaliqia came along and announced that a sahib was waiting to see me. I was very surprised and eventually found Lt. French waiting to "call". We talked for some time and I found that he had just come from Chang Chenmo, where I was to have gone, had there been any shooting free there. He'd had quite a good time, but had had a very bad time while crossing the Chang La (18,000 ft.) over the Ladakh Range beyond Leh. He was caught in a blizzard and the ponies, besides getting lost in the snow and mist, sank up to their flanks in soft snow and were in danger of breaking their legs between the hidden rocks. Fortunately, he made it without casualties.

Later I had supper with him and an interesting talk, mainly about shikar. He said that he had originally wanted to go to the Tian Shan Mountains 'way north-east of Kashgar; the Indian Government had approved but the Chinese had not. He talked a lot about Sinkiang and among other things said that the Chinese had a frontier post just the other side of the Karakoram Pass and would not let anyone through into Sinkiang.

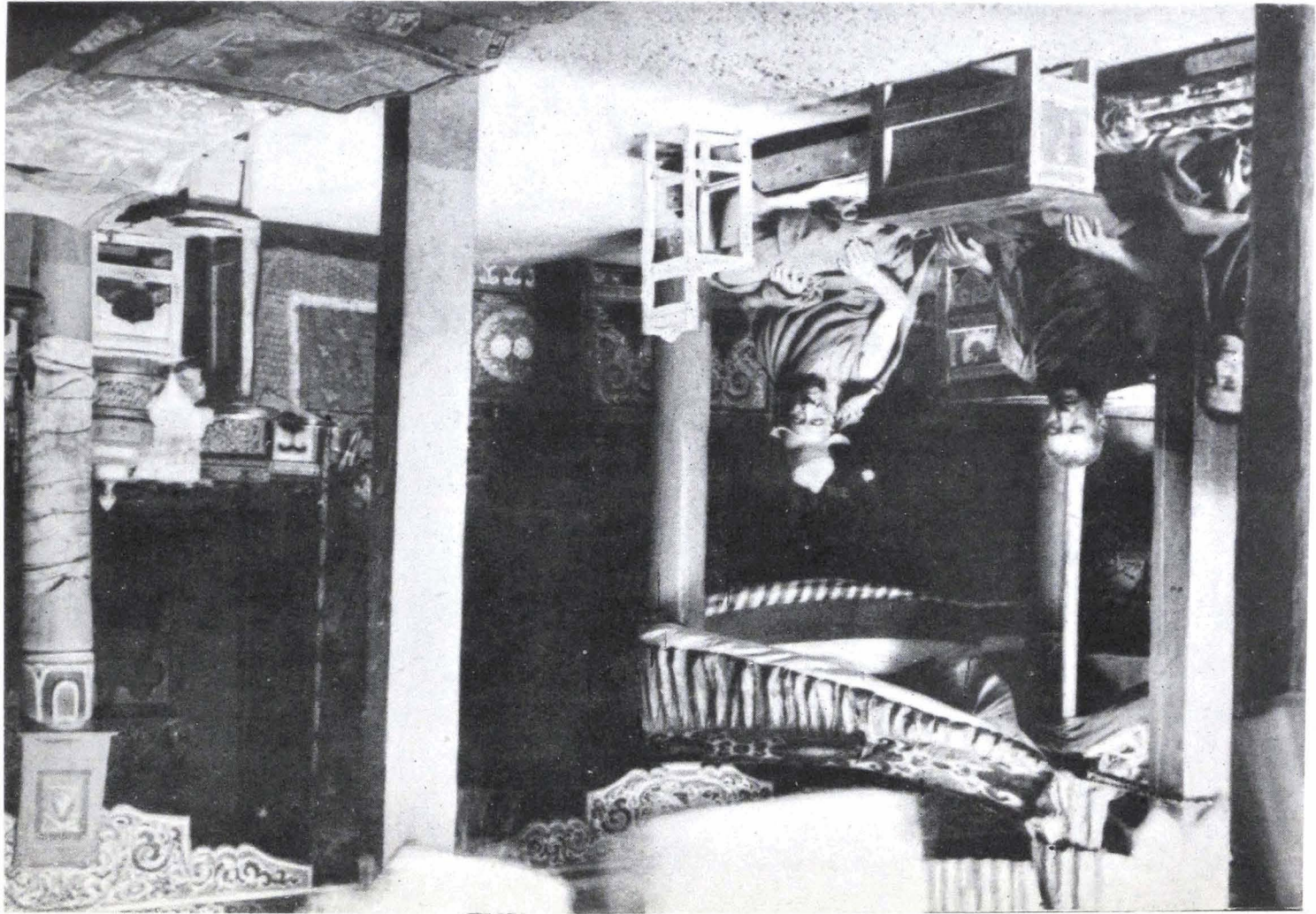
Next morning I bade French a good journey and pushed off on the seventeen-mile march to Nurla. An easy march, we spent the first half, up to the River Indus, going through a rather impressive gorge; then we turned up the wide Indus valley and soon arrived at Khalse where I was able to post a letter or two. After lunch there we pushed on over a sandy valley in

<sup>1</sup> Backsheesh . . . a tip.



PRAYER STONES ON TOP OF THE MONIPADMI WALL, NEAR NIMU.

INSIDE THE PRAYING ROOM OF PHAYANG GOMPA. THE PICTURE OF THE PANCHEN LAMA IS ON THE EXTREME RIGHT BEHIND THE PILLAR. NOTE THE LAMAS POSING IN TYPICAL ATTITUDES.



an exhilaratingly high wind. We arrived at Nurla without incident and pitched camp in an apricot grove. But the luxury of having apricots dropping into one's camp from heaven was not to be ; they were not ripe.

An overcast sky and a wind blowing up the valley made life a bit chilly during our next march, to Saspul Gompa.

Nurbu, whose home is at Nurla, produced a horse and promptly put my saddle on it. Cunning devil ; he's determined to get something out of me for his journey to Leh. The horse isn't too bad, quite a decent size, but has a jar in every step. Nurbu also produced a letter from Marco Pallis, which had been written in Tibetan. It was beautifully written in very neat characters. That bit of attention having been paid to Nurbu, after a few miles he produced a flute and proceeded to play it just behind me. This time I flatly refused to show any interest. He blew louder and louder and nearer and nearer—quite a melodious tune—but without visible effect on me. I was hard put to it not to laugh outright, I must say.

Khaliqia had a day off to-day—he could not understand even the most simple sentences in Urdu.

During breakfast next day Ahmed Lone came and dropped a bombshell.

A coolie had come into Saspul to buy supplies for Major Apcar who had his camp at Saspocha, up the nullah to the north. During the usual conversation of " Whence coming, whither going " of these fellows, the coolie said that Major Apcar had been shooting No. 12, Sharpu, Block at Rumbak—near Leh—the block I had reserved. Ahmed Lone was amazed, cross-questioned the coolie and immediately came and told me. I was even more astonished and then realised that some babu<sup>1</sup> in the State Game Warden's office had leased the nullah twice over. I was very annoyed, especially as Major Apcar had got *four Snow Leopard* and one *Sharpu* in that block.

<sup>1</sup> Babu . . . junior clerk.

After blowing off a bit of steam over breakfast, I decided the best thing to do was to get confirmation of this story from Major Aparcar. So I sent Ahmed Lone off on the horse with a letter, to try and clear things up. I don't know if I can get another block now—they will probably be booked up by now, that is, all the good ones will be booked.

We left without Ahmed Lone and the march was an easy one, with a short, steep climb of about a mile up to Rongo La. Nothing eventful happened until nearing Nimu. Here we came on a very long monipadmi in rather good condition. I took a photo of it and also a photo of one of the prayer stones.

A monipadmi can best be described as a buddhist praying-place for travellers. We have seen them all the way along the route from Lamayuru onwards, but as Khaliqia told me there was a good specimen here, I've refrained from describing one till now.

A monipadmi is built up of two long walls of stone spaced about six feet apart, closed at one end by a stone wall and at the other end by a stone erection that looks something like a flower-pot covered with a flat lid and mounted on a plinth. The space inside the walls is filled with earth and small stones. The idea behind the erection of a monipadmi is this: If a buddhist is going on a long journey and he passes near a monipadmi wall, he will generally go to the nearest Gompa and get the lamas to cut a prayer in a flat stone—for a price. The traveller will then take this prayer stone and leave it on top of the monipadmi, believing that left there, the winds will carry his prayer for a safe journey to the "abode of the gods" in the snow-covered mountains that border his route. A very rich man or ruler will have a complete monipadmi built. These stones are generally all engraved with the same prayer, but I did see a number with obviously different character engravings. While on the subject of Buddhism and Ladakh generally, it may be of interest to quote the late Sir Francis Younghusband, who sum-

marises Ladakh very well indeed in one paragraph of his book *The Heart of a Continent* :

But the Buddhist monasteries, the fluttering prayer flags, the chortens, and the many other signs of a religion almost totally unrepresented in India, gave the country a charm which just relieved it from utter condemnation. These signs of Buddhist life have many times before been described, so I need only refer here to the long rows of what appeared to be immense graves, overlaid with hundreds of slabs, each engraved with the formula, "Om mane padmi hum" ("Oh the jewel of the lotus"), the talismanic prayer which the devotees of this religion believe will produce more and more beneficent results the oftener it is repeated ; the many coloured flags fluttering in the breeze inscribed with the same magic formula, and breathing with each new flutter one fresh prayer to Heaven ; the dirty, yellow-clad monks,<sup>1</sup> with their shaven heads, their strings of beads round their necks, and their prayer-wheels reeling off a prayer with each successive revolution.

Other monipadmi than this one at Nimu are generally much smaller, and almost all are in a very poor state of repair owing to the severe weather they have to stand. But the one at Nimu is an exception. It is in good repair and is very long indeed ; split into two, with several "flower-pots", it must be a mile or more long before it comes to an end.

Ahmed Lone caught us up at about seven o'clock, with a letter from Major Apcar confirming the coolie's story.

Sleep mellowed my wrath and a longish climb up to the top of a pass, 11,150 feet high, gave us a grand view of a distant part of the Ladakh Range and of the wide Indus valley below Leh. The higher mountains of the Range were covered with snow and shone so brilliantly in the sunlight that they looked like a mass of ice.

The eighteen-mile march took shorter time than I thought it would, both ponies and ourselves averaging well over two miles an hour. It was very hot over the last four miles from Pitok, especially just below Leh where there is a very wide valley, almost a desert of

<sup>1</sup> Here, he is writing of a particular sect of lamas I never saw—the "yellow hats". Now, they nearly all wear red.

sand. I had to glance at my watch to make sure we were making progress ; Leh seemed to get no nearer with the passing minutes. I arrived in Leh to find a big mail waiting for me, which I read over tea. Later, after consultation with the Jemadar Game Warden and Ahmed Lone, I made out a telegram to the State Game Warden asking for Phayang No. 3 Sharpu and Ibex nullah, a nullah barely a day's march west of Leh.

Since the news of Major Apcar shooting No. 12 (Rumback) nullah came in, Ahmed Lone and I had long discussions over what to do next. He advocated trying, Phayang nullah, as we were so near-by, and then going on to Chang Chenmo, a noted hunting ground that is visited nearly every season, on the chance of finding something in an "open" nullah, driven there by other sahibs shooting those nullahs which they had previously booked. I would have gone there, had I not been so keen to visit the lesser known districts ; it seemed waste of time and opportunity to visit such a well-known valley. I studied my maps for hours, debating whether to go to the Karakoram Pass via the Central Asian Trade Route—rather an unproductive trek—or whether to go there via Chang Chenmo and Lingzi Tang—a far more interesting route as it is rarely travelled these days.

Then, whilst following the course of the Saltoro Karakoram watershed on my map, I noticed a dotted red line running up a glacier, the Gyong Glacier, to halt at the sign used to indicate a pass. The line did not continue the short distance down the east side of the range to the snout of the Siachen Glacier. From all the information I could glean from the map, this route and climb up to Gyong La had been achieved by Dr. Longstaff in 1909. For some good reason, not known to me then, he had not crossed the range. The route up the east side of the range did not seem unduly long and to reach it, I would have to go right up the Nubra valley to one of the largest glaciers in the world, and if I managed to cross this pass or one near it, I



would find myself running downhill to Baltistan by a route far shorter than the Shyok valley, which also attracted my attention as rarely travelled by Europeans.

I decided to attempt Gyong La and if I failed, to return and go to Baltistan via the Shyok valley. Ahmed Lone was non-plussed, but agreed that he'd be interested to see what shikar there was in these valleys, which he had never visited.

## Exploring Leh

JUNE 28th, the first day in Leh, was spent in dealing with my large mail, which preceded a most interesting morning. I started off by making a shopping list of various necessities and then went off to the native bazaar to buy them.

Although I'd brought some rope, I was inclined to think I had not got enough, so I asked for some at a shop. They produced some good looking stuff, but on examination it proved to be made of wool which snapped at the very least strain put on it. The shopkeeper was most upset when I turned it down and said it was "good rope, sahib ; he lift seven, eight maund".<sup>1</sup> I took him on and he agreed to test it. He slung the rope over a beam and put two and a half maunds (200 lbs.) on one end. By this time a crowd had collected and they all lent an enthusiastic hand to pull it up—kids of six and younger still as well. The rope stretched with the weight and also spun violently, which was a bad thing. After a little time the rope wouldn't take it and snapped at a weak point half-way below the beam.

An interested spectator of this show was Mr. Walter Asboe, who runs the Mission in Leh. As soon as the "rope-trick" was over he buttonholed me, took me all round the town and was a most enthusiastic guide. First of all he took me to the "Christian Inn". He made this hostel for trans-Himalayan traders ; but he said that in these times Central Asian traders were very rare indeed, the hostel being used mainly by Ladakhi traders from distant districts.

This lack of Central Asian traders from Yarkand and Khotan, he explained, had hit Leh very badly

<sup>1</sup> One maund = 80 lbs.

indeed, and for two years hardly a single trader had come over. This was due to the ever-increasing influence brought upon the province of Sinkiang by Russia. Russia has influenced the Chinese in the province so much that all British and Indian traders have been forced to leave, losing almost all their goods in order to pay their way back. Most of these traders have arrived in India, but a few who were away up north, near the Tian Shan mountains, are still coming in, mainly by the Gilgit route. As has been mentioned previously, the Chinese have established a post just the other side of the Karakoram Pass and will not let even Chinese traders enter either India or Sinkiang: travelling across the border seems to be a matter of luck and goodwill with the frontier guards.

The padre then took me round the back streets and, coming across a chorten, explained that the people here being Buddhists, they cremated their dead in these ovens. The bodies are cremated in the sitting position and, as the chortens are small inside, the backs have to be broken. He pointed out the castle of the old kings of Ladakh and the lama monastery above it, high on top of the ridge. The castle has a good specimen of a chorten outside it. When I tried to take a photo of a Ladakhi girl's head-dress and she ran off, the padre explained that she was afraid of "the evil eye" of my camera and that because of this superstition the women were generally very difficult to photograph. Then he took me to his mission school, where I saw women spinning wool and weaving blankets. He showed me some completed blankets, one or two of which I promised to buy from him. They were extremely good ones.

On another verandah he showed me the only man in Leh who is expert at making carpets. He had nearly finished one—actually it was a saddle-cloth—and his pupil, a boy of about ten, was in the middle of another. There are several pupils, and in this way the padre hopes to foster a new industry for Leh, namely, carpet

and blanket making, to make up, in some small measure, for the loss of the Sinkiang trade. He has interested the British Joint Commissioner in Kashmir who is sending him three more looms and his enthusiasm has infected the town council who are beginning to take an interest ; so it would seem that Mr. Asboe's initiative may meet with success.

Later the same evening I went round to see him and Mrs. Asboe and heard the news on the wireless. This sounded most promising and I thought it unlikely that I'd be recalled from leave during the next few weeks, whilst I was off the telegraph line.

The two main events next day were the arrival of a telegram (after sending a hastener) from the Game Warden booking No. 3 Phayang Nullah for me, and the checking of my stores. I go to Phayang on Thursday. This nullah is a "shot in the dark", being only second rate and rarely visited.

The checking of my stores revealed that I'd extracted 20 lbs. of things, which were certainly not required by any stretch of the imagination. There were a lot of unnecessary luxuries, but since they were there I included them as rations.

I have made a messing contract with the khansamah. Up to the present he has been rendering me a daily account and taking an average of all the days, the cost of "Living off the land" works out at Rs.  $1/4$  per day.<sup>1</sup> Now, instead of having an account rendered every day, which is a nuisance both to him and to me, he is to contract to feed me at a fixed rate of Rs.  $1/4$  per day. This rate includes the cost of eggs, meat, butter, milk and firewood. The meat consists of sheep and hens.

To-day we had a discussion between the padre, the Naib-Tehsildar,<sup>2</sup> the Charas Officer,<sup>3</sup> myself and Ahmed Lone concerning the best means of getting transport

<sup>1</sup> One rupee =  $1/6$ , but usually buys only one shilling's worth, in British India.

Rs.  $1/4$  is the way one rupee four annas is written.

<sup>2</sup> District official.

<sup>3</sup> Customs officer.

beyond Leh. Ahmed Lone wanted the whole bandobast to go on contract from Leh ; the Naib-Tehsildar said it would be better to go to Panamik on the Res<sup>1</sup> system and then make a fresh bandobast there. The padre endorsed the latter advice with the remark that the Nubra valley people would be only too pleased to get a transport contract now that the Central Asian Trade had ceased, and that I would probably get it done fairly cheaply. When I brought up the suggestion of going to Khapalu from the Nubra valley the Tehsildar said I would not get to Khapalu via the Shyok valley as it was a shocking bad track. Again the padre endorsed this, saying that last year two fellows had tried to do it and had had to give up—one of them before starting even. They said all this to try to dissuade me from going ; but as usual, the news that someone else failed only made me want to succeed all the more. The idea of crossing Gyong La was met with blank surprise and ignorance of the name. The net result was that I decided to go to Panamik on the Res system, and then if possible go over Gyong La and, if that route proved impossible, I would attempt to go via the Shyok valley to Khapalu.

I went to the Asboes for tea and afterwards the padre showed me a Buddhist "Wheel of Life", painted by one of his mission men. It was very well done, having scores of interpretations in it. One of his ways of encouraging christianity is to show the Ladakhis a "Wheel of Life" done in the Christian manner. Then he showed me some other paintings, among which were some depicting the parables with the stories written underneath in Tibetan. The pictures were accurate, only instead of showing, for example, the high priests as Jews, they were dressed as Lamas, and the scenery was Tibetan instead of Palestinian. In this way they appeal to the Tibetans when otherwise the meaning of the picture would be lost on them.

<sup>1</sup> Res = a system whereby certain villages are bound to supply transport to travellers at certain fixed rates.

Then he and I went for a short walk. I saw the Meteorological Station which he runs ; the Residency, where the Resident stays when he visits Leh ; the European cemetery where a Jesuit priest is buried and the grave of Mr. Dalgleish—a Scottish trader-explorer, murdered by his Afghan servant on the Karakoram Pass while on his way from Leh to Yarkand in 1887. There were other graves as well, of people who had been killed in the Himalayas one way or another.

We went over to a little village which has the biggest chorten in the district. This chorten has little bells hung round it, the strikers of which are vaned so that the wind rings the bells and thus keeps away the evil spirits. Another thing I learned from this good padre was that Himālaya was not pronounced, if spoken correctly, with a long A. The word is a Sanscrit word meaning “The Abode of Snows”, and when written in the four Tibetan syllables does not show a long A in the pronounciation. Padre Asboe speaks, reads and writes Tibetan, of course.

I bade Mr. Asboe au-revoir that night and the following morning we left for Phayang Nullah. No one knew the way, but we were told that there was a short cut over the ridge above the town. Even the pony-men had only a hazy notion of the trail and the retinue of Kashmiris were loth to proceed under such conditions, though I thought that really they were reluctant to leave the comforts of Leh. At last I got fed up with them all, told them so and told Khaliqia that I'd take him straight there, and if I didn't I'd give him a packet of cigarettes. The route was very rough and steep, but well worn withal ; but it was too rough for the ponies, which had to go by a higher and longer route. I went to some trouble to keep on pointing out trail signs, as I was convinced that unless I did so the Kashmiris would still think me incapable of self-support when it came to looking after the party out in the blue. I also told Khaliqia that if I came

to Phayang successfully he was to give me the cigarettes. That made him laugh and cheer up.

At one time we came on twelve sharpu, two or three of which were shootable. They were only some two hundred yards away walking up the hillside quite quietly, stopping now and again to look at us, regarding us with evident curiosity and some suspicion. The pity of it was that I had not got my rifle with me ; it was with the ponies as, foolishly, I never expected that I would come across any sharpu. After climbing two small passes we dropped down into Phayang Nullah and sat down by a village called by a name that sounded like "Murdok" (12,000 ft.) to wait for the ponies. They arrived about two hours after we did. I demanded my cigarettes from Khaliqia, which made him laugh and rubbed in the fact that even without my map, which, being the old edition, would have been useless anyway, I was not utterly incapable.

Hopefully, but without conviction, Ahmed Lone went out early in the morning to see what game he could see. He returned by midday to say there is absolutely nothing at all to be seen. I'm sick of all this business ; I spent Rs. 175/- on a shooting licence and have one red bear to show for it.

We pack up to-morrow and return to Leh. There we will stay long enough to complete final details for the journey over the Ladakh Range into Nubra. At Panamik I'll decide what to do next, in the light of local conditions of transport. I'll probably go for Ibex near Panamik and possibly for a Burrhel at Sasser. After that I will have a shot at getting over Gyong La to Khapalu. That is the whole plan at the moment ; the immediate objective being to reach Panamik as soon as possible. On the way back to Leh to-morrow I'm going to visit Phayang Gompa, situated at the mouth of the nullah and near the road to Leh.

We left at eight o'clock and Khaliqia and I went down the nullah to Phayang Gompa. I got hold of a village man on the way down and checked up on

the map from him. The map is all wrong,<sup>1</sup> so I made a sketch of the nullah, and placed all the villages which I saw myself, noting the names and distances. Wherever the map appears to be wrong I make as reliable corrections as I can. Unfortunately, though, I am severely handicapped by my ignorance of Tibetan when it comes to interpreting village names ; the best I can do is to make as accurate a phonetic interpretation of the local natives' gargle as seems possible. The information might be of use to the Survey of India offices, so I might as well get it if I'm in a position to do so.

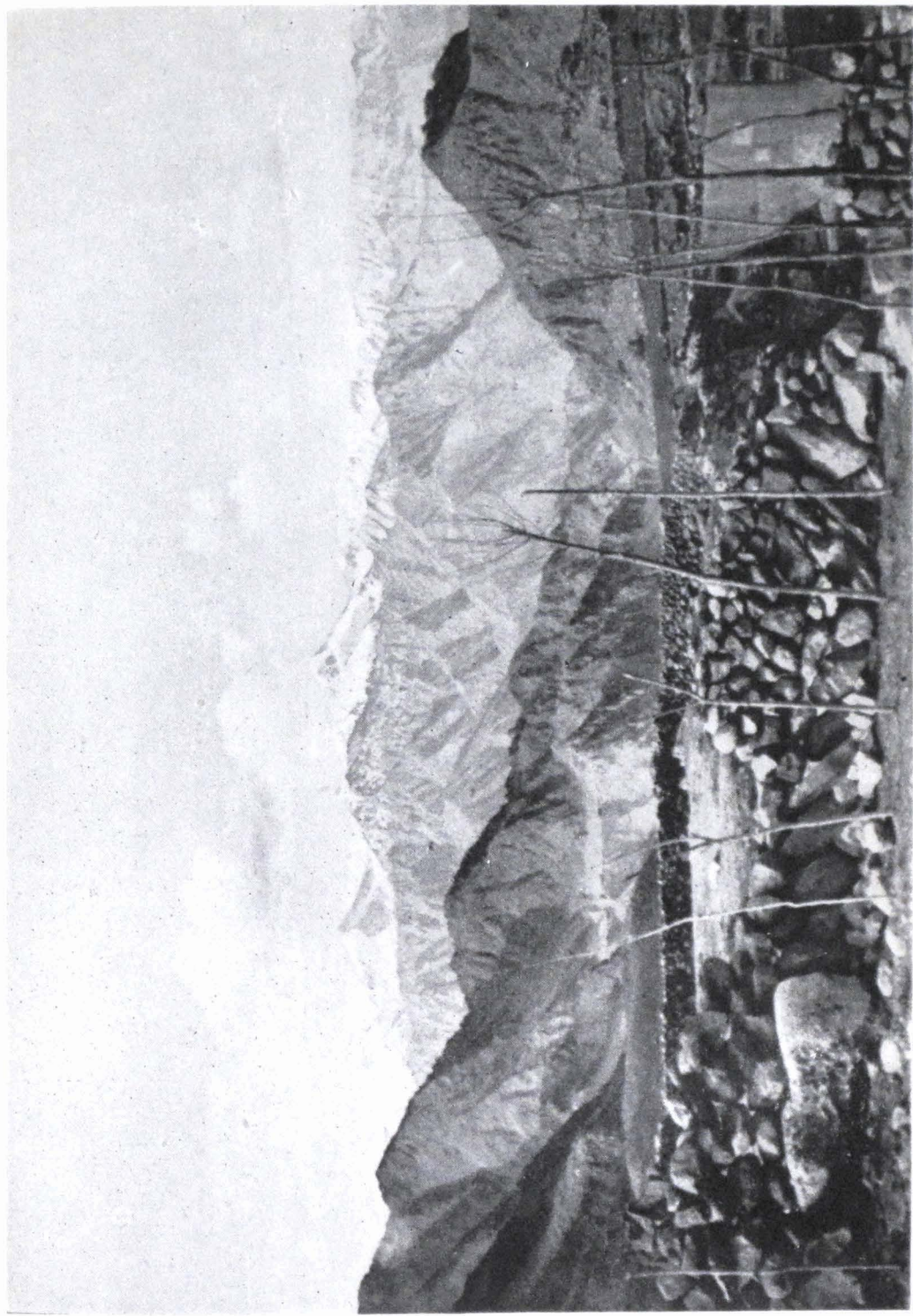
We arrived at Phayang Gompa and were taken around. It was really rather disappointing ; I don't quite know what I expected to see, but I think I expected to see more than I did. We were shown into a main room which, lighted by one window in the ceiling, was dining-room, sitting-room, bedroom and chapel of the Lamas. Altogether not very sanitary.

The entrance was through a pair of double doors painted with an intricate and vari-coloured design. On either side of the entrance, running three-quarters of the way up the room, were carpet-covered benches the height and width of a foot-stool. Walking up the "aisle", behind the bench on the left was a table under a canopy. Enquiries so far revealed that the carpet-covered bench was for the Lamas to sit on when praying and the table was for the Lamas meals ; the information though seems likely to have got distorted in the process of interpretation from Tibetan to Hindustani to pidgin-English. Perhaps "the Gods" fed there.

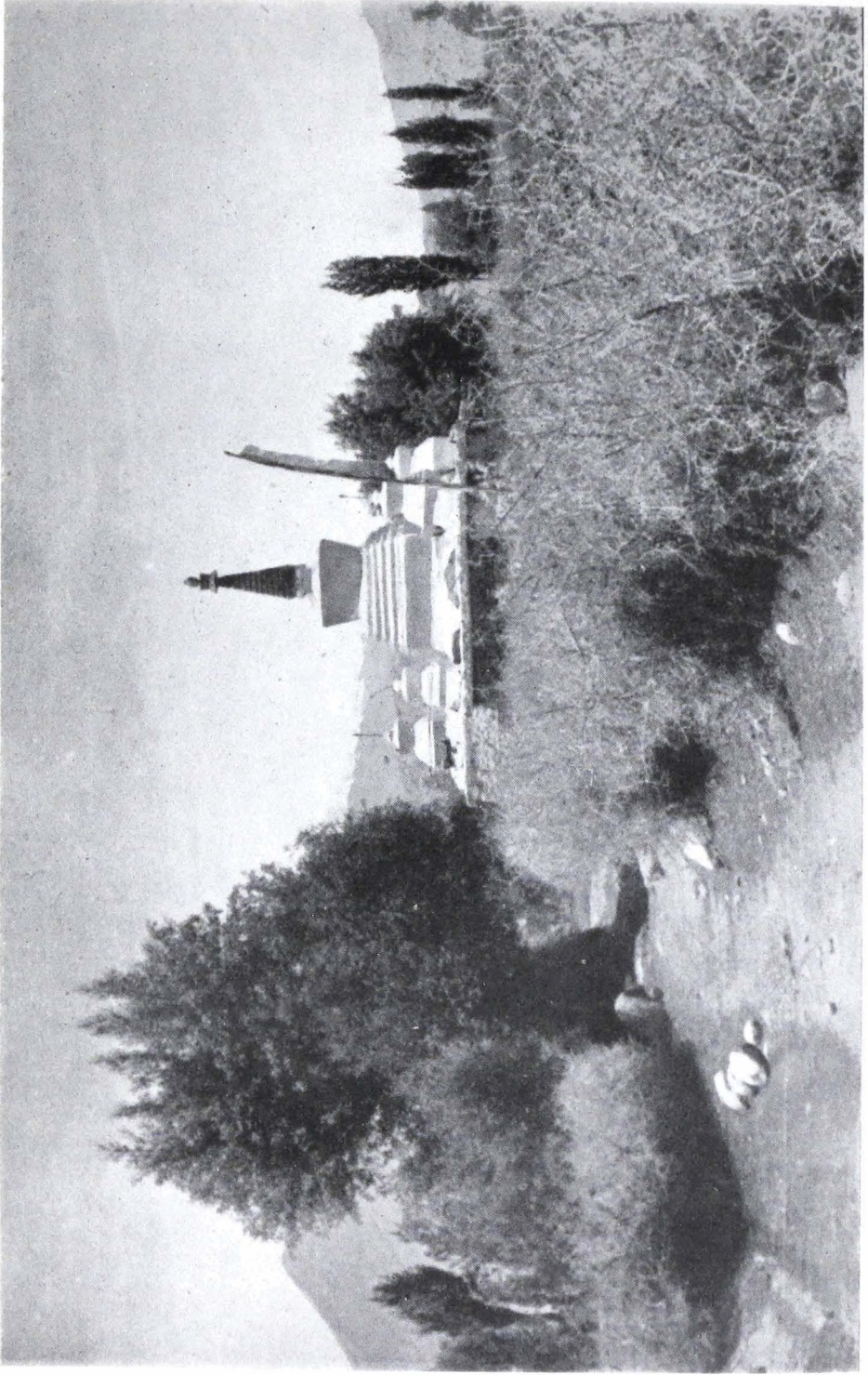
At the head of the "aisle", against the wall running at right angles to the "aisle", were built a series of altars with niches just above them. In the centre niche, the chief one, it seemed, was an oil painting of the Panchen Lama—the spiritual head of all the

<sup>1</sup> The map I was using was the 1928 edition of sheet 52F, which showed this district as being based on the old Indian Atlas Survey ; so that I should not have expected the nullah to be shown in detail.





THE ZASKAR-HIMALAYA FROM MURDOK, PHAYANG NULLAH. JUNE 2ND, 1939.



CHORTEN ARCHWAY AND PRAYER FLAG, THIRIT, NUBRA VALLEY.

Buddhists. In the other niches were representations of Buddha. Placed in front of the altars and running parallel with them was a fairly high and narrow bench on which were a great many oil lamps, only one of which was lighted at the time. In front of the centre altar there was a stand on which were two or three saucers of corn—probably an offering by some peasant. The ceiling was supported by brightly painted pillars, and from it hung a great many flags and pictures of orientalised devils, serpents and animals—all painted in bright colours. This particular room was a new one, everything was fairly clean and the decorations very bright. The three remaining walls were covered with paintings of all kinds of symbols, each with its own particular interpretation. Then I was shown a newly-painted “Wheel of Life”. Unfortunately it was in a most awkward position to photograph and I was unable to take a photo of it, though I took a fifteen-second exposure of the room. Then I was shown an older and much more filthy room which had a certain “air” about it!

Finally we went outside and here I saw a high mast with a prayer flag running its whole length and fluttering in the gentle breeze. The superstition behind this is much the same as that of the monipadmi, only rather more picturesque, in that the prayers which are written on the flags are believed to be carried off to the mountains by the wind. After taking a cine-shot of that I took one of the Lamas, who were standing around in their greasy red robes with hats cocked on the sides of their heads. When I told them they need not stand still, they thought it a great joke and posed in ridiculous attitudes—particularly the young boys. I tipped the head Lama for his trouble and he then showed me down some steps, on the right of which were three prayer wheels which he flicked round clockwise, thus sending a hasty prayer to his gods, which presumably were squatting on the top of one of the high snow-topped mountains we could see away across the Indus valley.

Our guide, whose name was Gonchuk,<sup>1</sup> then showed us down the path which led to the main road to Leh, a total distance of some fifteen miles. Gonchuk then announced that he would leave us, salaamed and went off all in the same breath. Incredible as it seems, he did not ask for "backsheesh", and because of this I called him back and gave him a small amount. Lama people are usually notorious for their habit of requesting "backsheesh" for no reason at all.

We plodded on to Leh over the main road under a hot sun and wearily trudged up the last three miles. These three miles are most deceptive; after turning left into the nullah of Leh, one sees the town apparently only about a mile away up a sandy incline. In reality it is a good hour's walk away over that surface of loose sand, shimmering with heat waves and penetrating into every part of one.

The following day I felt I was getting somewhere when I rationed myself on what stores I had and sold the remainder, some to Mr. Asboe and some to a local shop. These stores made a saving in weight of 26½ lbs. or more, and a lot of saving in space. A further cash income from the shop enabled me to buy several necessary things, including an extra rope (a better one than was tested before!), a large stock of cheap cigarettes, and snow-goggles for twenty coolies, which will probably be necessary for the Gyong La effort. Fifteen chips covers all expenses for these coolies, so I don't stand to lose too much if, on arrival at Panamik, I find it impossible to proceed up the Nubra valley.

That night I dropped in on Padre Asboe to bid him au-revoir and to thank him for his hospitality. As a parting gift he gave me four pictures of the parables with the Tibetan scenes and writing under them. They were the "artist's originals" and, as I told the padre, I would prize them very much, especially as they

<sup>1</sup> I've since wondered if this Gonchuk, who is now an old man, was the same fellow that Major Mason took from Phayang on his Shaksgam Exploration in 1926.

were the only souvenirs I had of my "Tibetan" travels. I heard the last news that I'll hear till I return to Srinagar and soon afterwards bid them good night.

## CENTRAL ASIAN TRADE ROUTE

At last, after wasting a week, we got off on the second main leg of the trip—the leg that I hoped would prove the most interesting. I think everyone was glad to get on with the show.

Khardung La, the pass by which we cross the Ladakh Range north of Leh, is not yet open, but as we go only as far as Polu to-day we are taking ponies. To-morrow, yaks will be necessary to take us over the pass and these will arrive at Polu to-night.

The climb, except for the first four miles, was consistently steep. After lunch, the ponies caught us up and shortly afterwards I saw a brace of chikoor across the nullah. While going after them I saw two marmots and changed over to stalk them. On peeping over a rock, the chikoor were to be seen, but the marmots had vanished; strange that the chikoor did not take the cue from the canny marmots. One chikoor ran some yards and rose—I took a long shot at it but missed. About a mile before reaching the camp—Polu (14,500 ft.)—one horse gave out owing to the height and we transferred his load to one of the riding ponies. It was cold at Polu, which is nearly on the snow-line, and shorts made it additionally so. This camp is merely a serai, that is, a walled enclosure—in rotten repair at that.

Next day was a day to be remembered. Having been told last night that we'd leave at sun-up, I woke at three o'clock to hear men's voices. A quarter of an hour later Khaliqia came in to say that the yak-wallah wanted to go ek dum<sup>1</sup> as it had been a cloudy night without much frost. Evidently the yak-wallah had been nagging Ahmed Lone since one o'clock, much to

<sup>1</sup> Hindustani for "at once".

the latter's annoyance. After apostrophising the benighted man for not knowing his own mind, I got up and pushed a spot of breakfast inside me. It was freezing hard outside—or felt as if it was. We were all ready and packed up by a quarter to five, but it took the yak-wallah another hour to load his yaks and get going. No amount of threats would make him hurry. Then a light shower of hoar-frost blew over and froze us while we saw things done properly.

Eventually we got off at a quarter to six and started to climb the steepest part of the pass, behind the stone shelter that called itself Polu. There was a lot of cloud about and a light wind was blowing, bringing with it a cloud of frost which made one's face sting. The weather was good for the crossing of the pass—Khardung La (18,380 ft.)—but was rotten for photography, though I tried to take one photo of Leh and the Indus valley many thousands of feet below, backed by a wide panorama of the Zaskar Himalaya. A red filter would have produced a far better photo than that which did come out.

About half an hour after starting I saw someone coming down from the pass and guessed it was Lt. Lyall-Grant, who was expected back from the Karakoram any day. I was right and we stopped for some time, swapping news—I in particular asking him about the state of the Sasser Pass over which I might possibly wish to go, and over which he had just come from the Shyok Dam. He had been up there taking photos of this notorious natural dam. This dam is the one which has frequently burst, notably in 1926 and 1928, and caused the loss of countless lives and valuable corn-fields in the Shyok and Indus valleys almost throughout their lengths. The dam is formed by the snout of a glacier, the Chong Kumdun, which runs right across the valley at the source of the Shyok River from west to east. When this happens, a huge lake is formed behind it by the water from the melting ice of the Rimo Glacier to the north. When winter comes, more snow and ice

falls and forms on the Rimo and the following summer more water enters the lake until, eventually, such a huge pressure of water is exerted on the snout of the Chong Kumdun Glacier that the mass of ice gives way and a great wave of water sweeps down the Shyok, a short way up the Nubra and on down the Shyok into the Indus and its tributaries, doing a considerable amount of damage to life and property. The Chong Kumdun is watched constantly and whenever there is the slightest danger of its snout breaking away, all the people in the river valleys are evacuated till the danger is over. Later on, during my trek, I saw some of the damage the last series of bursts had done in 1926-9. Lyall-Grant had got some good photos and said that it would probably not become dangerous again for many years as there was a wide gap between the snout of the glacier and the Shyok valley wall.

After bidding him good luck on his return journey, I took the climb very steadily and in one place tried to ride the yak, but the snow was too soft for it as it sank in about a foot at every step. About 200 feet from the top, although I'd been taking it easily, I found climbing up over the snow-slopes a real effort, so after a long rest I started walking for one minute and resting for two. Two hours after leaving Polu I reached the top, the tough yak-wallahs being about a quarter of an hour ahead of me. At the top we rested for a brief period, while the yak-wallahs changed over my loads to Lyall-Grant's yaks which had climbed up the north face of the pass, in order to facilitate yak bandobast, my yaks from Leh going back with his loads. It was cold at the top; it was only 7.45 a.m. and there was a great deal of cloud which effectively obscured the sun and a cool wind was blowing. I wore much the same as I wore for the Zoji La; a shirt, two sweaters, a wind-jacket and double gabardine ski-ing trousers keeping me warm.

Then we started down the very steep north face of the pass. This was of rather soft snow and dropped,

not far from sheer, for about 1,000 feet. Khaliqia slid down and so did Ahmed Lone. Not to be out-done I also tried—and failed, mainly because I was wearing nailed boots, whereas the others wore grass shoes which slid quite easily over the soft snow. I then took to riding the yak which I found most docile and comfortable.

There are three main forms of animal transport in this part of the world ; the pony, the zoe and the yak. The ponies are shocking-looking animals, very thin and bony, but they carry very big loads amazing distances. The zoe is a cross between a yak and a cow ; it is not very strong and though used for transport, it is more frequently to be seen at the higher altitudes pulling ploughs in the fields. The yak is a very tough animal which, unlike the domesticated pony and zoe, lives wild in the Tibetan plateau and is a protected animal. The yaks that one sees in the valleys near Leh, however, are all locally reared. The main difference between the yak and the zoe, apart from the former's greater strength, is the very long hair and long legs of the yak as opposed to the shorter hair and legs of the zoe.

After riding for some time we left the snow behind and stopped for tiffin at half-past ten. After that I walked most of the way and finally rode into Khardung in a light shower of snow. Here we pitched camp in a tiny and optimistically named " bagh " <sup>1</sup> in one corner of the serai.<sup>2</sup> The only things that I have noticed so far that are different this side of the Ladakh Range, are that the wheat is only just being sown whereas it is quite green at Leh and that the wild pigeons are different. Apart from the fact that they are very much tamer, the pigeons seem to be similar to the ordinary rock-pigeon, but are more " fan-tail ". Also, they have a white patch at the base of their tail-feathers and a white strip half-way down and across the same feathers, reminiscent of R.A.F. squadron markings.

<sup>1</sup> Garden (Hindustani).

<sup>2</sup> Enclosed camping ground for caravans.



Having crossed the pass I now realise that the week's rest at Leh did me a great deal of good and enabled me to acclimatise myself to these rather unusual heights, and I was greatly encouraged by the realisation that I was unaffected by crossing Khardung La.

I slept like a log after yesterday's efforts and took my time about leaving for Khalsar (10,400 ft.), a twelve-mile walk. We left the serai at nine o'clock. The valley became more and more green until, towards the mouth, we were walking through quite a pleasant willow tree wood with a stream running through it. Soon we arrived at the junction of this stream with the Shyok River valley, and after going down this latter valley for a mile or so we started to climb up the left wall to about 1,000 feet above the river level. After walking along an ancient terrace of the Shyok for some time, we dropped down into the nullah of Khalsar. On the way down we saw the corn-fields, with new corn shoots showing, almost literally full of chikoor.<sup>1</sup> Ahmed Lone had three cartridges in his pocket. We sent Khaliqia over the fields. I missed with two shots, to Ahmed Lone's disgust, and he missed with one shot; Khaliqia put us both to shame by walking up to a chikoor and crowning it with his kud-stick.<sup>2</sup> After some tea I went out and played chess over the fields with the chikoor, but I had to come back and ask Khaliqia for his kud-stick. I've discovered that Ahmed Lone sometimes shoots chikoor sitting; so that's why he is so successful.

Minor flap just before supper. The local irrigation system was turned on and nearly flooded us out. Feverish work with anything to hand saved the situation.

A short time after climbing out of Khalsar nullah, on to the same terrace we had been walking on yesterday, we dropped down into the Shyok valley at its junction with the Nubra River. The view of this junction from where we were, up on the terrace, was absolutely wonderful. One could see miles and miles down the

<sup>1</sup> Chikoor = a hill partridge.

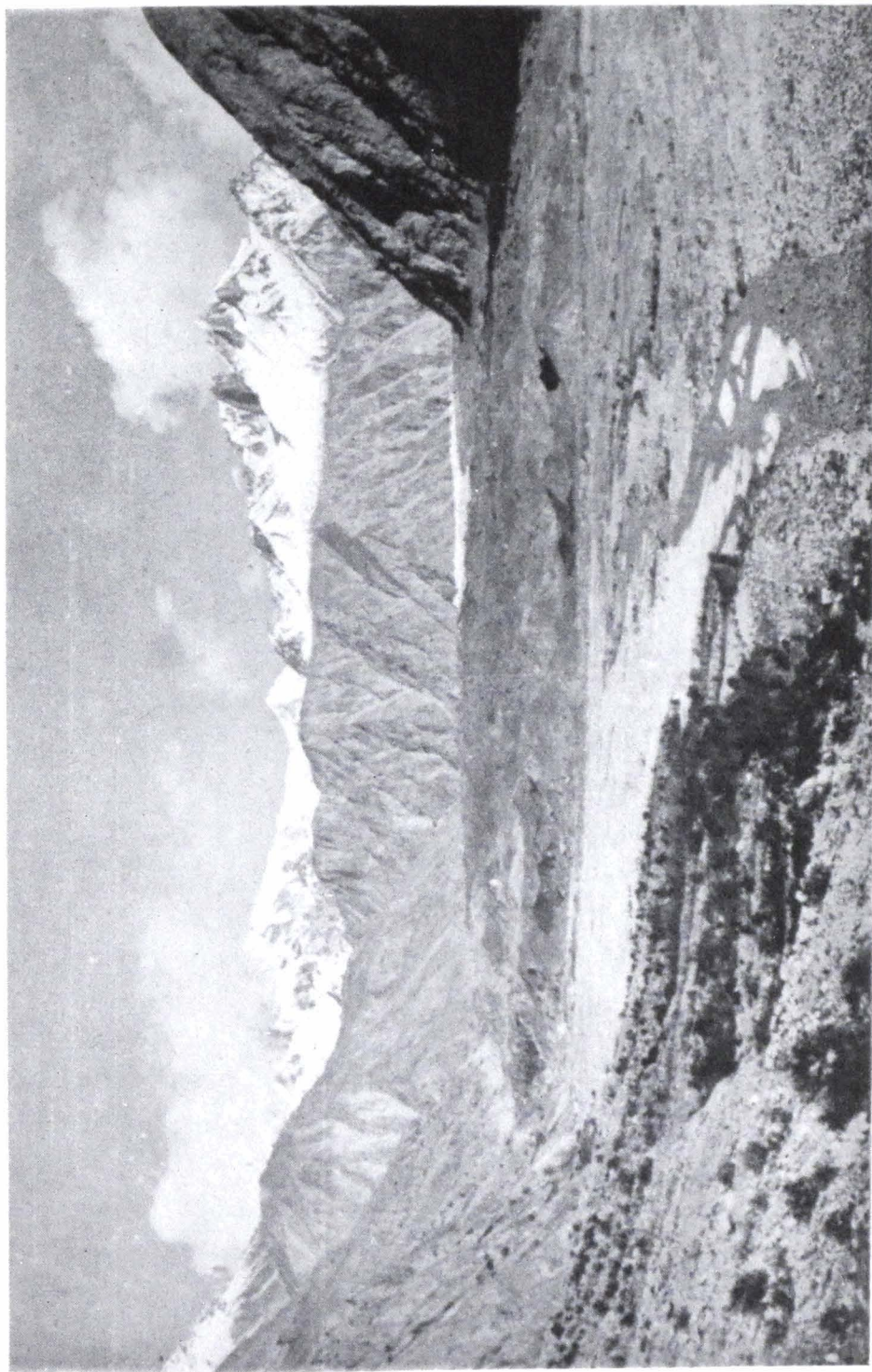
<sup>2</sup> Kud-stick = like a scout's staff. Kud = hill (Hindustani).

Shyok and as I knew I might possibly be going down it I wondered what sort of a time it would have in store for me. The valleys of the two rivers are very wide here, but there is very little water in them. We crossed the Shyok by a ford immediately below Thirit, about a mile from the suspension bridge which, incidentally, still consists of only the two buttresses—ten years or so after the last Shyok flood swept the bridge away. I went across first on the horse and the caravan followed. As usual, the blessed zoe-men, for zoes were the beasts of burden to-day, tried to go across at the first spot they struck in order to save time and it took quite a lot of persuasion on our part to make them go to the really shallow spots. Finally I got them across without incident and the Lambadar<sup>1</sup> of Thirit who had come down to the river to meet us, presented me with a wild rose. I sent the horse back for Ahmed Lone and the others and after chatting to the Lambadar for a few minutes, pushed on to Thirit where we had lunch.

Then followed a long walk to Sumur (10,050 ft.), over the sandy desert of the junction of the river valleys. The country here, with a warm and high wind blowing down the Nubra which swept sand in our faces and whispered among the tamarisk bushes, would have reminded me very much of the valley of the River Hab at Karachi if it were not for the snow-flecked summits of all the mountains around us. After a thirteen-mile walk I arrived to find Mr. Standzin, an introduction to whom Padre Asboe had given me, readily welcoming us. He apologised for having no chairs, but spread a carpet under an apricot tree and gave me boiled milk and biscuits. He is off to Leh to-morrow. I asked him about travel conditions in Nubra and mentioned Gyong La, but neither he nor anyone else had ever heard of it; he said that they had had very fine weather and high winds for a long time.

In the evening, to kill a bit of time, I drew an elevation of the climb over Gyong La; the result appalled

<sup>1</sup> Lambadar . . . headman.



THE SNOUT OF THE SIACHEN GLACIER FROM NEAR "NUBRA CAMP", JUNE 16TH, 1939.



APPROACHING CAMP II OVER MORaine COVERED ICE OF THE SIACHEN GLACIER.

me—I thought we would never succeed in crossing it. Then I did one of Khardung La on the same scale ; as this looked like a church spire and the other looked like a roof I felt more encouraged. I showed the drawings to the others ; they were vastly amused, but still were impressed by the fact that they had already climbed a pass very much steeper than Gyong La. Rather a deceptive demonstration of the real difficulties to be overcome, I fear.

A hot and uneventful march of sixteen and a half miles saw us at the end of the second stage of the trek—Panamik (10,500 ft.) I was dog-tired on this march, as, at Khalsar, I had been awake most of the night owing to half a gale blowing, and at Sumur the wretched village dogs of what seemed to be the entire valley kept me awake with their barking.

After tea we questioned an old man, the only one who said he knew of Gyong La, about the route up to this pass. He had been up there, he said, fifteen years ago, with the then British Joint Commissioner, and as he could not reach the top owing to the bad road (ice-fall?) he had left the chitti<sup>1</sup> the Sahib had given him between two stones half-way up. He'd never heard of anyone crossing this pass. After a lot of talking and pumping by us, we suddenly found out he'd been only as far as the Siachen Glacier snout. But we did find out that the Kubet men knew the route up the Nubra well, so we decided to cross the river and see what they said about it.

This conversation with the old man of Panamik made me decide to ascertain, as far as possible, on my return to civilisation, the history of the exploration of this valley, more especially with reference to its upper reaches, above the diversion of the Trade Route to Umlung. It appears that the high state of the river, due to the natural increase of water from the Siachen Glacier in summer, has been a frequent cause of travellers turning back before reaching even the tongue of

<sup>1</sup> Chitti . . . strictly, it means "letter" (Hindustani).

the Siachen Glacier. However, whatever the reason, the first three Europeans recorded as having visited the upper Nubra—W. Moorcroft in 1821,<sup>1</sup> G. T. Vigne in 1835,<sup>2</sup> and Dr. T. Thomson in 1848<sup>3</sup>—did not reach the Siachen. It was thus left to Col. Henry Strachey in October 1848<sup>4</sup> to be the first to set foot on this glacier, but he returned after ascending over the terribly rough moraines for two miles of its course. He was followed by F. Drew, in 1849–50,<sup>5</sup> by E. C. Ryall of the Survey of India offices in 1862,<sup>6</sup> and Dr. Arthur Neve and Capt. D. G. Oliver in 1908,<sup>7</sup> but only Ryall reached the tongue of the Siachen, making an exploratory map as far as this point. Thus, after six visits had already been made to the area, the real discovery of the true course of the Siachen Glacier and all the geographical implications that this carried with it was made by Dr. T. G. Longstaff and Capt. D. G. Oliver during the former's historic expedition in 1909.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Longstaff reached a point 10 miles above the tongue of the Siachen and was able to see many miles farther up the valley, in the direction of the upper part of the glacier, which he had been the first to discover, together with Lt. A. M. Slingsby and Dr. Arthur Neve, earlier on this same expedition. Col. O. L. Ruck, a shikari, was also a visitor to this glacier during the same year.<sup>9</sup>

The Siachen Glacier was re-visited by Dr. and Mrs. Hunter Bullock-Workman in 1912,<sup>10</sup> Mr. Grant-Peterkin, their surveyor, plotting its course with some accuracy. They travelled from Baltistan up the Bilafond Glacier and over the Bilafond La, first discovered and crossed by Dr. Longstaff in 1909, to the head of the Siachen.

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in the Himalaya*, W. Moorcroft and G. Trebeck.

<sup>2</sup> *Travels in Kashmir*, G. T. Vigne.

<sup>3</sup> *Travels in Tibet*, Dr. T. Thomson.

<sup>4</sup> "Physical Geography of Western Tibet," Strachey; *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, F. Drew.

<sup>6</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 84.

<sup>7</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 38.

<sup>8</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 35.

<sup>9</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 84.

<sup>10</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 43.

Thence they travelled down its length, the first Europeans to do so, but returned up it again, leaving by the Bilafond La. They were followed by the Netherlands explorer Dr. Ph. C. Visser and his wife in 1929,<sup>1</sup> who were accompanied by Khan Sahib Afraz Gul Khan, a noted surveyor of the Survey of India offices. They reached the Siachen tongue from the Nubra valley, travelled up it and branched off into the Terong Glacier valley. Thus the region of the Siachen tongue was accurately and officially surveyed at last. The next traveller to visit the area, the Italian explorer Signor Giotto Dainelli, did so from the Nubra end in 1930,<sup>2</sup> travelling up the glacier from its tongue and returning by the Teram Shehr Glacier, Rimo Glacier and Central Asian Trade Route. So far as I am aware, Dainelli was the last person to visit the Siachen Glacier.

The Kubet villagers turned up in force at Panamik, at six next evening. Ahmed Lone, as usual, has borne the brunt of the bandobast and has got some of them to go up the Siachen Glacier in the endeavour to find and cross Gyong La at a rate of pay of twelve annas per day plus one seer<sup>3</sup> of flour<sup>4</sup> per man per day. After Ahmed had got them down to this, I went to see them and was told that some of them had been to the Siachen before. These were sorted out, three of them, and it appeared that they had been on Dainelli's<sup>5</sup> Karakoram Expedition, nine years ago. After some talk, five declared themselves ready to go at once on the above terms. Ahmed Lone then tried to persuade the others to accept the same terms.

At 7.30 p.m. Ahmed Lone came and told me that he had got twelve men to accept the terms, but that, should we reach Baltistan, the return journey of the Ladakhis was to be paid for at six annas per day per man plus food at half a seer per day per man and that the return journey was to be reckoned on the time that

<sup>1</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 84.    <sup>2</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 79.

<sup>3</sup> One seer = two pounds.

<sup>4</sup> Wheat ata.

<sup>5</sup> A well-known Italian scientist and explorer.

it took us to cross Gyong La. The local munshi,<sup>1</sup> who has interpreted throughout proceedings put the contract on paper—one Tibetan version and one Hindustani version. We have twelve coolies and the rest will be found at Kubet to which we go to-morrow.

All the information that I can get shows that no Sahib, Ladakhi or Balti, has ever crossed Gyong La from either east or west. Why? The route seems an obvious one to attempt. Is it impossible to climb the east face? Dr. Longstaff, I believe, climbed the west face to the summit, so that would appear possible. The information to be obtained in the Nubra valley seems to be a hopeless muddle of inaccuracy. Having come this far, I intend to put all my efforts into crossing this pass; especially as no one else seems to have bothered to try it from the east.

Before having a spot of tea I went for a short walk to Panamik's hot spring. It is disappointing, there being very little to see; unfortunately it was inadequate to make even a bath.

We left Panamik at about 11.30 a.m., having waited an hour and a half for the Res ponies—which did not turn up. In the end we had to obtain our own ponies. As usual, the wretched pony-men tried to go straight across the river, otherwise, it was quite an uneventful five-mile march.

From the state of the river at present, it is obvious that if I am going up the Siachen at all I should go without delay. If I leave it any later I am risking being cut off from a safe retreat, should that become necessary, by the depth of the water; so to-morrow, to kill time while the coolies make their bandobast, I'm going to try and shoot an ibex in Kubet nullah. I may have to stay out one night if we see one worth shooting. I have to fill in forty-eight hours somehow while the coolies make their chapplies, rope and clothing for the Gyong La effort.

<sup>1</sup> Munshi = teacher, linguist.



The contract for the coolies was finished off satisfactorily last night—more of a matter of form than anything else. I'm not deceiving myself that it means anything though ; like a modern treaty, it's not worth the paper it is written on. There's nothing to stop the coolies from dumping their loads and refusing to go on ; there are no law-courts up here.

Awake at four o'clock, breakfast at half-past, and away at five was the order of the early hours. It had been a windy night and clouds covered the sky. We climbed up the rather steep mountainside for an hour and a half, but saw nothing in one nullah. Then we crossed over to the main one, finding on the way some eight-days-old tracks of a fair-sized ibex. We saw nothing, so Ahmed Lone said I'd better stay where I was while he raced up the nullah to see if there was anything worth, firstly, chasing, or secondly, waiting for overnight.

While he was away I amused myself by watching the fascinating sight of the sun rising over the mountains and, in particular, the wonderful effect over the immensely high mountain I.P.<sup>1</sup> 24,650 feet, one of the Sasser Kangri group. The sunbeams swept over the ridges and made the swirling grey mists glitter brilliantly as they parted, first revealing and then hiding the awe-inspiring snow-slopes of the mountain ; it looked as if some giant was heaving about under his bed-clothes before waking up. This is the first real mountain I've ever seen—travelling in the valleys, one does not see the very high peaks. Its immensity awed me ; that such a thing could exist had never before really occurred to me—one is inclined to take photos very much for granted. Even had it been possible to take a photograph into the sunlight, it could not have done justice to the beauty of the scene. I suppose that I was at about 13,500 or 14,000 feet ; what then would a mountain of 24,650 feet look like from sea-level ?

Tiring of view-gazing, I took out my pocket-Urdu

<sup>1</sup> I.P. = intersected point.

and tried to find suitable names for the un-named glaciers around Gyong La. It is advantageous to give them some name in order to be able to refer to each one individually. Several names suggested themselves ; “ Peesoo Glacier ” seemed quite an appropriate name— “ flea glacier ”—we’d probably have them by then !

Eventually Ahmed Lone returned ; he’d seen the ibex, but it was only a small un-shootable one, so we packed up and returned to the village. The coolies were chased up, flour weighed out, cigarettes dished out and we are getting off to-morrow at eight. At last the climax of the whole trip starts ; in three days we will be at the Siachen.

## CHAPTER 3

### Into the Blue

WE left on the third stage of the trek at eight o'clock on June 13th. Most of the coolies brought ponies which were to carry their loads as far as possible.<sup>1</sup> We had a long walk through the typical village lanes of this country; deep and stuffy with high and very thick hedges of dead thorn on either side of them. The going is very rough as the lanes, as well as being the highways, are also convenient channels for irrigation water, so the way is invariably very wet and stony. These lanes and the tiny two-month-old baby goats are the two characteristic things I've seen in the valley so far and which I won't forget. The goats are attractive little things with a high-pitched bleat and tiny horns and ears. Most of them are no bigger than a small terrier. Another curious thing about Ladakh is that there are very few dogs. In the Indus valley, most of the dogs are generally of the Pekingese variety, and the Ladakhis, as opposed to Indians who are terrified of dogs, keep them as pets. There are a few dogs in Nubra, great big shaggy-coated animals—typical mountain dogs and very fierce.

The march to Kimi (11,000 ft.) was an easy one of twelve miles. Kimi does exist—which the map, judging from the question mark, doubts—and the following magnetic bearings place it: Mt. Warsi 320°, Mt. Wusack 120°.

I realise these readings are almost in transit and so are many others that I have taken, but when one is travelling in the valleys there are precious few suitable fixed points, shown on the map, to be seen. Naturally, if possible, I try to get bearings on the G.T.S.<sup>2</sup> triangu-

<sup>1</sup> This proved to be "Nubra Camp".

<sup>2</sup> G.T.S. = Great Trigonometrical Survey of India.

lation stations and intersected points. This evening I attempted to give Ahmed Lone and Khaliqia a lesson in compass reading, which they seemed to understand and appreciate.

The following day we got into what is rarely-visited country. Soon after leaving Kimi we had to cross the river immediately opposite Henachi. We had some fun here ; the ford started at the bottom of a cliff and the water was deep and fast-flowing. It took a long time to get everything across, but this was accomplished safely. The coolies are a very good crowd of young fellows, taking the ice-cold water as a huge joke, laughing, yelling with cold and chaffing each other.

After a short rest we pushed on over the river-bed to Henachi and for some reason known only to himself, Khaliqia went another way over the various river streams together with Rastaman, who had my stockings, socks and chappies. The result was that I had to ride a mile or so across the valley and another half-mile into Henachi before I could regain touch with Khaliqia, who, if you please, had coolly sat down for his tiffin. I was furious with him for making a fool of me in front of all those coolies and villagers. They all thought it a huge joke (which it was, as I realised) and laughed outright ; but being the first Englishman up here, above the trade route from Panamik, for years on end I thought it a bad thing to be made a fool of.

The rest of the twelve-mile walk was uneventful. A shepherd lives in this remote spot—Warshi (11,500 ft.)—and has advised us to cross to Gonpo first as the track from there onwards is good.

An appalling march followed next day ; not long, about nine miles, but shocking travelling over the river-bed. We crossed over the river at Warshi as the shepherd had advised us and stayed on the right bank, where the river streams are shallow. I then took a few bearings in order to place the ford. Shortly afterwards, after two or three storms which brought terrific



“GYONG KANGRI” (23,500 FT.), ABOVE THE ICE-FALL IN “NORTH GLACIER”. JUNE 18TH, 1939.



THE ICE-FALL IN "NORTH GLACIER" FROM CAMP IV. JUNE 19TH, 1939.

gales and clouds of sand down the valley, we came to Liyul. There is nothing there except water and plenty of firewood. The Warshi shepherd told us last night that Dainelli had stayed there one night. Hereabouts we saw the tracks of a large ibex and two very large snow-leopard. We have camped a mile short of the tongue of the glacier, on the south side of a small hill, where there is wood, water and some shelter from the wind. I can see the peak "23,500 feet" which, according to the map, is immediately above and north of Gyong La. I've dubbed this "Gyong Kangri".

It has been a hard day; several storms sweeping over from the west with fairly bright intervals. Clouds have been on the tops of all the mountains and sweeping down the nullahs all the time, making map-reading difficult. The country is really awe-inspiring; sheer-sided, glacier worn mountains, the real magnitude and height of which it is difficult to assess owing to the deceptive clarity of the mountain air, soar up to unbelievable heights. Scrambling up those nullahs, hanging on to rock faults by finger and toe in the middle of a twenty-foot smooth face seemed as if one were hanging in space; but, later, looking back from the valley, the rock-face could only just be seen. Yesterday I gave the coolies an encouraging surprise by producing cigarettes for them and to-day they are tired and discouraged after that march, so I produced tea for them. In this way, by showing that I intend to look after them, I hope to eliminate any possibility of them striking when we get on to more difficult terrain. I am calling this camp, "Nubra Camp" for the sake of a name.

We started at eight o'clock and thereby I learned that if one is glacier travelling one must start earlier. About a mile and a half from camp we reached the glacier tongue and started to climb up the right lateral moraine. A short way up we were held up by an ice-ridge running across our path. Overcoming this, we found ourselves in a nullah where there was good spring

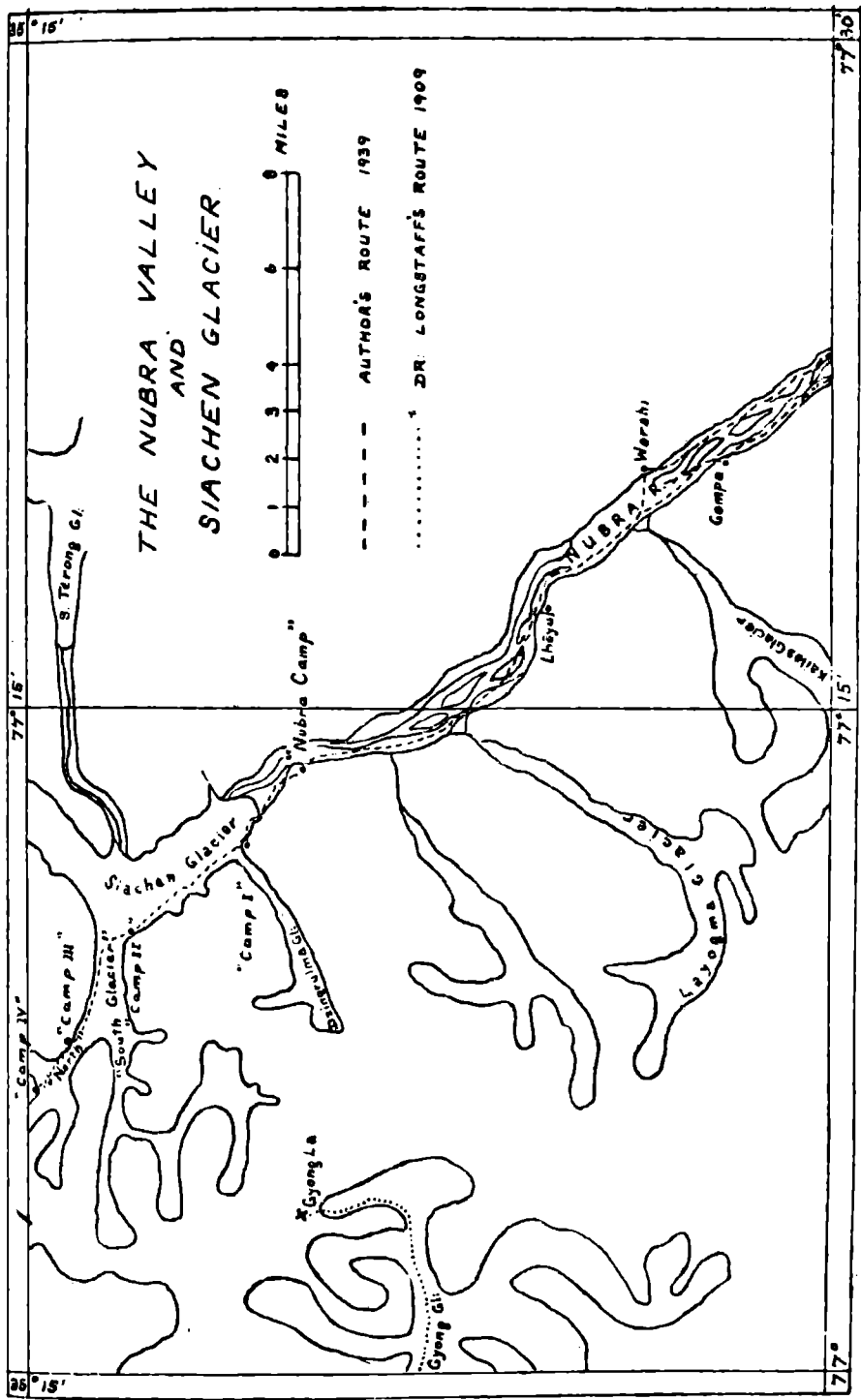
water. We waited for the coolies and saw them over safely and then pushed on. Tracks of large ibex and snow-leopard were to be seen on all the soft ground. We went on over very rough going and then stopped for tiffin ; while we had this Khaliqia, who was leading the coolies, suddenly appeared and said he had put up a very large snow-leopard. Evidently it was asleep under a large rock only some fifty yards up the slope from the moraine. Khaliqia had set a large stone rolling and this had frightened it up towards us, but, needless to say, we did not see it again. If ever I come to India again I'm coming up here to shoot ibex and snow-leopard ; the place is alive with very good specimens.

Soon after lunch, it was apparent that we would never make the tributary glacier leading up to Gyong La to-day, so we set about looking for a camp-site and eventually found a good one about a hundred feet above the glacier. True, it is exposed to all the winds, but it is the only level site to be seen where there is plenty of wood. After tea Ahmed Lone and I set off up the mountain to see exactly what could be seen round a shoulder in the valley wall ; but we did not discover much and I returned to camp baffled by the inadequacy of the map.

It did not take long to reach the nullah of the tributary glacier after leaving Camp I, and on arrival there I immediately realised how useless the map was, because it gave only a very sketchy impression of the form of the two glaciers in this nullah. Anyway, it is fairly apparent that the route to Gyong La goes up one or other of these glaciers, though which I do not know. In fact, when I realise what an inexperienced amateur I am and think of the various difficulties in the way, it seems to me that the wisest and safest course to take is to pack up with the idea altogether. Honour is not satisfied so soon in the venture though ; I will not lose face with my Ladakhis at such an early stage.

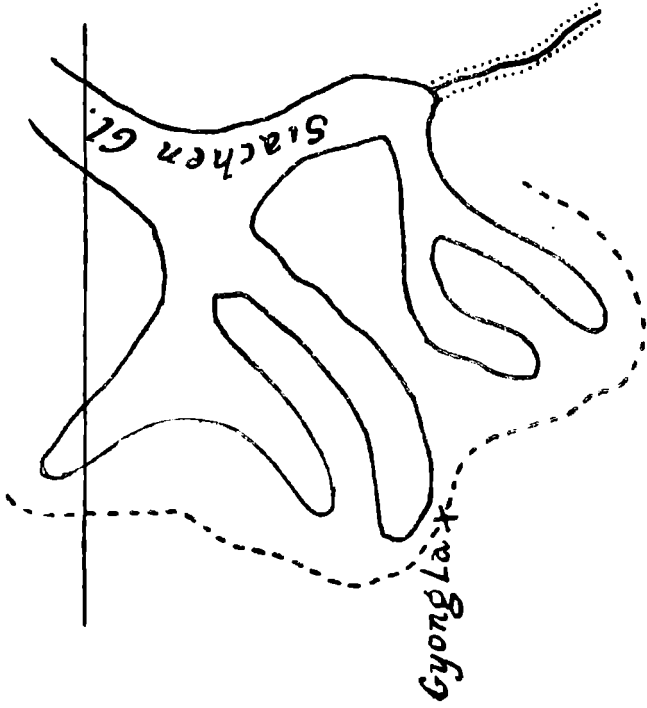
We've just come back from a recco ; but this did



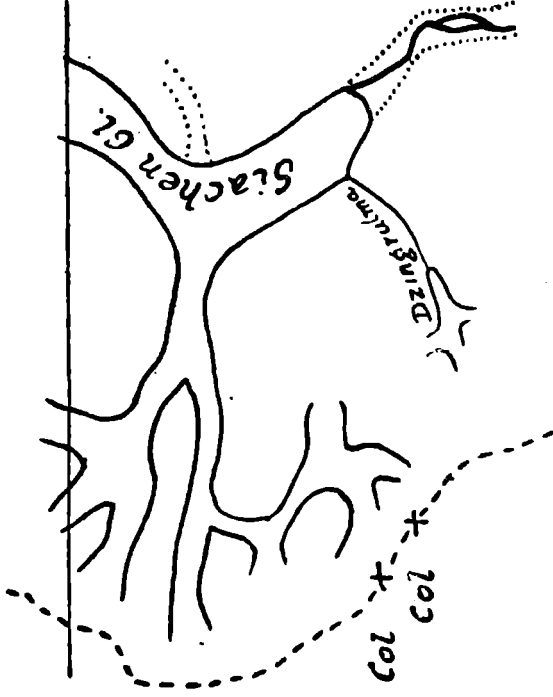


MAP 1.—THE NUBRA VALLEY AND SIACHEN GLACIER.

Based upon Survey of India maps 50A (1939) and 50E (1938) with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.



From Map 52 E (1928)



From Map 52 E (1938)

MAP 2.—THE SIACHEN GLACIER SNOUT.

Based upon the Survey of India maps with the permission of the Surveyor General of India and reproduced by courtesy of the Editor of the "Himalayan Journal."

not elucidate things very much. We climbed fairly high above Camp II, situated in a small ablation valley at the junction of the Siachen and tributary glaciers. From our point of vantage, we saw that the nullah split into two branches, both curving round in a north-westerly direction. The glaciers in these nullahs I am calling "North" and "South Glaciers" respectively. "South Glacier" seemed to have a smooth surface for as far as we could see, but "North Glacier" was extremely rough and steep. As far as we could see above "North Glacier", to the right was an enormous mountain which fell away rapidly to the south in a series of very steep ice-cliffs and avalanche slopes. The contour of this mountain is the only thing which fits the map with any degree of accuracy and must be the one which Dr. Longstaff shows as being due north of Gyong La.<sup>1</sup> I have two more days to play with and think it best to make a bee-line for the base of the terrific precipice falling from this high mountain; so I hope that "North Glacier" will serve my purpose. I intend to go as far as I possibly can to-morrow. Before returning to camp I took a panorama photo of the Siachen Glacier which was lit up well by the setting sun.

To-day's march has been tiring, the moraine giving us some pretty heavy going. Ahmed Lone, myself and Rastaman go ahead, scouting for a route and equipped with a rope and ice-axe. Khaliqia, fluent in Tibetan, with one large rope and ice-axe, heads the coolies while Abdullah brings up the rear. The coolies go slowly, now and again stopping to rest with a shrill whistle fully expressive of the effort needed to climb over the moraine. The whistle seems to have different tones at different obstacles and translates, better than words, what the coolie thinks of the situation. The ice in the region of the tongue of the Siachen is piled up in a series of great waves, none of which are less than fifty feet high and some are as much as one hundred and

<sup>1</sup> i.e. "Gyong Kangri", previously mentioned.

fifty feet high. The ice is overlaid with rock debris of varying thickness and many boulders, some of them as large as a cottage. Travelling over these waves of moraine-covered ice is tiring in the extreme. After struggling with, perhaps, five such waves one may be faced with one of a larger breed which, on being climbed, only provides the discouraging panorama of yet another mile of waves to be overcome before camp can, justifiably, be made. At last, however, we reached our objective and camped on a patch of sand between the ice of the Siachen and the mountainside. There is plenty of wood here, but the only water available is snow or ice-water.

After sleeping soundly we set off at six o'clock in the morning, travelling towards a shoulder of the ridge above the left lateral moraine of what might be called the "neck" of the tributary glaciers to the Siachen. Although we'd seen an excellent route up the left lateral moraine of this neck during our recco : yesterday evening, Ahmed Lone insisted on going diagonally up the glacial moraine for some unearthly reason. The proper route is to cross over the glacier from Camp II and then come up the left lateral moraine<sup>1</sup> of the "neck". This side is perfect ; it is all smooth sand and there is a large pond on the way.

After reaching the foot of the rock shoulder we waited for the coolies. After a long time, as there was no sign of them, Ahmed Lone and I climbed up the rock shoulder and got a good view of the entire glacier. After some anxious waiting, the coolies eventually appeared over the other side. They were struggling over the moraine, even though we had told them to cross over the glacier direct. Ahmed Lone and I then climbed up the hill in order to do a recco of the remainder of the route. Things look promising and after yesterday's misgivings we feel optimistic. "North Glacier" is impossible as a route ; it fills the entire nullah and is a mass of seracs and cliffs, but we think

<sup>1</sup> Better, an ablation valley.

we have seen a route above the glacier. To-morrow, we climb up and pitch camp on a fairly large maidan,<sup>1</sup> where there is wood, just level with the snow-line but not in the snow—I reckon the height will be about 15,000 feet.

After coming down the hill we heard Khaliqia's story. They had left a wood-axe behind and had sent a coolie back for it. He did not say why he hadn't come by the route we told him of; I suppose it was because, to an oriental, the quickest way between two points is a straight line. I thought Khaliqia better than that; he seems an intelligent fellow. They came over hair-raising whorls of black ice holding deep water pools separated by very narrow strips of ice walls topped by delicately-balanced stones. Two coolies had slipped down, but only a short way and they had come to no harm, the rope saving them.

One of the coolies has a flute, which he plays each day after they are settled into their camp. So far I have failed to hear it only once, at Camp I. These coolies are a very good crowd indeed; they know that I'm exploring and don't know the way and only three of them have ever seen the Siachen Glacier before; they are a happy and sporting crowd. To-day we have made Camp III on the edge of a back-water of moraine in "North Glacier", well below the ice-fall. During our recco to-day, we came across a very large bit of twisted tree-trunk. We prised it loose and sent it hurtling down the kud-side to land with a resounding crash—which conveniently broke it up—some thousand feet below. This, together with what we have brought from Camp II, has given us plenty of wood—real wood I mean, not just the roots which abound here—and has enabled me to indulge in an unusual luxury. I'd just had a spot of tea, when Khaliqia came and asked me to have my bath. I asked him why so early and he said "Master, when sun going down then no coming any more water from ice". The sun disappears here

<sup>1</sup> Maidan . . . a level piece of ground (Hindustani).

at six-thirty, so I had my bath before the heavenly tap was turned off.

In the morning we set off and crossed the nullah above the piled-up moraine, having built a six-foot pylon above Camp III. To-day's route was not long, but was a steep climb up to a high bluff. At one point we had to use the rope as a hand-rail to assist the coolies up a small cleft. Ahmed Lone went up top-sides and I stayed down at the bottom ; I let him make the bandobast. I hated to see his inadequate oriental methods and finally stopped the whole show and reorganised it, making Ahmed Lone anchor one end, whilst I anchored the lower end. The coolies then got up with a fair degree of safety.

At about eleven we reached the top of the bluff, Camp IV, on the edge of the snow-line at about 15,000 feet. After a longish rest, Ahmed Lone, I, the head coolie and six others set out to see what was above a hanging glacier—"Camp IV glacier"—coming down a nullah north of here. We made a false start by trying to reach the glacier direct, which wasted an hour, so we really only started at one o'clock. We crossed the nullah well out of range of the stones which bounded down from the glacier above and climbed up the other side. After a very steep climb over scree and moraine, we reached the névé of the glacier and followed a strip of moraine. It was slow work and exhausting at that height in the soft snow, but we reached a large boulder well up the glacier at about half-past two. I had hoped, optimistically, that I would see the glacier the other side of the ridge we were climbing, as I had at first got the impression that "Camp IV Glacier" was a saddle astride this ridge. On reaching the boulder, however, all hopes of any success in this direction went for six. The glacier rose farther and curved round west—all of which seemed to indicate that it drained the east face of the high peak I was making for ; but I did not want to find myself on its east face. The precipitous wall above the ice-fall in "North Glacier"

was impracticable as a route. There was one line that could have been taken by a light party, but I was unwilling to lead heavily-laden coolies over it especially as one very steep, snow-filled couloir had to be overcome. It would have been foolish to go back and try "South Glacier" with the little coolie food we had and with the Nubra River getting bigger and bigger behind our backs. To-day was the last day I had for reconnoitering the route to Gyong La and I was obviously defeated.

I took a round of all the bearings I could and also a panorama photo looking south-east towards three extremely high peaks a long way off.<sup>1</sup> At half-past three, as the sun sank behind the ridge and a chill wind blew down the glacier, we returned. The coolies fairly leapt down and took a short cut—to Heaven as I thought—across the nullah immediately under the glacier face. Now and again stones—big rocks—hurtled down from the glacier, spinning wildly, but everyone ran across and no one was hit. Eventually we got into camp. After a cup of tea I told Ahmed Lone we were going back and that we must do it as quickly as possible ; to-morrow we go to Camp II.

✱

## OUT OF THE BLUE

I was very tired last night after all the days efforts and to crown it I got about one hour's sleep. To-day, while I was pushing down some breakfast, I was still trying to think of a way of getting over the pass and thought of returning to Gompa, making a small bandobast with food for three weeks and attacking the pass again, this time by exploring the "South Glacier", while Khaliqia took the rest of the bandobast to Khapalu via the Shyok. Turning this over in my mind, I soon realised the difficulties of such a bandobast ; the expense would be heavy, I wasn't certain that Gyong La was passable and three more weeks would

<sup>1</sup> The Sasser Kangri group, probably.

make the Nubra a very big obstacle, even for a light party.

The return march to Camp II, via the way we came except that we did keep to the left bank of the "neck", was uneventful and easy. What with yesterday's efforts, no sleep last night and to-day's march, I was exhausted on arrival here and went to sleep for an hour before tea.

If my original plans had worked out, I would have been at Gyong to-day. Life has not been made any easier by a boil which started to be painful on the march. It is behind my left ear on the neck, and memories of a bad mastoid on that ear don't help much! I tried, fairly successfully, to ease it with fomentations of boiling hot water. If it doesn't get any better by the time I reach Kubet I may return to Leh, two days shorter than Khapalu.

An uneventful return to Nubra Camp. We started at seven o'clock and were in camp by three. On the way we passed several ibex heads, most of them good ones, which had been killed by snow-leopards. We also found some wild rhubarb which, of course, we did not leave behind. Ahmed Lone wants me to go to Sasser and shoot a burrhel; a small bandobast for four days. Well, I don't see why not; I'm tired of getting no concrete results out of this trek. I've built a big cairn on top of the spur here and put a summary of the results of my trek up the Siachen in a bottle at the bottom. I wonder who will be the next person on the glacier.<sup>1</sup>

The march from Nubra Camp to Gompa took almost twelve hours. At one spot, in order to avoid the river, we had to scale a shoulder of rock which was almost smooth. This provided some fun and I lost my sun glasses—annoying. Then the coolies struck, saying.

<sup>1</sup> Whoever it is, he should not pay any attention to these notes, if he finds them! The latest map of the area is extremely good and minute in detail. This cairn is built, without doubt, exactly on intersected point 12,170 ft., sheet 52 E. (1938).



there was too much water ; I couldn't blame them. Crossing those streams was bad enough unladen. Ahmed Lone, I and the head coolie were ahead and two unladen coolies brought us this news. The head coolie went back to deal with the situation, while one of the two coolies who had brought the news stayed with Ahmed Lone and me. Then we had to ford a large stream of the river, rather unexpectedly. The water, being only a short way from the glacier was as cold as it could be, it was running very swiftly and came just above my knees. After a fifty-yard paddle I couldn't feel my feet ; but I adopted the very effective native method of recovery and buried my legs in the sun-warmed sand. We also lit a fire and kept it going until the coolies arrived. This cheered them no end after having to do some very unpleasant wading with loads on their backs. Eventually we staggered into a pretty garden of wild roses at Gompa at 6.15 p.m., having started at 7 a.m. During the whole of the march we kept to the right bank of the valley and it was only in the last three miles that we had to ford the river at all. Even then we only had to do it twice, once the main stream and once a rather large side stream.

The walk to Aranu went off without incident and on arrival at Kimi, a village-man produced some "chang" for me—a local whisky made out of flour, I believe. I only tasted it, but didn't like it much ; though I believe that some people who go very far afield on shikar do drink it as a very mild substitute for whisky.

In the morning, feeling thoroughly lazy, I wrote out twenty chits and paid off the coolies. Expensive venture, especially as it did not succeed. While paying them, I noticed the huge boil behind my ear had come to a head. I've just doctored it, with some success at that. I go to Sasser to-morrow for a week and then return to Panamik.

Feeling very much better later on, I lazed away the rest of the day, admiring the colourful scene of wild

red roses backed by shaded mountains crowned with snow caps silhouetted against an azure sky. The warm wind sang a song of Siachen in the rose bushes,<sup>1</sup> whispered in the blades of grass and soothed me into utter relaxation . . . and sleep . . .

#### SKELETON TRAIL

On June 25th we started off from Kimi by going two miles downstream before attempting to cross the Nubra. The pony-men then wasted time by looking for a crossing place where there obviously was not one. Finally, I lost patience and told the head man to buck up or I would fine him ; a piece of sheer bluff. It was obvious that he did not know the road, as he should have done, having been given twenty-four hours' notice of our desire to cross the river. He then led us a mile upstream, without getting any farther towards the other side, and then went into very deep water with the ponies, getting the loads wet. Granted the water was deep and swift flowing, but that was no reason for not using the coolies he had for carrying loads in such water, even though it was a risky procedure.

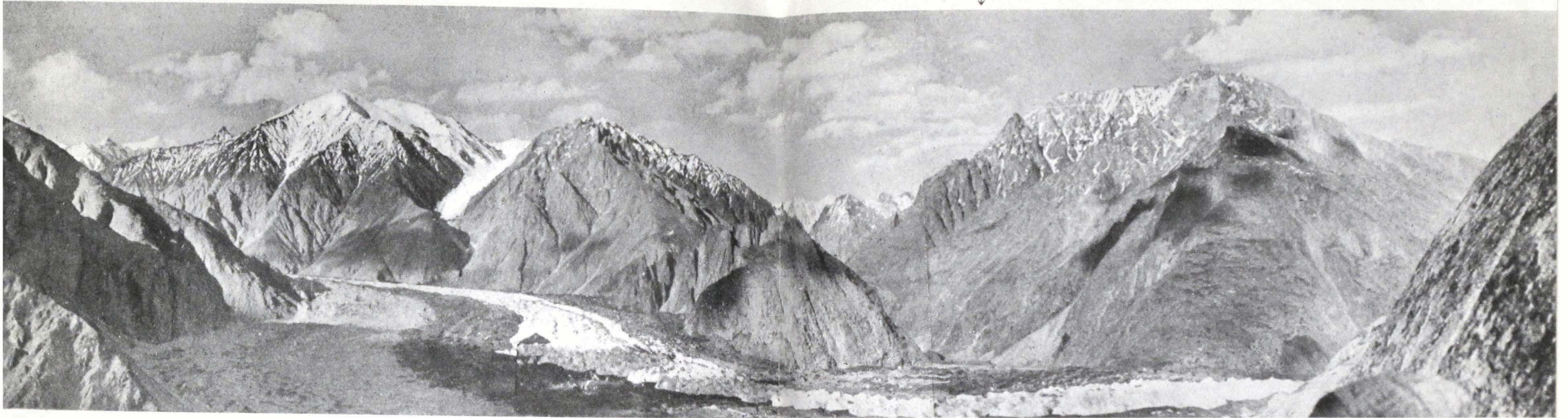
I then crossed over on the very small riding pony provided, feeling sure it would be swept away by the water ; however, just as it seemed that he must go under, a swift turn round, head to current, kept him swimming on an even stomach. The pony went back again and Rastaman came across on it. He got the pony broadside on to the current, lost his balance and both he and the pony nearly went for six. Ahmed Lone was next and the pony had gone across yet again ; I didn't like it, but shouting across the river was not sufficient to prevent him from using the same pony to bring him across. He did the same as Rastaman, but kept his head and stopped where he was, in so far as

<sup>1</sup> The Siachen obtains its name from the occurrence of wild roses in the upper Nubra. " Sia " is the Ladakhi-Tibetan for " rose ",

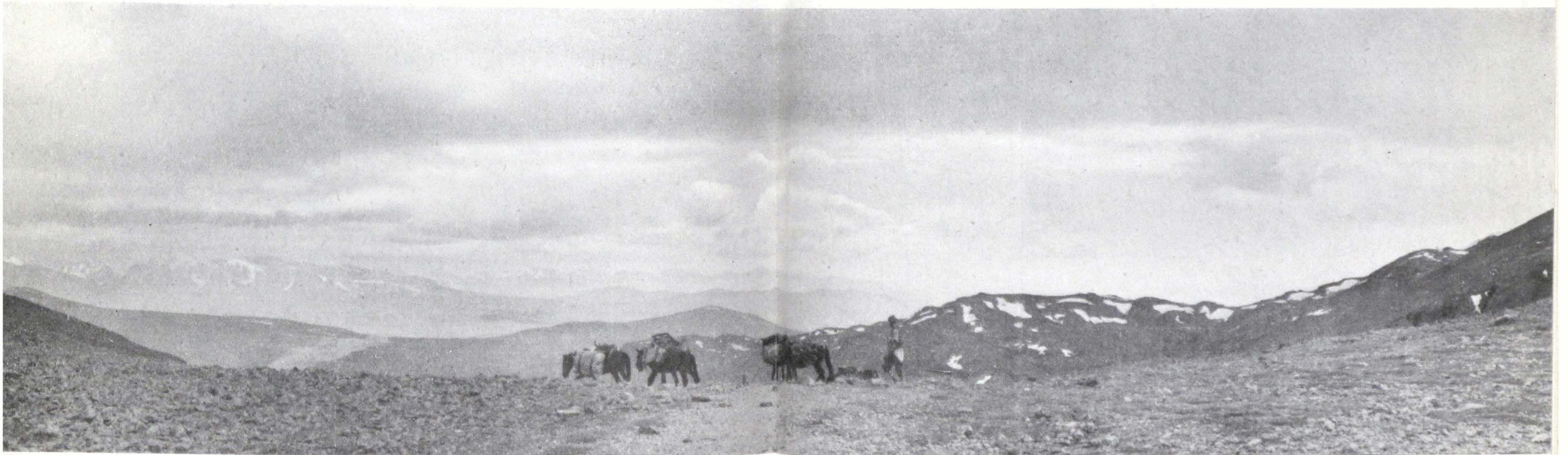


LADAKHI GIRL COOLY, TIGGUR, NUBRA VALLEY.

TERONG GLACIER VALLEY



PANORAMA OF THE SIACHEN GLACIER TAKEN FROM ABOVE CAMP II. JUNE 17TH, 1939.



"WE GOT A GOOD VIEW OF THE DEOSAI PLAINS", FROM THE SUMMIT OF "WAZUL BAI", 15,000 FT. JULY 23RD, 1939.



“ST. CHRISTOPHER” WATCHES ABDULLAH CROSS A RIFT ABOVE THE SHYOK RIVER.

this was possible. I was ready with a rope this time, anchored to an ice-axe buried in sand. I hurled it at Ahmed Lone and, again, had to dash into the water myself to lead the struggling pony ashore.

Finally, we reached the other bank and while my shorts, stockings and chapplies were drying by a fire, I had my tiffin. Ahmed Lone had some pretty lucid things to say about the pony-men. Poor old Rastaman had been shaken badly ; however, after a dry by the fire he was all right and set off for Panamik with two ponies while we started for Umlung (11,500 ft.) on the Central Asian Trade Route. We had a long climb up a steeply winding track which took us up the face of a precipice and then dropped down into the gorge again to a very small flat piece of ground called Umlung.

On the way through this gorge, while climbing up from the Nubra and, later, dropping down to Umlung, I saw several carcasses of ponies, some legs complete with hair and hooves, several complete skeletons and in particular, the complete skeleton and skin of a foal—all of the animals having died through exhaustion of travelling, possibly in winter, over this road to Yarkand. The average height of the road is over 10,000 feet, and there are four or five passes of over 18,000 feet which have to be crossed. Travelling over this road in winter is foolhardy and attempting it too early in the Spring or too late in the Summer is liable to end disastrously.

Villagers from the Nubra valley are at work repairing the road in preparation for the British Joint Commissioner's <sup>1</sup> journey to the Chinese frontier. This has made the burrhel <sup>2</sup> move up towards the Sasser Pass, so to-morrow we go on to Tut Yailak, hoping to shoot a burrhel on the way there. Then we will sit up all night, if necessary, over the meat, hoping to get a snow-leopard. I really would like to get that ; a snow-

<sup>1</sup>The B.J.C. for Ladakh. The somewhat large territory of Ladakh is administered by two commissioners. The B.J.C. is one ; a Ladakhi is another.

<sup>2</sup>Burrhel (*Ovis Nahura*), sometimes called "Blue sheep" owing to a bluish tint in the coat.

leopard skin is really valuable, and I was staggered at the price they were asking in Srinagar for a coat made of a few skins.

The day started badly ; one of the mules broke its tether and started off home. Two of the Ladakhis chased it, leaving myself, Khaliqia, Abdullah and one Ladakhi to make the bandobast. Between us we loaded the two horses and the mule leaving Abdullah behind with one load, to wait for the home-sick mule. I tried my hand at the art of being ghorer-wallah with one of the ponies, giving it a crack on the rump with the butt end of an ice-axe and emitting a not very convincing effort at the Ladakhi encouragement of " Chu ", which is pronounced expectoratively, when the pony started to lag behind ; or, when it went too fast, crying out in a warning voice, " Hōsh " Soon after starting one horse sat down under his load ; the load had to be removed to allow the animal to get up and then had to be re-packed again. By this time the home-sick mule had been retrieved, loaded and had caught us up.

Eventually, we caught up with Ahmed Lone who had started out early to look for burrhel. A Ladakhi shepherd from Tut Yailak said that a large black wolf had taken one of his sheep and also a cow and he then pointed out what he called a good burrhel nullah. An hour and a half's wait while Ahmed Lone examined it proved a useful time to get rid of some tiffin. Ahmed Lone returned having seen nothing.

The trail climbed steadily, the weather was rotten—clouds right down in the valley—and it was perishing cold. I felt really miserable and realised that I'd really had enough of it ; but decided to give it this last chance to give me good luck.

Later on, just before reaching Tut Yailak, Ahmed Lone saw nine small burrhel on the hillside and after tea he saw some more. This was at least encouraging. To-morrow, he goes out at 5.30 a.m. to look for a big one high up on the hillside.

At 9.30 a.m. the Ladakhi coolie whom Ahmed Lone

had taken with him this morning, returned with the good news that they had been successful. We left at 10.0 a.m. and caught up with Ahmed Lone after a steep climb to 15,500 feet, at about 11.30 a.m. He said that there were several good burrhel feeding just below the glacier tongue<sup>1</sup> in a well of moraine, a very good spot for shooting them. After a spot of tiffin we pushed on at noon, and half an hour later Ahmed Lone, immediately in front of me, suddenly crouched down. Doing likewise, I asked him what was up.

Ahmed Lone had seen some seven or eight small burrhel in a line between us and the big ones, about two hundred yards ahead. This was almost a tragedy; the wind was blowing from the north-west, more or less up the nullah. We dropped into a small rift and went up the east side of the main nullah, to keep out of the wind of the small chaps. All we could do now was to wait. The sky was completely overcast and it was mighty cold. At half-past one the big heads of burrhel started to come down our side of the nullah.

All went very well; we went down our small rift as far as we could without getting in the wind of the small burrhel and waited. I got my rifle ready and then, three hundred yards away, the animals went over to the other side of the nullah. Then followed a long wait; at three o'clock the sun came out and warmed us up. Very, very slowly the big chaps came down the nullah, feeding as they came. Then they came quickly and suddenly the herd split, one lot, with big heads, by all pieces of luck coming over our side of the nullah.

By this time the herd of small burrhel had moved up towards the glacier—another piece of luck—and we scrambled down our little rift as quietly as possible. Coming to a suitable spot, I got into position and waited. A few moments afterwards the burrhel came into sight round a boulder; Ahmed Lone whispered which one to take. The burrhel kept on moving quickly, the biggest on the far side from us. I kept

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, this proved to be the Namling Glacier.



following through with my rifle ; finally one of the biggest stopped and I had an unobstructed view of him. I fired and hit him, but he ran on. Quickly crawling to the other side of the rift I picked him up again, fired and missed. The herd panicked, couldn't see us and split, one lot with a big head in it coming straight towards us. I waited and they turned up the side of the nullah. I took a walking shot at the big one—fifty yards—and hit him, but not badly. Then the herd saw us and went up the side of the nullah, turning back towards the glacier. I took several more running shots, but without success. Ahmed Lone was certain I'd hit a third in the buttocks, but of course it had got clean away, and I was not sufficiently convinced to make me follow it up.

It now remained to pick up the two I'd hit. Unfortunately they had split ; the first one, badly hit, was on our side of the nullah ; the second one I saw going strong 'way down the other side of the nullah. We promptly chased this one and eventually saw it near the edge of a nullah 150 yards away. I caught only a fleeting glimpse of it in the sight, pictured in a typical pose on a needle of rock, staring at me with terrified eyes ; then before I could fire it went over the top and disappeared. I hesitated ; for me to wound and not finish off the game struck me as a bad shikar, yet the party must split in order to get the first and badly-wounded burrhel. Alone, Ahmed Lone stood much more chance than I of picking up the second one—I gave him the rifle and returned up the nullah with Khaliqia and a Ladakhi.

We formed line and walked up the nullah on its eastern side. After a little time I saw a movement some 150 yards off, looked hard and could just make out the burrhel lying down against the stone background. I immediately “formed triangle”, myself, with large hunting-knife, uppermost, where the burrhel would probably go. We closed in slowly ; the burrhel made a dash for a nullah. I raced along above it and it

collapsed after fifty yards at the bottom of a big rock. Re-forming triangle, we closed in again and got up to the burrhel. It had no more strength left to make another dash. I caught its horns and had a bit of a tussle with it, finally managing to kill it outright with my knife. The Ladakhi didn't like this and stood behind the rock saying his prayers! After a wash in some snow, we had a breather and some chocolate. Then we tied up the burrhel and started back to camp.

Meanwhile there was no sign of Ahmed Lone. Soon after reaching camp we heard a shot, and ten minutes later saw Ahmed Lone and the Ladakhi, through the telescope, bringing the other burrhel. I went to meet them and congratulated them on getting it. We talked for a few minutes and then I suddenly whipped out my knife and showed it to Ahmed Lone. His astonishment was amazingly funny to see.

“You get other one, Sahib?” he said incredulously.

I told him we had. He promptly shook hands and was as happy as a child with a new toy, very pleased to realise I had actually caught the other burrhel and killed it with my knife.

I aimed to hit the first burrhel behind the right shoulder and I got him in the side. The bullet went right through, smashing his near fore-leg; why it didn't kill him I don't know. The second one was hit only in the near fore shoulder, though I aimed for his chest. The heads measure 25 inches and 25½ inches. The limit for burrhel is 23 inches, below which one may not shoot them.

In accordance with our plans made yesterday, we left the burrhel meat a short way away from the camp last night, in the hope that it would entice a snow-leopard or the alleged black wolf within rifle range. I slept in my clothes with the rifle ready beside me, but nothing turned up. We left at a quarter to eleven and after an easy eleven-mile march downhill, arrived at Umlung at three o'clock.

First thing in the morning it was found that the black

mule had again had a fit of home-sickness, this time being so misguided as to lead astray one of the white ponies. The cause of the home-sickness is the scarcity of grass at Umlung. This time it went off to Tut Yailak, but it was caught fairly soon and we got off at 8.30 a.m.

After one or two minor incidents with the black mule we reached Panamik at three o'clock. Here, we found Rastaman looking as if he were at death's door ; he'd been very ill for the last two days and judging from his description of life, it seemed as if it had been a bad attack of dysentery. He says he feels a good deal better to-day. Well, if he takes things easily the healthy atmosphere of this valley will prove to be the best doctor. Rather serious this, as I had intended to double march to Khapalu.

Last night I had a supper of burrhel meat, minced. I can't compare it to anything ; it is very good, but very rich.

A lazy day followed. I repacked all my stores, getting rid of one yakdan. Rastaman is a good deal better ; after another night's rest and if he rides all day to-morrow he'll be quite all right.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Valley of Floods

ON July 1st we started off at 6.30 a.m., after chasing up more pack-horses and we had an uneventful march of sixteen miles to Tiggur. Here we had a short rest while the horses were changed. This was an occasion for most of the village to turn out and, finding one fellow who seemed pretty intelligent—he spoke Kashmiri, Urdu and Tibetan—I questioned him about the Shyok route to Khapalu, about which precious little seems to be known by all. So far I have gathered that we have to go on the southern bank route, and that we have to take coolies for four days.

I got a surprise at Tiggur ; on leaving, a girl led one of the ponies. Enquiries revealed that she was going to Thirit as a “ghorer-wallah” ; she is the first girl “ghorer-wallah” we have had so far. She was not nearly as superstitious as the other Ladakhi women we have encountered and I got quite a good photo of her, both cine and still, the taking of which she did not seem to resent.

Rastaman took the journey quite well, riding almost the whole distance of twenty-three miles. I walked most of the way, plodding along behind a Ladakhi pony-man, who religiously passed every monipadmi on the left, regardless of the roughness of the road. If they do this, they bring down blessings on themselves ; if they pass it on the right they bring down curses. Even the ponies are trained to go past the left side and our own ponies, left to themselves, will almost invariably go to the left in single file, even if it is a worse road than that to the right. For the second time on the whole trek, I saw a lama sitting on a rock by the road spinning off prayers on his prayer-wheel while he

muttered some magic formulae over and over again. The prayer-wheel was fairly big, made of copper.

The sunset was glorious, shining right up the Shyok, all sorts of colours mingling in the sky above the heavy relief of the purple-tinted valley walls.

We left Thirit at seven o'clock in the morning and walked down to the boat, a mile away, which was to take us across the Shyok. The pony bandobast for to-day was rather complicated. The Tiggur ponies went as far as the ferry and Ahmed Lone had sent chitties to the Lambadars of Khalsar and Diskit for ponies to come to the southern bank of the Shyok and to be ready to take us on to Hundar. As I half expected, on arrival at the river there was not a four-legged animal in sight over the other side. However, the ponies were unloaded and the boat loaded. We then set about trying to persuade the Tiggur pony-man to take us on to Diskit. He definitely declined, saying he would not make his horses swim the river. He took off the saddle of the worst pony to back up his argument; the back was one mass of sores and, as we already knew, this horse was very bad, walking with only the greatest difficulty.

Then Ahmed Lone descried movement 'way up the Khalsar road, three or four miles away. Hope that these were the Khalsar ponies suddenly arose; field-glasses were produced and showed the movement to be two men and a donkey. Hope sank. We had another shot at our ghorer-wallah this time with more success and he tried three horses. They got across safely. After a lot more argument, we suddenly saw six men and seven horses coming from Diskit way; these were almost certainly for us. Shortly after this the two men and a donkey popped into view from behind a sand-dune the other side of the river. One man turned out to be the fellow who had taken the chittie to Khalsar. He yelled across to us, an hour and a half after our having waited for ponies, the important information that no horses were coming from Khalsar

and that Diskit was providing them. Soon after this the Diskit men arrived.

The Tiggur man then moaned about his horses being the other side of the river and asked for back-sheesh. I told him that if he only knew it his back-sheesh was in his three horses which, having had a good wash in the river, were now enjoying themselves and doing themselves good—probably for the first time in years—by rolling in the sand. This put him in good humour and I showed him his horses through my field-glasses, which amused him immensely; the horses swam back safely.

Finally we loaded up the Diskit ponies and set off. The ride to Diskit was uneventful; but on arrival we heard an awful shindy of trumpets and drums. Investigation proved that the villagers were celebrating the annual Tibetan feast. The celebration here, according to Ahmed Lone, was on exactly the same lines as the celebrations at Himis Gompa<sup>1</sup>; but of course it was on a far less ambitious scale and only the village folk took part. I was invited in to watch. A chair with a carpet over it was placed above and behind the chief lama, who, judging by his hat, was apparently one of the now rarely found “yellow-hats”, as I have heard them called. The rest of his robes of office were red.

The chief lama squatted on a bench with a table in front of him on which were several cups and jugs of chung. Below him, along the side of a square courtyard, squatted the village-men, all drinking chung out of Tibetan cups made of cherry-wood or copper. Along the right side squatted the orchestra which consisted of men playing clarionets, flutes and banging drums; along the left side were the women dressed in their picturesque head-dresses, together with their young children, all of them drinking chung. One kid, who could not have been more than four or five years old, was thoroughly drunk and was a very funny sight as

<sup>1</sup> The most important Buddhist monastery in Ladakh, situated a short way up the Indus valley above Leh.

he staggered about. Then came the dancers. These were men and their dance consisted of a very slow shuffle round the fireplace which was in the middle of the square, for night celebrations. While they dance they hold their blanket-like shawls in their hands before them. This party was going on for two days and nights ; it had only started to-day, so it had not got properly warmed up by the time I saw it. I took several cine shots and one photo, but unfortunately I was at the end of both films!

A word about the women's head-dress. The turquoise stones, I am told, come from Lhasa, the rest being made locally. A really good head-dress may cost anything between three and four hundred rupees.<sup>1</sup> The stones are mounted on a piece of material reaching and tapering from the forehead to the small of the back ; this material being flanked by ear-pieces of black astrakhan.

Later we left for Hundar. On the way we passed several fresh-water pools ; once a flight of duck rose, but there are not many here. Then we stopped to talk to some village men and one of them showed me how he made fire. He had a small purse in which he kept dried sheep-dung and a small stone of sorts—not flint. At the base of the purse was a strip of curved iron. He took some dung, carefully placed it on the stone, near one edge, and then struck the stone sharply with the iron strip. A shower of sparks blew out and ignited the dung. This glowed very slightly and the man blew it into a strong spark. From this he would have made a fire.

I might make some comment on the water on which we have been existing. Water, according to Khaliqia's classification, seems to be of four distinct types : firstly, spring water found at its source, the best water which it is not necessary to boil ; secondly, " atcha pani ", water which looks like spring water but whose source is doubtful and which it is advisable to boil ; thirdly,

<sup>1</sup> £25.

“nullah-ka-pani”, which looks moderately clear, is probably snow-water and spring water mixed and which should be boiled and sometimes strained; fourthly, “barap-ka-pani”, that is, snow-water, which generally implies either river-water or melted snow or ice, which must invariably be strained and boiled. Though I have divided up water into these four distinct types, one frequently found it unnecessary to boil some water; I always made my bearer show me a sample of the water he was going to use for cooking before I allowed it to be used. On one occasion I threw it out altogether and on another occasion I made him strain it first; otherwise, we never had any trouble. I had a small stock of potassium permanganate, but used it only two or three times.

There was a terrific storm some ten miles away up the Shyok this morning. Soon after we left at eight o'clock, we had some rain for the first time in the trek. On arrival at Spanpuk we found that some of the villagers were watermen and we started talking about the possibility of drifting down to Khapalu. They crowned the idea, saying that the water was very bad (i.e. rough), but they offered to take us to “Tirse” (Thoise, on the map). This seemed as if it would save four miles walking, so we accepted. Quite a throng of village-folk accompanied us to the river, the women and children standing on the roofs of their houses.

Eventually we arrived at the river-bank and two water-men produced what they called a “zuck”, a frame-work affair made of wood underneath which are secured a number of inflated cow, goat and/or sheep-skins. They heaved the zuck out of the water in order to inspect the serviceability of the skins, each skin being carefully examined for punctures. When they found one, the men repaired the puncture in rather a clever way; a small piece of wood was selected from a “puncture repair outfit”, stuck through the hole and pierced through the skin again rather in the same way as a needle is used. A small piece of string wound tightly



round the skin immediately below the stick, tied and then shrunk with water to further ensure the safety of the repair completed proceedings.

The next part of the ceremony was not without its humorous aspect as the skin had now to be blown up. The "valve" was made of a short tube of wood tied just inside the neck of skin and this was plugged with a piece of round wood. The method of blowing it up was simple; the water-man applied his mouth to the nozzle, blew, plugged the nozzle with his tongue while he took a deep breath, blew again and so on, meanwhile showing evident signs of becoming somewhat winded! They were very quick at blowing up the small goat-skins; I was looking forward to seeing how they would compete with one of the large cow-skins, but unfortunately it appeared unnecessary to blow one up.

We set off after all the punctures had been repaired, Ahmed Lone, Khaliqia and myself, skilfully steered by the two water-men. It took some time to get settled on the crazy craft—it was a little small for five of us. The water was smooth for some time, and I saw no reason for not having my tiffin; this vastly amused the other two and the humour of the situation struck me as here I was, sitting cross-legged on a zuck chewing a burrhel-meat sausage when, rather unexpectedly, we rounded a sharp bend and suddenly found ourselves spinning wildly along in the midst of a rapid, lucidly described by Khaliqia as "kacha pani, sahib"—that is, "bad water". I hung on for life, now and again grabbing for the rest of my tiffin which threatened to go over the side at any moment. To make matters more entertaining, one of the zuck-men decided that one of the skins was leaking, so he pulled out the plug and started to blow it up! After one or two more rapids which whirled us all over the place, we had to put ashore to allow the men to blow the skins up again. While they did this, Khaliqia cut some tamarisk branches on which to sit—zuck travelling is rather a wet business.

Eventually we arrived at Tirse to find camp being made by Abdullah as it turned out that the coolies we were to take from here were not ready. Here, again, most of the village-folk turned out to see us and we found a filthy little man clothed in ancient skins, who hied from Tabe Lungpa. He knew the route well and it appears that we will take three days (and should take four) to reach Turtok from here, instead of the optimistic two days quoted by the Charas Officer of Leh.

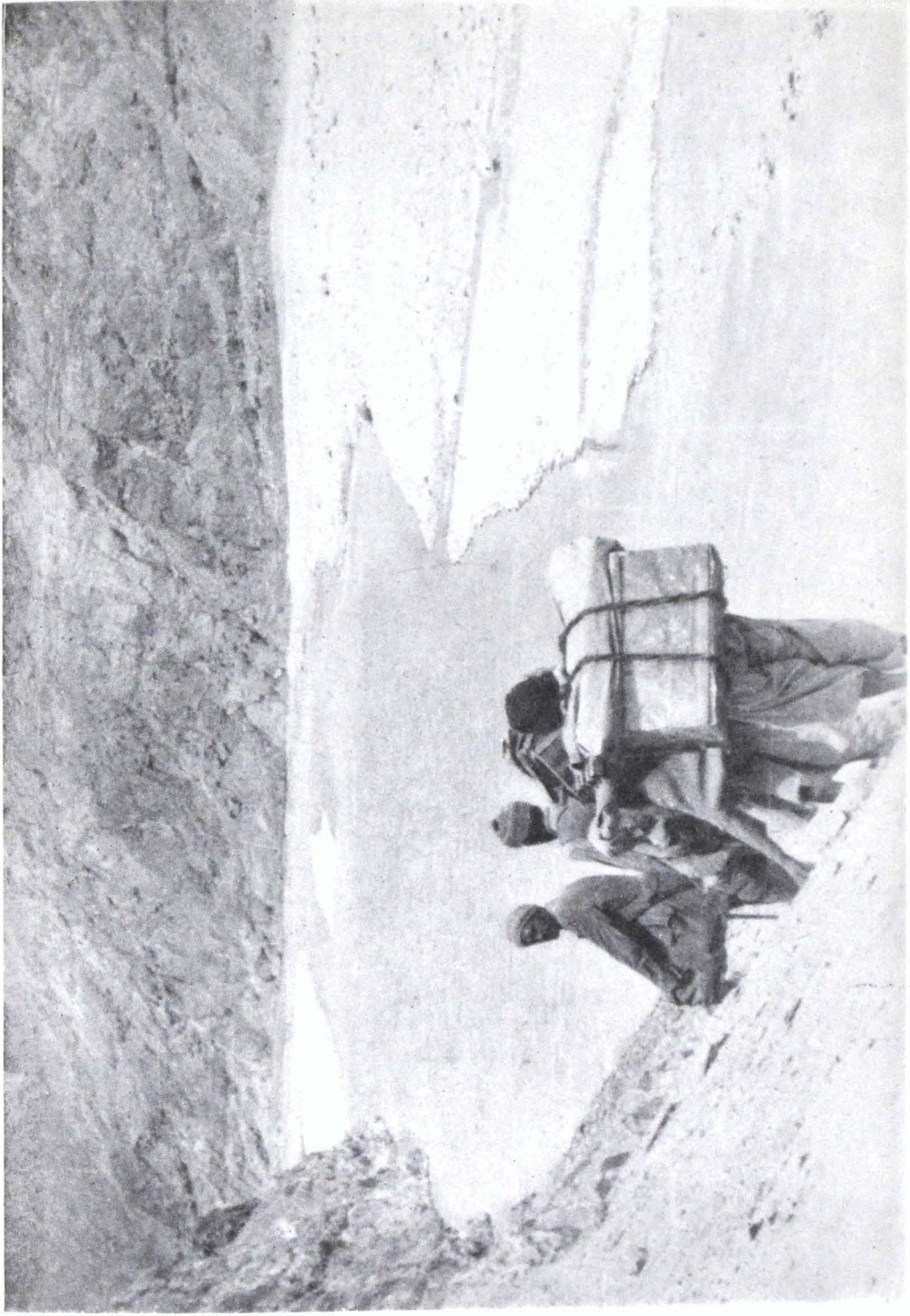
Travelling in this valley is the most happy-go-lucky affair. Yesterday we were told we would not be able to get coolies anywhere, but we have got them to take loads as far as Turtok ; it remains to be seen what will happen when we get there. The map is very self-assertive, showing some non-existent villages, not showing others and spelling the names in ways which, when pronounced, sound nothing like the village-men's pronunciation—witness Thoise pronounced "Tirse." Partappore, a so-called stage village, is not shown. It is the other side of the valley from Hundar and bears from Mount Charasa 65°. Measuring mileages for paying pony-men is thus a bit of a difficulty ; but between the official stage mileages, the map, average times for marches and guesstimation, we get somewhere near the correct figure. Khaliqia tells me that the village-folk are inspecting things with great interest, many of them never having seen a sahib's "bandobast" before. They take a very good view of my travelling by zuck, saying "All Balti and Ladakhi man is afraid" and "When other sahib come, then all zuck will be ready". It seems as if I'm waving the flag a bit ! These Nubra and Shyok people are entirely independent of the outside world, making everything they need themselves out of sheep wool and goat hair. Their shoes are generally made out of goat hair, but I've seen a number of chapplies made from motor-tyres, probably imported from Leh.

Setting off from Tirse was a bit of a business ; we wanted thirteen coolies, but they refused to play,

saying that the loads were too heavy. Eventually seventeen started and reduced themselves to fourteen at Askaru (Kharu on the map); unfortunately the village was so situated that one got a good view of the route as far as Pastan Lungma and the barren view scared off three coolies. Then followed a long and uneventful march over the rarely-travelled desert valley; some time after passing Unmaru, the valley narrowed down to a bottle-neck and walking with a strong sand-laden wind in our faces was tiring going.

We came to Tharu Lungma, a large stream of beautifully clear water, and I guessed that this was where we were supposed to camp, even though there was mighty little wood to be seen. I was wrong, the coolies leading us on another two miles or so to a small nullah called Nakpopal (meaning "black rocks" in Balti) about a mile above Pastan Lungma. It didn't look very inviting, camp being right on the edge of the river on one side, a cliff below us and half a mile of sand-dunes upstream of us. All the same, the coolies beach-combed a lot of wood and got good water from somewhere—Heaven knows where. The valley here is utterly barren, a very few small trees and bushes growing here and there on the wide flat of mud and drifting sand; a scene of desolation brought into being by the Shyok floods of 1926 and 1929 and from which the valley seems to be recovering slowly.

Immediately after leaving Nakpopal we had a bad rock face to traverse for some 150 yards. We got across this safely and I must mention a little man who helped us over it. This little chap—he was little more than five feet tall—turned up at our camp last night from Tirse. This morning he showed us the way over the rock of his own accord and later on gave us advice and information, telling us that it was thirteen miles from Nakpopal to Malakcha; I began to wonder if he was not St. Christopher come to life! He carried all his goods, including a loom, on his back and was going home to Turtok.



KHALIQA LEADING. ABOVE THE SHYOK RIVER. JULY 9TH, 1939.



“BEYOND TABE LUNGPA THE TRACK IMPROVES.”

We had a long and very hot march through a gorge of nothing but black rocks, and in places the track was bad. Once we passed a large hole in the mountainside, out of which a very welcome blast of cold air was streaming. The coolies took ten and a half hours to reach Malakcha. A mile or so before Malakcha we came to the first good water nullah in the march; everyone cast their loads and fell into the water—metaphorically speaking!

There is very little wood here—just enough for a cooking fire. The map hereabouts is rather poor; Biagdang village is opposite our camp, which is in Malakcha nullah. The Balti tells us that to-morrow we have sixteen miles to go to Turtok. This is the first fellow we have met, in about a month, to whom a mile or an hour means anything! One coolie became sick three miles from here while I was some way ahead; on arrival here I sent off two coolies and some water with which to bring him in. At 7.45 I pushed off to look for the coolies and found them all about a quarter of a mile away. I shone my torch on the coolie carrying the load and much to my surprise found that it was "St. Christopher". I'm afraid that I had no sympathy for the coolie who was sick—they all drink the dirty river water, thus asking for trouble. The road is rather bad for Ladakhi coolies; it gradually drops to 9,000 feet and is mighty hot for everyone, but especially so for those of Tibetan blood, who live much higher.

We left at six o'clock and soon had several men from Biagdang yelling across the valley asking us who we were. The tiny figures, which produced such musical and disproportionate voices echoing across the valley backed by golden wheat and green trees made an unforgettable picture. Later on as we were traversing a scree, "St. Christopher" suddenly popped into view and before he did any more vanishing tricks I took a photo of him. At about 10.45 we reached Tabe Lungpa and again everyone fell into the nullah. It was grand to wash arms and face in cold, clear and

clean water. Here we had lunch and left St. Christopher behind with our blessings, as he was going to stay here the night.

Beyond Tabe Lungpa the track improves and the going became quicker as the Baltis, in whose territory we were now travelling, seem to keep their roads in good condition. But we passed one place where wind erosion was taking place rapidly ; several stones came hurtling down towards us and one had to be somewhat agile to avoid being knocked out. Then we had a long hot march, arriving at Ramdundo at 6.15. Twelve long hours on the road and then we found merely a good water nullah, no wood to speak of and no village, though the map showed one.

I decided last night that my first pair of chappies, after some 460 miles of walking, would not take me any farther. Only one was really bad ; the other would have taken me to Khapalu at least.

For the last two nights I have scarcely slept owing to the roar of the river and this morning, after a sound sleep, I woke up smothered in sand which a cool wind had been blowing in during the night.

We left at half-past six, in an optimistic mood, that we might get coolies at Turtok and go on to Siari to-day. Reaching Turtok at about nine o'clock, the Lambadar said this was impossible ; I didn't think this true as the road from here was a good one for the first two miles. However, it didn't take very much persuasion to make me stay here as we are all tired out, and having stopped at Ramdundo, we are almost bound to lose a day somewhere. Turtok is a pretty oasis ; the fields of corn and barley are ready for reaping and wild peas (quite good to eat) are growing amongst the corn. The camp is on a shaded terrace under a large walnut-tree but, as seems to be my luck with all fruit trees, the walnuts are not ripe yet. I questioned the Lambadar of Turtok about Ramdundo. He told me that there had once been a village at the mouth of this nullah, but that the water had turned bad and poisoned the crops, forcing

the villagers to evacuate. Having drunk the water, this was a cheerful piece of news to give us ; but we are not dead yet. If the Lambadar's story is accurate it would be interesting to know what mineral qualities of the water caused this poisoning and where the source was, in the nullah to the south.

## KARAKORAM SUNSET

I had trouble in paying off the coolies, as I rather expected. Someone came this way eleven years ago and paid his coolies the sum of Rs. 3/- /- each for the trip from Thirse to here. Then, we are told, two ladies, at about the same time, paid their coolies Rs. 1/8/- each for the same trip. But I imagine that Rs. 1/8/- is about right ; the coolies rather naturally refuse to accept Res rates, which turn out at Rs. 1/5/6 per coolie. In consequence, the coolies left us before lunch in a great huff. I slept solidly for three hours in the afternoon and, feeling better for having done so, was not surprised, on waking up, to find that the coolies were sitting outside much mollified, patiently waiting to agree to a " chip-eight " apiece.

The explorer who came down this valley eleven years ago, quoted by the coolies, was almost certainly Major (now Colonel) Kenneth Mason of the Survey of India ; but who the two ladies were remains a mystery which I would still like to solve. Prior to the Shyok floods of 1926-9 there was a very good pony-track the whole way down the Shyok valley to Khapalu. Since time in all uneducated natives mentality, especially under the stress of floods, is a somewhat elastic measurement, it is quite possible that two ladies did travel down the valley just before these floods took place and prior to Col. Mason's expedition. However, the history of early travellers passing up or down this lower Shyok valley, between the Nubra River and Piun, where another track comes into the valley from Chorbat La, is only very vague. It seems to have



been penetrated first by E. C. Ryall, in the course of his survey duties, in 1862.<sup>1</sup> So far as I have been able to discover, no other visit was paid to the valley until 1909 when Dr. T. G. Longstaff,<sup>2</sup> in the course of his explorations already quoted, came over from Saltoro by a pass (Chulung La) in the mountains to the north and travelled up the right bank to the Nubra valley. Then two officers on shikar visited Prahnu and the Laonchon nullah, on the right bank, in 1921, another having been there in 1909.<sup>3</sup> Capt. B. K. Featherstone, in August 1922,<sup>4</sup> was the next traveller. He ascended the valley from Khapalu and, very contrary to my own experience, on arrival at Prahnu he found the villagers hostile to his intrusion into the valley. Then, in October 1926,<sup>5</sup> the "Shyok Dam" which is formed, as previously explained, by the snout of the Chong Kumdan, broke down under the pressure of water exerted on it by the lake which had formed upstream of it. The water rushed down the valley, carried away the bridge over the Shyok near Thirit, washed away almost the whole of the village of Diskit—now re-built, of course—and destroyed almost in its entirety the pony track, built in 1912, which went down the valley to Khapalu. Any damage that remained to be completed was done by the next flood, in 1929; the gorge which commences at Nakpopal held up the flood to some extent and was responsible for the water flooding the Nubra-Shyok confluence. Some damage was done, though few lives were lost.

The next full-scale passage of the valley, from Nubra to Khapalu, was completed by Col. Mason in 1926 on the completion of his Shaksgam River expedition.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Synopsis of Results, G.T.S." Vol. 7, *S. of I.* Introduction, Trig. Pamphlet, Sheet 52 F.

<sup>2</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 35.

<sup>3</sup> See page 92.

<sup>4</sup> "An Unexplored Pass," *Featherstone Geographical Journal*, Vol. 67.

<sup>5</sup> For a full review of the history of the Shyok River floods, see *The Himalayan Journal*, Vol. 1 (1929), and also Vol. 2 (1930).

<sup>6</sup> *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 49.

Since then there appears to be no record of anyone else having travelled through the valley, unless one records the attempt of the two sahibs, quoted by the Missionary at Leh, to reach Khapalu by this route in 1938.<sup>1</sup>

There followed an entertaining day. It started off by the Lambadar of Turtok trying to give us a woman coolie ; naturally I refused to take her and this created a fuss, but we got off at 6.30 with twelve Baltis. After four miles of easy going down the valley floor, we arrived below the village of Tyakshi, where we were to change coolies. The news of our coming had reached the village several hours before and there were a number of men waiting to see us. As soon as we got near them they yelled up to others on top of the 200-foot river terrace, and very soon men and children came slithering down a long scree from the village, hidden on the terrace above us, to see the rare sight of a sahib and his bandobast. We heard that only one or two old gentlemen who had been able to travel had seen a sahib before.

The village men then asked to be allowed to " make music " in celebration of this tremendous event. They produced the usual three drums and a kind of saxophone and played some jungly stuff, which did not sound unlike Bolero, whilst three or four men danced a dance rather similar to the Ladakhi one. Finally, after the end of the dance, I pushed off. Everyone had been very happy examining all my gear, and as we left there was a dead silence, as though they were a lot of children who had been stopped from playing with their toys.

The Balti coolies are amazingly tough and fast even though some of the roads go over very rough country. I thought we had passed the really bad stuff, but after traversing three precipices I knew otherwise. When we stopped for lunch, the coolies automatically came to me, sat down and dumped their loads in spite of Ahmed Lone and Khaliqia protesting. They clustered round me looking at my map, cameras and field-glasses

<sup>1</sup> See page 41.

and everything I had ; I took a photo of them and the four Kashmiris were scandalised at their behaviour. The Baltis did not mean any insult ; they were absolutely childlike in their simplicity and did not see why they should not enjoy themselves by sitting next to the Sahib, examining his things and talking to him—they all speak Hindustani.

Then we went on, the Balti men, with rather less than a maund each on their backs, walking almost upright, laughing and talking all the time. When I first saw a Balti with his long curly hair I was reminded of the people of Oberammergau whom I saw some ten years ago ; It would not be difficult to imagine a Balti as one of the Apostles. The only basic difference between a Balti and a Ladakhi is that a Balti washes both himself and his clothes and a Ladakhi washes himself only, and not very often at that.

In one place we had to cross a strip of water. A Balti coolie readily and quickly dropped his load and carried me across “pick-a-back”, the water being deep and wetting my feet only. The Balti thought it a bad show and was upset ; but to reassure him, I laughed it off with “Kuch ficker ne”, (it doesn't matter). This made the Balti happy, but unfortunately let Ahmed Lone down, for the coolie looked across to him, the last man and looking very forlorn, and said something like : “Come on, black man, you can wade across.” Khaliqia was furious, but all the coolies laughed. I couldn't help laughing and Ahmed Lone fortunately preserved his sense of humour. Later, on crossing the bridge at Prahnu (as usual it was narrow and rocked), Ahmed Lone lost face very badly ; his nerve failed him and he crossed on hands and knees, much to the Baltis amusement.

Prahnu, amidst a mass of golden barley fields, is the base for some good but difficult ibex shooting in Laonchon nullah ; the local shikari produced three chits, one dated 1909 and two of 1921. After a lot of talk, I decided that I could not spare any more time shooting as

I felt that I ought to get to Khapalu and see my mail. I'm not feeling too well ; the reaction of eating too many mulberries last night—made a pig of myself on them after a month of tinned stuff. As regards the map, the bridge at Turtok does not exist and neither does the village of Puchatang.

Last night I was again lucky. This time I saw a "Tamasha", the village dance of the Mohamedans ; it was only a small one, but all the village-folk were there. The "party", for that is all it was, was very like the Ladakhi celebration at Diskit, except that the Baltis do not drink "chung", as they are all Mohamedans. Everyone was sitting round a courtyard, with the band on one side, when I arrived uninvited in the middle of proceedings. The villagers were most courteous ; they all rose and kept a respectful silence whilst a cloth was spread under a tree for me to sit on together with the Kashmir State Tax Assessment Officer—an Indian.

The show proceeded ; first some old men came on, then younger ones doing their dance—similar to the Ladakhi one—followed by the children, one or two tiny tots of five or six amongst them floundering about all over the place. The dance, as carried out by three young men, starts off in a very slow tempo, not unlike a slow fox-trot, and works up in a steadily progressive rhythm to an absolutely frenzied whirl of flying arms and clothing, with everyone yelling and clapping encouragement, laughing heartily in the meantime. Four young men came along dressed as lamas, one of them being the head lama. A fifth man was clothed in filthy rags and had a blackened face—make-up of some sort, evidently the joker of the players. Those fellows could certainly act well and the joker provided a lot of laughter, the lamas being the butt of his anti-Buddhist jokes. At an auspicious moment I left as my tent had been erected and, of course, I could not understand the local "patois" of Hindustani.

In the morning we started off at seven ; Ahmed Lone

crossed the bridge in a dignified manner this time and then followed three hours dead slow going over scree and loose conglomerate cliffs. One of the coolies was a surprisingly tough boy of fourteen. On arrival at Chuar we changed coolies and whilst this was being done I had my lunch, which was evidently a rare entertainment for the whole village to watch.

Leaving Chuar, where the apricots were nearly ripe, we went over a good road—a really good one this time—to Siksa. Again, coolies were changed and finally we arrived at Piun.

We left Piun at six o'clock on July 10th, in a final dash for Khapalu. We had ten coolies, two ponies and two riding ponies; the road was not really good and as a result was not fit for the ponies, although we had been told that it was. Due to this the march was long and tiring and was not very eventful.

On reaching Lunkha we waited for the coolies and, once we were all together, I decided we could probably reach Khapalu before dark; but later, when we were almost opposite Abadon, the coolies led us up the hillside announcing that this was a short cut to Khapalu. Like everyone else, I was too tired to think twice about going this way, as I should have done. We plugged on wearily and finally reached the top of the main ridge, somewhere about 10,500 feet, in time to see a glorious sunset lighting up Masherbrum (25,660 ft.) away up Hushe nullah.

At six o'clock I consulted Ahmed Lone and we came to the conclusion that we had another two hours light. After half an hour we met a local man who said that we had six miles to go to reach Khapalu; after another half-hour another man said we had seven miles to go. This was silly, and at 7.30 I went on strike, noticed a suitable spot and ordered camp to be made. There was no wood, but plenty of water flowing near by and we had the Primus. Khaliqia, with the coolies, caught up Ahmed Lone and myself; but the two ponies with Rastaman, the servants' bed-rolls and my tent had gone

on miles ahead. I had plenty of blankets for the three servants and myself, and after a lot of harsh words to make them move—as usual, so useless in an emergency—we got the Primus going. Food, washed down by hot tea, repaid one after fifteen hours on the road and thereafter I crawled into my flea-bag, gazed at the mellow tints of sunset over the Karakoram peaks and promptly fell asleep. For the sake of a name, I called our camp here “Hanjore Hill”—it is roughly the correct position.

I woke up at four o'clock to see the daylight and to hear the coolies' voices, dozed off to sleep again for a couple of hours and then sat up to see a blazing sunrise lighting up the Karakoram mountains and Indus valley, a glorious sight from my elevated perch.

After a spot of breakfast, Ahmed Lone and I pushed off to Khapalu which we reached an hour and a half later. Eventually we made camp and settled down for a rest whilst a coolie went over to Doghani post office for my mail.

I had a huge mail and spent most of the next day reading it and sorting it out.

In the evening, I went to drop my cards on the Rajah of Khapalu: From the outside, his house looked pleasantly clean, but on getting inside I was surprised to find the place was a mass of dark passages of doubtful cleanliness. After winding about the house for some time, Ahmed Lone and I were shown into a clean room with a very large bay window which lighted up the room well. The Rajah came in salaaming, shook hands with me and we sat down and smoked cigarettes talking, through an interpreter, until a servant brought tea in. All this time, Ahmed Lone was sitting on the floor near by with rather a resigned atmosphere about him, knowing that I had got a mild surprise, to say the least of it. After tea some excellent cherries and strawberries were brought in.

The Rajah very kindly offered to let me shoot in his own ibex nullah, but I declined, politely I hope, saying

that I was really on an exploratory trip and had now to return to India. He then asked if there was anything I wanted or if he could help in any way; again I thanked him very much and said nothing—it would have been fatal to do so and most discourteous. Nevertheless, as I left Ahmed Lone slipped round a corner, grabbed a servant and asked for what we wanted—potatoes and fresh vegetables. Later two huge cauliflowers and two pounds of early potatoes were brought to camp. Such are the methods of the east.

## Baltistan

**A**FTER leaving Khapalu, on July 13th, we crossed the Indus, uneventfully, by zuck. This was followed by a short diversion of two days up Hushe nullah, the object being to shoot a sharpu. The attempt was a complete failure and all we saw was a rather spectacular land-slide. After striking camp, situated at Brale Gone, we did a short march to Saling under a cloud-covered sky, which cooled down an otherwise hot march.

Soon after leaving Saling we passed a well-developed spring of excellent water and then started to climb up a ridge some 500–1,000 feet above the river. On reaching the top we got quite a good view of the surrounding country; Dansam River and Saltoro, in the direction of Gyong La, were out of sight, of course, the farthest one could see in this direction being I.P., 21,870 feet above Ghyari. I took a photo of the scene and went on to Doghani, passing another spring at "Soga" (spelt Wogo on the map). I found that "Doghani" post office and the only good water available is at Bragar, so we went on there. It has been a good day; an overcast sky with slight drizzle and a high wind.

A long and rather hilly march under a strong sun and in a hot wind blowing up the valley left me very tired on arrival at Gone. As soon as camp was made I fell on a huge high tea, wrote up my diary and then went straight to bed. My Kashmiri retinue cannot understand the idea behind a high tea and Ahmed Lone is quite sure that it is not enough—a four- or five-egg omelette, fruit and three large buns with butter, jam and tea.

To-day we passed the first Balti mail-runner we've



seen. Unlike his Ladakhi mate, he carries a small spear on which are two tiny bells. This is carried in order to scare off any animal or human attacker when he is on a night run. Incidentally, it is generally useless asking anyone, except the more enlightened village lambadars, how many miles it is to any place. If one does ask them, they generally say "sare tin dak" which means three and a half dak runs. On any dak (mail) route, the entire route is covered by relays of runners, each runner being, as near as possible, four miles from the next. This distance is known to all the country-men as "ek dak", "sare tin dak" being twelve and a half miles.

Having managed to make the intended march yesterday, we have a day in hand and so made a short march of ten miles to Gol to-day. Three miles after leaving Gone, we reached the very large village of Kiris, where I saw the first clean, Hindu-owned shop since I left Srinagar. More or less as I anticipated when buying them, I am now at the end of the last of the cakes of soap; at this shop I was able to buy a small piece of soap in order to arrive in Skardu fairly clean. I also bought a gaudy handkerchief, most of my present ones being in ribbons.

After changing coolies, we went down to the ferry, a boat, not a zuck. Here, the coolies lay down their ropes and became oarsmen—six each side. There were no rowlocks, they just leaned over the side and paddled. In spite of all the cox's shouting and my own criticism the oarsmen would *not* follow stroke and we proceeded over the river amidst a whirl of paddles, clothing and spray. Reaching the other side, we went on to Gol over an easy road, where we heard that a sahib and mem-sahib came past here four days ago with twenty-six horses; that's what I call bungalow bando-bast!

On the south side of the river we came on yet another sign of approaching civilisation—the Kargil-Skardu telegraph line. All the way along the route the signs

of civilisation have become more and more enhanced, starting off with motor-tyre chapplies and here, at Gol, the extraordinary sight of the lambadar in an old trilby hat, purple-dyed coachman's tail coat, linen trousers and brown shoes. The shyok river joins the river Indus near here and continues down to the sea as the Indus.

At last we were able to get two riding ponies ; what a difference they made, even the very least riding seems to take the edge off a march. With the assistance of one horse, we did the 19 miles in nine and a half hours, including stops for tiffin and rests ; the coolies did it in thirteen hours. Though the road was good, it was very hot—which was uncomfortable for the coolies.

Shortly after leaving Gol, we found a spring alongside a recently planted avenue of willow trees. Reaching Skardu, I was pleasantly surprised to find a little mail, held up for some reason. Well, so ends the first stretch of the return trip. I anticipated there would not be anything exciting during the return and I think this stretch has lived up to that expectation ; maybe the Deosai Plains and Gurais will produce something.

A lazy day of rest followed, before setting off on the final lap to Srinagar. Ahmed Lone eventually found a pony-man—a Kashmiri—willing to go to Srinagar for Rs. 7/8/- per pony. He had a lot of trouble, all the Kashmiris wanting Rs. 9/-/- and Rs. 10/-/-. As the pony-man has yet to make his bandobast, we only leave for Satpura at midday to-morrow ; about the worst time of day we could leave, travelling in the heat of midday and afternoon, when all sane people sleep. “ Mad dogs and Englishmen . . . ”

I went to the bazaar this morning and bought some jam and some other necessities, amongst which was a mosquito net ; although the Deosai Plains are at some 14,000 feet they are mosquito-ridden.

One of the Sherpah porters of the American Expedition to K2 is here. He told me that last year they

established seven camps and that this year on reaching Camp IV he became ill and was sent back. This year's party, he says, are trying to establish seven more camps, (it sounds rather a lot!) Camp VIII being a very difficult one to reach. The Expedition is due back in Skardu in a week's time. Terrific storm over Deosai; the Americans must be having a rough time of it if they have had the weather we have been having recently.

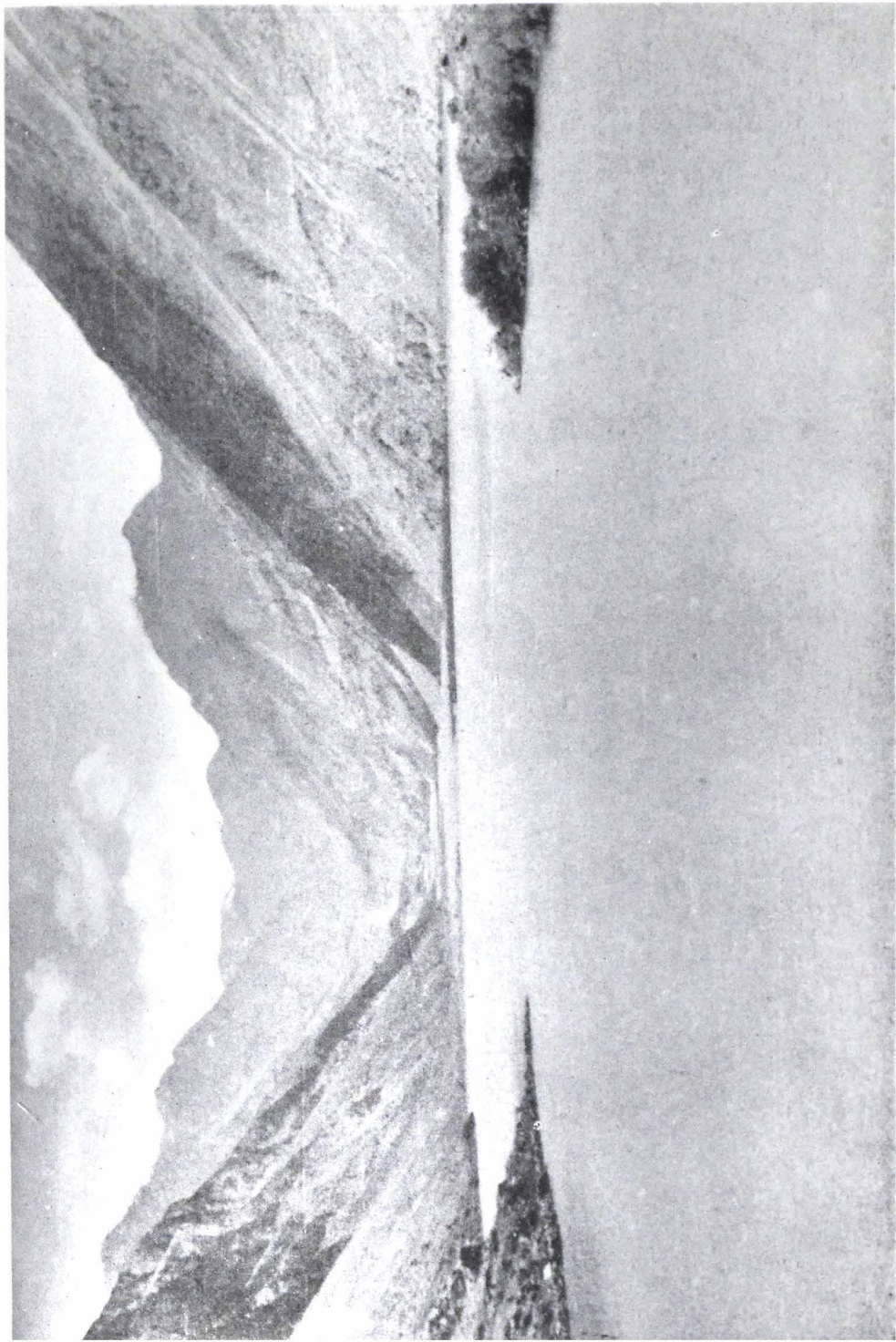
Next morning, even though I fully expected the ghorer-wallah to be late, I did not expect him to be as late as two o'clock. Satpura, nine miles away, would certainly not be reached before 7.30 or 8.0 p.m., and as I was not going to walk up-hill on that particularly stuffy afternoon, arriving to make camp in the dark, I decided to stay another night. There was another big storm blowing over the Deosai Plains in the evening; it is going to be wet travelling across them.

#### TRANS-DEOSAI

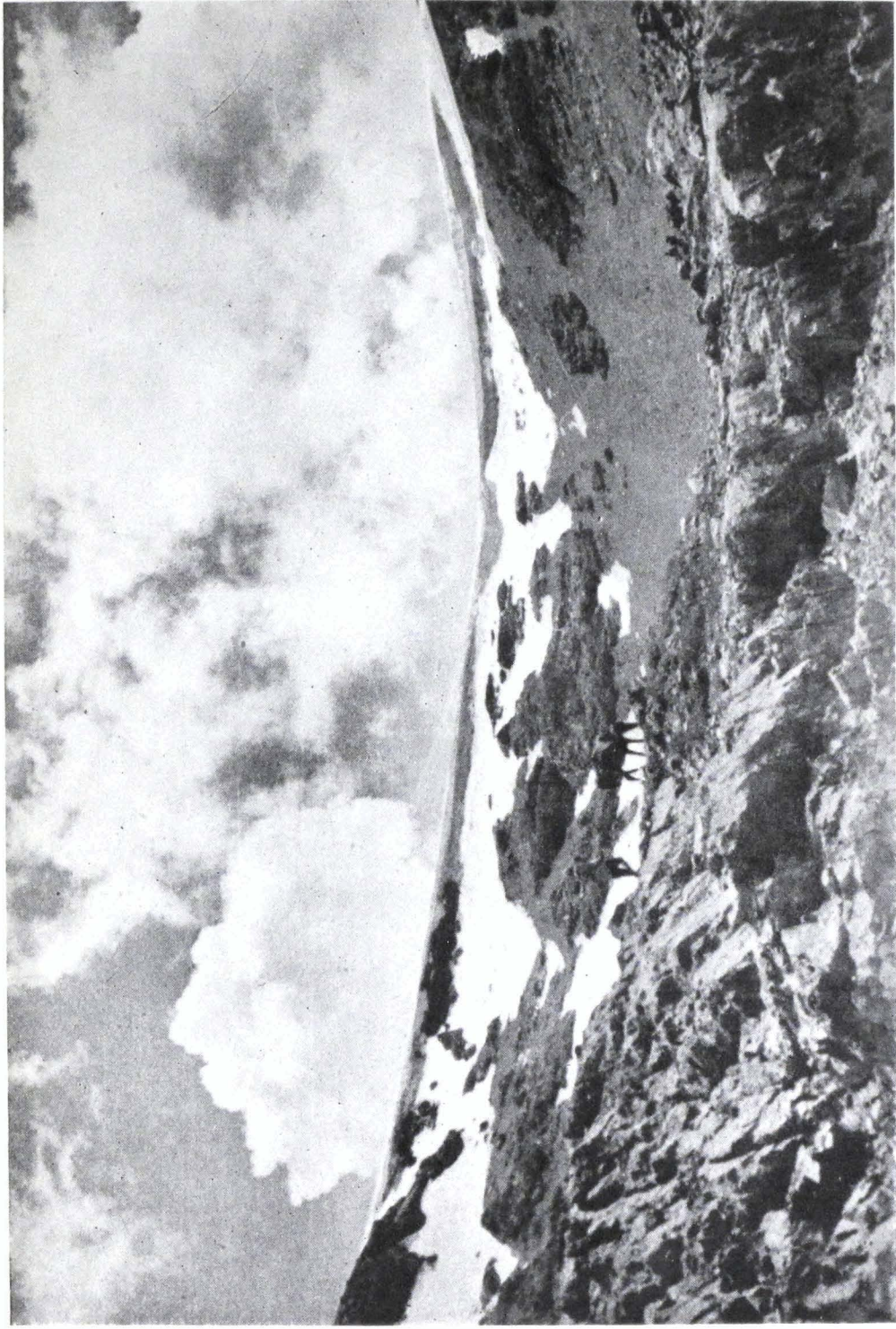
After some rather brilliant efforts to bust up the whole outfit by the four ghorer-wallahs, whom I've named Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we actually got off at a quarter to nine—three-quarters of an hour late. As we left, I saw the mail-runner arrive from Srinagar, so I sent off Khaliqia to see if there was any mail and if so to bring it on.

We headed for the wide opening of Satpura nullah and not long afterwards Khaliqia caught us up and, much to my surprise, presented me with *The Himalayan Journal*. I then sat astride my pony and proceeded to glance through it, admiring the wonderful photographs of mountains and glaciers. I wondered how my own photos would turn out.

After a short climb we came to Satpura Tso, a lake of fresh water which does not appear to be as large as shown on the map. We reached Satpura at about two o'clock, just as a heavy shower of rain began to fall.



SATPURA TSO, SOUTH OF SKARDU, BALTIKISTAN. JULY 22ND, 1939.



APPROACHING "WAZUL BAI" (15,000 FT.), DEOSAI PLAINS. JULY 23RD, 1939.

This soon stopped and I got down to making a head-net, from a piece of mosquito net, ready for the Deosai Plains. Khaliqia couldn't follow how to make the head-net, so I made it with a needle Khaliqia gave me, a thing like a large-size nail with the head cut off and a hole drilled through it for an eye.

One or two native travellers who arrived at Satpura last night, told us that owing to the heavy monsoon storms over Deosai, the track up to the top of the Ladakh Range was bad. For this reason I ordered a start at six, treating the road as an unknown one. It was well I did so, because very shortly after turning up the nullah leading to "Wazul Bai" in the Deosia Range, we had a spot of bother.

While rounding an out-jutting piece of rock, the load on one pony jammed against the rock; the pony shied and threw off the load—a couple of yakdans,<sup>1</sup> one of which was slightly broken. While this pony was being re-loaded and the others "levered" past the rock, the last pony in the line was suddenly bitten by a horse-fly or something; anyway, it shied and fell over the guard wall, rolling over and over down the steep kud-side. The load fell off and the pony regained control after falling some eighty feet; the load, which very fortunately for both horse and us consisted only of bed-rolls, wedged some fifty feet lower down. Ahmed Lone and I went down and hacked out a narrow track for the pony.

After a lot of trouble we got on our way, crossing a number of places where the path had subsided and small land-slides had blocked the path. As we climbed we reached more and more vegetation; little fir trees, wild roses such as we had seen in Nubra, forget-me-nots and other mountain flowers were there in profusion. Whilst I had some tiffin, the retinue collected wood, as there is none on the Deosai Plain.

Soon we approached the top of the long nullah, grassy slopes appeared and a small pond, near which

<sup>1</sup> Yakdan—a box made of three-ply wood and leather.

was a large camp. We rested by the camp before tackling the final steep slope up to the summit of Wazul Bai (15,000 ft.). I should explain this name, not given on the map. I wanted a name for this pass and the only one the "four evangelists" could give me was the Kashmiri name of "Wazul Bai" which means "Red Mountain" (christened by the red rocks of the pass). But as all other passes round here are called by the Tibetan name for mountain ("La"), this name seemed inappropriate, especially as we were in Baltistan where the natives probably had yet another name for it.

Poor old Matthew was suffering badly from headache as were most of us. We had climbed up 7,000 feet in seven hours steady going, so it is little wonder we felt dizzy. The top of the pass was marked by a rather good example of a snow cornice<sup>1</sup> on one side of a large patch of snow. Reaching the summit at about 2.30 p.m. we got a good view of the Deosai Plains and mountains under a heavy blanket of monsoon clouds, around which a lot of thunder was rolling. What seemed to be the daily afternoon downpour started and before it got any worse, we pitched camp in a sheltered spot ("Sunday Camp") at 14,500 feet. There was no point in getting soaked through just in order to reach Ali Malik; Heaven gave us all the good water we needed.

On Monday, July 24th, the aim was to go as far as we could as quickly as we could. The mosquitoes were scarcely any trouble last night, but made themselves noticeable this morning when we reached Ali Malik. As they were so persistent I put on the head-net and gloves. The gloves are woollen and are little or no protection as these mosquitoes have heads and suckers which, proportionately speaking, would do credit to an elephant and they have no difficulty in reaching down between the threads. The head-net worked well, but later in the afternoon was annoying owing to the glare it held from the sun; a black or dark-coloured

<sup>1</sup> Cornice = overhang, like the crest of a wave.

net would be better. At about four o'clock a breeze blew up and kept the mosquitoes away until we got into camp.

Ahmed Lone, with the ponies, was a mile or more ahead of us and he made camp in the worst place he could have done—right down by stagnant water and grass; although the mosquitoes are everywhere, he might have chosen a less frequented spot. These wretched insects fly round in mass formations after the fashion of insects in Mickey Mouse films. I had tea and am now writing this in full battle dress.

The map of the Deosai Plains, though fairly accurate topographically, is inaccurate ethnologically. Not one of the party or of the "four evangelists" knew any of the river names printed on the map. It seems to be a habit of map-makers to invent their own names and not to use the names employed by the local natives. I found out the various native names along the route and wrote them in the appropriate places on the map.

We saw several large marmots<sup>1</sup> on the way to-day, but I did not attempt to shoot any—there seemed little point in it and, because of this, it seemed unnecessarily cruel to do so. When we approached them, the marmot sentry on duty would hop on to his haunches and gaze at us suspiciously; then, with a flick of his bushy red tail, he would race round in a circle chirruping the alarm to all his village-folk. Others would take up the call and in a few seconds every marmot, except the sentry, had taken a header down his hole and was poking his little red head out again enquiringly. The sentry carried on a worried chirruping, dashing here, there and everywhere, until we had passed and he was able to give the all clear.

After leaving Surchabachan at seven o'clock we had a short climb in ideal weather up to San Sangri La (oh, shades of "Lost Horizon"!) On reaching the bottom of the steep south face, near Chota Deosai, we met the

<sup>1</sup> Marmot = an animal very like a red squirrel, but living in the ground.



first sahib we've seen for seven weeks. We exchanged comments on the route, where we were going and the news. He's off to Baltistan to shoot ibex and said that next year he was thinking of going to Siachen for the same beast. When I told him I'd been there, he promptly took my name and address, as he said he'd like some hints on the route. After some time we parted, but Ahmed Lone stayed behind for a long time talking to his brother who is this sahib's shikari; the servants of both parties knew each other well.

Soon we came to the second pass (shown on the map as Mir Panzil 13,042 feet, but not known as that to the natives) and after a short rest while watching the curious sight of two streams flowing in opposite directions, one north and the other south, we walked down the very steep slope on the south side of the Himalayan Range to Burzil. From here we got a good view right down the valley to our destination, Minimarg.

As soon as we started down from Mir Panzil, the difference in the country was startling. Everywhere there was rich green grass and the hillsides were covered with conifers; the very air seemed different. This sudden difference in the country was surprising after weeks and weeks of travelling amongst the barren hills north of the Himalayan Range. Whilst pausing to admire the scenery from the summit of Mir Panzil, I was forcibly reminded by the change of surroundings that I was nearly back in civilisation. An overpowering desire not to return took hold of me; the thought of hot, sticky plains, ready to strike one down with any one of their only too prevalent diseases, horrified me after these months spent in the cool health of wild country. I threw off the thought with an effort and, looking forward to seeing my friends again, ran down the slopes to Burzil. At Burzil we joined the Srinagar-Gilgit road and telegraph line which run over Burzil Bai, to the west of our track. This road is an excellent one and we soon reached Minimarg, a tiny village of log cabins and a stone post and telegraph office.

Another Sahib and his mem-sahib appeared first thing. They were evidently staying in the post office last night, but I didn't know it till I saw them getting ready to leave in the morning. I went and bade them good morning and, again, exchanged news; they are off to Baltistan flower hunting. I did my best to show intelligent interest, but my abysmal ignorance of botany soon became evident when I tried to explain the carpets of flowers we had passed at Wazul Bai. I ended by making some fatuous encouraging noises, much to the mem-sahib's amusement and my shame of ignorance! But they were rather astonished when they finally got out of me what I'd been doing in the last three months.

After leaving them, all went well until about one o'clock when the daily monsoonal thunder-storm broke much earlier than usual. We were drenched through before we found a camp sight at the 47th mile-stone—from Bandipura. Since the storm broke its been drizzling and now, 8.0 p.m., it is pouring down. Rain or no rain I'm going on to-morrow.

More and more sahibs. One passed my camp at 6.30, while I was washing, going downstream in a terrific hurry—scarcely stopped to say good morning. Although he had an hour's start on us, I caught him in Gurais telegraph office where I wired for a bus to meet me at Bandipura on Saturday.

I rode on to camp at Kanzalwan and an hour or so after tea another party came in, all the men feeling rotten with a mild dose of dysentery. It turned out to be P.G.R. of the Royal Artillery. He'd shot a markhor somewhere in the Indus valley below Skardu; we had a long talk over supper and decided to join forces for the return.

We left Kanzalwan more or less on time at 7.15 a.m. on June 28th and a mile or so after starting I heard a shout behind me, turned round and saw another officer whom I knew. I was very surprised, until he caught me up and said that there was a "flap" on, that he'd been recalled by telegram at Gurais and there was one

there for me too. He and his companion stopped for a rest, having started at 4.0 a.m. ; but we carried on, P.G. being worried because he did not know if he'd been recalled or not.

We pushed on to Tragbal, where we had a long rest and were asked to have tea with an Indian family, the son of whom was in a " Piffer " <sup>1</sup> regiment—I forget which. After thanking them for the very welcome tea we said au-revoir and then walked on by a series of short cuts to Sonawain.

Here, P.G. found that his bus had come up to wait for him overnight. By this time it was 6.30 p.m. and as I heard that my bus was at Bandipura, we put both lots of gear into P.G.'s bus and set off. At Bandipura I left P.G. to go on, as he was in a devil of a hurry, collected my mail and set off for Srinagar after sending a telegram to my agent there. At Ajas there were some short family reunion scenes between Khaliqia, Ahmed Lone and their families ; finally we arrived in Srinagar at 10.30 p.m. I walked into Nedous Hotel and was stared at by two dear old ladies, who had changed for dinner, as I registered at the office. I apologised for my dilapidated appearance, and though they answered as if they were quite used to such sights, which they must have been, I moved off rapidly. Painfully, I forced myself to realise that the adventure was over ; I shaved off my beard.

<sup>1</sup> " Piffer " = P.F.F.—Punjab Frontier Force.

I N D E X

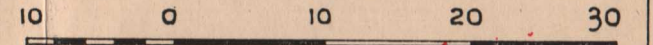
|              | Stage. | Date.       | Name.            | Miles.          | Height. | Page. |
|--------------|--------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|---------|-------|
| <i>Chap.</i> |        | <i>May</i>  |                  |                 |         |       |
| <b>I</b>     | 0      | 9           | Srinagar         | —               | 5,200   | 15    |
|              | 1      | 9           | Kangan           | 24 <sup>1</sup> | 5,795   | 16    |
|              | 2      | 10          | Gund             | 13              | 6,500   | 16    |
|              | 3      | 11          | Sonamarg         | 14              | 8,750   | 17    |
|              | 4      | 12          | Baltal           | 9               | 9,200   | 18    |
|              | —      | 13          | Zoji La Pass     | —               | 11,570  | 19    |
|              | 5      | 13          | Machhoi          | 9               | 11,265  | 20    |
|              | 6      | 14          | Dras             | 20              | 10,660  | 22    |
|              | 7      | 17          | Somat            | 12              | 10,200  | 25    |
|              | 8      | 19          | Kharbu           | 11              | 9,500   | 28    |
|              | 9      | 20          | Kargil           | 16              | 8,780   | 29    |
|              | 10     | 21          | Mulbekh          | 22              | 10,500  | 29    |
|              | —      | 22          | Namika La Pass   | —               | 12,200  | 31    |
|              | 11     | 22          | Bod Kharbu       | 15              | 10,890  | 31    |
|              | —      | 23          | Fotu La Pass     | —               | 13,432  | 31    |
|              | 12     | 23          | Lamayuru         | 15              | 11,300  | 31    |
|              | 13     | 24          | Nurla            | 17              | 9,900   | 32    |
|              | 14     | 25          | Saspul Gompa     | 14              | 10,500  | 33    |
|              | 15     | 26          | Nimu             | 12              | 10,500  | 34    |
|              | 16     | 27          | Leh              | 18              | 11,554  | 35    |
| <i>Chap.</i> |        | <i>June</i> |                  |                 |         |       |
| <b>2</b>     | —      | 1           | Phayang nullah   | 10              | 12,000  | 42    |
|              | —      | 3           | Leh              | 15              | 11,554  | 43    |
|              | 17     | 5           | Polu             | 10              | 14,500  | 47    |
|              | —      | 6           | Khardung La Pass | —               | 18,380  | 47    |
|              | 18     | 6           | Khardung         | 17              | 13,500  | 50    |
|              | 19     | 7           | Khalsar          | 12              | 10,400  | 51    |
|              | 20     | 8           | Sumur            | 13              | 10,050  | 51    |
|              | 21     | 9           | Panamik          | 16½             | 10,500  | 53    |
|              | 22     | 11          | Kubet            | 5               | 11,000  | 56    |
| <i>Chap.</i> |        |             |                  |                 |         |       |
| <b>3</b>     | 23     | 13          | Kimi             | 12              | 11,000  | 59    |
|              | 24     | 14          | Warshi           | 12              | 11,500  | 60    |
|              | 25     | 15          | “ Nubra Camp ”   | 9               | 12,000  | 60    |
|              | 26     | 16          | Camp I           | 2½              | 12,200  | 61    |
|              | 27     | 17          | Camp II          | 3               | 12,200  | 62    |
|              | 28     | 18          | Camp III         | 3               | 14,000  | 66    |
|              | 29     | 19          | Camp IV          | 1½              | 15,000  | 68    |

<sup>1</sup> 16 miles by bus from Srinagar to Woyil Bridge.

|                                   | Stage. | Date.       | Name.           | Miles.       | Height. | Page. |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|-------|
| <i>Chap.</i><br>( <i>contd.</i> ) |        | <i>June</i> |                 |              |         |       |
|                                   | 30     | 20          | Camp II         | 4½           | 12,200  | 70    |
|                                   | 31     | 21          | "Nubra Camp"    | 11           | 12,000  | 70    |
|                                   | 32     | 22          | Gompa           | 9            | 11,500  | 70    |
|                                   | 33     | 23          | Aranu           | 20           | 11,000  | 71    |
|                                   | 34     | 25          | Umlung          | 7            | 11,500  | 72    |
|                                   | 35     | 26          | Tut Yailak      | 11           | 14,500  | 74    |
|                                   | 36     | 28          | Umlung          | 11           | 11,500  | 77    |
|                                   | 37     | 29          | Panamik         | 15           | 10,500  | 78    |
| <i>Chap.</i><br>4                 |        | <i>July</i> |                 |              |         |       |
|                                   | 38     | 1           | Thirit          | 23           | 10,000  | 79    |
|                                   | 39     | 2           | Hundar          | 15           | 9,900   | 80    |
|                                   | 40     | 3           | Tirse           | 10           | 9,850   | 83    |
|                                   | 41     | 4           | Nakpopal        | 16           | 9,700   | 85    |
|                                   | 42     | 5           | Malakcha        | 13           | 9,400   | 86    |
|                                   | 43     | 6           | Ramdundo        | 16           | 9,000   | 87    |
|                                   | 44     | 7           | Turtok          | 2            | 9,000   | 88    |
|                                   | 45     | 8           | Prahnu          | 12           | 8,750   | 91    |
|                                   | 46     | 9           | Piun            | 8            | 8,650   | 93    |
|                                   | 47     | 10          | "Hanjore Hill"  | 25           | 12,000  | 94    |
| 48                                | 11     | Khapalu     | 5               | 8,400        | 95      |       |
| <i>Chap.</i><br>5                 | 49     | 13          | Brale Gone      | 12           | 9,000   | 97    |
|                                   | 50     | 15          | Saling          | 10           | 8,500   | 97    |
|                                   | 51     | 16          | Bragar          | 15           | 8,200   | 97    |
|                                   | 52     | 17          | Gone            | 19           | 8,000   | 97    |
|                                   | 53     | 18          | Gol             | 10           | 7,500   | 98    |
|                                   | 54     | 19          | Skardu          | 19           | 7,000   | 99    |
|                                   | 55     | 22          | Satpura         | 9            | 8,000   | 100   |
|                                   | —      | 23          | "Wazul Bai"     | —            | 15,800  | 101   |
|                                   | 56     | 23          | "Sunday Camp"   | 14½          | 14,500  | 101   |
|                                   | 57     | 24          | Surchabachan    | 23           | 13,200  | 102   |
|                                   | 58     | 25          | Minimarg        | 19           | 9,500   | 103   |
|                                   | 59     | 26          | 47th Mile-stone | 14           | 8,500   | 105   |
|                                   | 60     | 27          | Kanzalwan       | 18           | 7,645   | 105   |
| 62                                | 28     | Bandipura   | 24              | 5,500        | 105     |       |
|                                   |        |             |                 | 822½ approx. |         |       |

# PART OF KASHMIR

Stat. Miles



Author's Route  
Other Main Routes

Based upon the Map "The Karakoram" published by the Royal Geographical Society with some additions by the Author

