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A Journey across the Pamir from North to South

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*A Journey across the Pamir from North to South.*

By ST. GEORGE LITLEDALE.

(Read at the Evening Meeting, November 23rd, 1891.)

Map, p. 68.

MRS. LITLEDALE and I left England on Thursday, 11th April, 1890, and reached Odessa on the 17th, at 11 a.m. As the Batoum steamer sailed at three that afternoon, there was barely time for us to purchase some supplies which our previous journeys had taught us could not be obtained further on. At the hotel we found our interpreter, who had come from St. Petersburg, where he had been engaged for me by the kindness of Mr. Eliot, one of the secretaries at the Embassy. When a very dapper young man, with an immaculate shirt-collar and white satin tie, accosted me, and stated that he was the interpreter, my heart sank. How could I expect such a dandy to rough it in such a trip as ours? But he was very quick, and by his aid we got our purchases on to the s.s. *Tzarevna* with a little time to spare. Mr. Stevens, our genial vice-consul, came to see us off, and as the steamer was leaving the wharf he shouted, "Why did you not ask me to find you an interpreter? I have a capital man, a Persian." That was the very man we wanted. I had only time to reply, "Send him by next steamer—will wait," and off we went.

On landing at Batoum I inquired for the agent to whom I had consigned my heavy baggage, which came out by direct steamer. His office had been burnt down a day or two previously, but the luggage, fortunately, was still at the Custom-house. A reward made the natives scratch among the ashes, and four out of my five keys were discovered, the missing key being the only one of no consequence—which is contrary to all precedent! Then came the task of getting my guns, tents, &c., through the custom-house; having come by cargo steamer they were entered on the bill of lading, and as guns and ammunition are strictly forbidden to be brought into the country as freight, I was in a great fix. In vain I produced a letter to the Batoum Customs officials, which

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Monsieur de Stael, the Russian Ambassador, had courteously given me, in which he stated that I was going on a scientific journey with the knowledge and consent of the Russian Government, specifying the number of rifles and quantity of ammunition, and requesting that I might be allowed to pass without delay; but it was of no use. They said if I had only brought the things with me as *personal luggage* I should not have been detained five minutes. I was treated all through with the utmost courtesy, but red tape, of which we know something in this country, flourishes in Russia to an extent of which the average Briton has no conception, and it was only on the fifth day, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Peacock, our most obliging consul, who telegraphed to St. Petersburg, and invoked the aid of the Embassy, that I got through at last, and without any duty; but the Customs sealed up all the boxes and gave me a letter to the Chief of the Customs at Usunada, in which he was instructed to remove all the seals immediately on production of this letter, and further informed that they had received special instructions from St. Petersburg that I was on no account to be delayed.

To finish the story of my troubles on this subject, on reaching Usunada, the Chief was away. His deputy said the letter declared there was to be no delay, but he had received no confirmation of it: the letter of advice had not arrived by the steamer: he had no doubt it would come by the next, and the moment it did he would remove the seals, &c. The next steamer, I may mention, was not due for two days. One learns not only to be patient, but also wily when travelling in the East, so, with the aid of an obliging officer of the Russian Guards, with whom we had made friends in a quiet way, we thoroughly scared the official who refused to take off the seals, and then set to work to interview every likely and unlikely functionary. At last we unearthed one, who, after a brief consultation with our friend, tore off the seals, and we were free.

The Persian interpreter, promised by Mr. Stevens, came by the next steamer from Odessa, and joined me at Batoum. He had travelled extensively in the East with Dr. Lansdell, Mackenzie Wallace, and others, and I was especially glad to get him, as I knew we should want a Persian interpreter when we got among the Tadjik in Badakshan, and I did not feel at all sure I should find one who would trust himself to the tender mercy of the Afghans.

I left Batoum by train on 26th April and rejoined Mrs. Littledale at Tiflis. I had sent her away from Batoum to avoid the chance of her catching fever at that most unhealthy place, though since the Russians have prohibited rice being grown near the town, as it was during the Turkish occupation, there has been a marked decrease in the amount of fever. We stayed a couple of days in Tiflis, where we bought every dried ox tongue we could lay our hands upon, some forty odd. They are very portable, and made a delightful change from the

inevitable mutton we had to live upon later on. On approaching the Caspian the Baku line passes within a mile or two of the oil-town; the derricks over the wells look in the distance like great black sugar-loaves. On arrival we drove straight to the steamer, but had to go to an hotel for the night. The steamer was clean and comfortable; she was built by Samuda, in London, eight-and-twenty years ago, and was brought through the canals in two pieces. When she burnt coal it cost about nine roubles, or about 22s. an hour; now she burns oil, using 30 poods an hour, at a cost of 2s., besides having only six men for engines and boilers in place of 15 or 16.

We had a smooth passage across the Caspian, and arrived about 11 a.m. at Usunada, where we were met by an officer sent by Colonel Andrieff, who was acting head of the Transcaspian Railway during General Annenkoff's absence. This officer told us that a special carriage had been set apart for us, and would be at our disposal till we reached Samarkand. Colonel Andrieff dined with us on the steamer, and as he was travelling by the same train we did not hurry over that meal, for we knew they would not go without him. We had the whole carriage to ourselves and arranged one compartment as a bedroom, with our camp mattresses on the top of air-beds, which we had brought for the tarantass work later on, and with pillows we made ourselves really comfortable. The weather was delightful—just warm enough. The whole railway journey was a great contrast to the one we had made a couple of years before, when the line was only just open and everything was in disorder. There was a dining car on the train, and we had as good food as one might reasonably expect in that part of the world. From the Caspian to Samarkand it is one long plain, with only slight undulations here and there; consequently there are no cuttings or embankments, hence the cheapness with which the line was constructed. But although inexpensive, in the first instance, there are sections of it that must be costly in the extreme to keep in working order.

From Merv to the Oxus, and over a shorter stretch from the east bank of the Oxus towards Bokhara, and another to the eastward of Usunada, the line has been carried through howling wastes of drifting yellow sand, having all the appearance of a strong sea with its waves and billows, which some magician has changed to motionless sand; but the stillness is not real, for if you watch the top of the crests of the wavy hills you will notice that even a light breeze causes the moistureless powdery sand to blow over the top of the crests down on their lee-side, thus moving the sand-hill slowly but gradually forward; and it is these restless sand waves that constituted the main difficulty in constructing and keeping open the Transcaspian Railway. The people employed in making the line had evidently been allowed to cut down any shrub they could find for fire-wood, consequently, there is a strip on

each side of the railway a quarter of a mile in width without any vegetation to help to hold in check the shifting sand.

From Samarkand to Marghilan, the Russian capital of Kokhand, the road passes through a stretch of barren country alternating with veritable gardens of Eden, which support a large population. To the south extends a long range of snow mountains, peak after peak, some of them nearly 18,000 feet high, though the general run are about 12,000 or 14,000 feet. This range forms at its eastern end the watershed between the Alai Plateau and Kokhand, and joins the Tian Shan. The north side of the Kokhand valley is also bounded by snowy peaks which, though not so lofty or imposing, still help to form a panorama of exceeding beauty, and in the spring I was reminded strongly of the Vale of Kashmir.

Arriving at Marghilan on 14th May, we laid in a four or five months' supply of white flour for ourselves, and I purchased an English-made revolver, at famine price, for the interpreter, which revolver he managed to lose or have stolen from him a couple of hours after he got it. Directly we arrived, I set to work to try and find a Kirghiz named Azim, whom we had had as cook before, and by the aid of the police we found him. We were delighted at securing him, as he was by far the most intelligent man of his race that we ever came across.

Resisting the kind invitation of General Korolkoff, the Governor of Ferghana, to stay another day, we left Marghilan and arrived at Osh, 500 miles from Samarkand, the terminus of the post road.

We found a very convenient half-empty house, where we stayed the few days that it took collecting our party. The next step was to discover our old caravan bashi. He had bloomed into a more important personage, but he jumped at the idea of going with us; previously he had owned no horses himself, and simply went as caretaker of other people's animals, and in that capacity did excellently; now he had eight or ten horses of his own.

With the aid of Colonel Deubner we soon made an arrangement with him, that we should hire eight horses from him, with two men, and that he should supply five extra horses without payment, in case of accidents, and two men to attend to them. We also purchased twelve horses, at an average price of 2*l.* 10*s.*

Owing to the absence of firewood on the Pamir we had baked two thousand biscuits about the size and shape of a man's fist, these were for the two interpreters and Azim the cook. We dried them in the sun, and they got as hard as stone, and would keep for any length of time.

I invested in a coat reaching down to my heels, cloth outside, sheepskin within, and a cap with a kind of curtain all round which made a cape over my shoulders, also of sheepskin. Mrs. Littledale had brought lots of wraps, but we had an extra lining of Khotan lambskin put into a cape of Harris cloth, which had already a thick wadding; it was heavy,

but she only wore it riding; it completely covered her and the saddle. She found it delightfully warm. We had cut down our personal baggage as much as possible; I had only a small trunk, which was principally filled with photographic things, aneroids, boiling-point thermometer, bird-stuffing tools, &c., and presents for natives. What we did not stint ourselves in was bedding, and we had each a water-proof canvas roll containing plenty of blankets, &c. I attribute the good health we have always enjoyed on our expeditions mainly to the fact that no matter how cold or wet the weather may have been, we have always had warm and dry beds at night. Our tent was ten feet square, American drill, with a dark-blue lining, and an outer fly with a porch. It weighed, without poles, 80 lb. Edgington made it to our own design seven years ago. We have used it every year since then, and it looks good for another seven years. If a tent is properly made in the first instance, and is never kept folded up for any length of time when wet, it will last for years, but if no trouble is taken a three months' trip will ruin a new one.

Our camp beds were very strong and serviceable, and most comfortable, weighing about 20 lb. apiece, made after the plan of the Indian charpoi, but lighter; a very thin tarpaulin ground sheet, which is lighter, more durable, and far cheaper than mackintosh, kept everything dry below. We had also a most ingenious folding stove, made in Canada, and recommended to me by a great sportsman, Mr. Otho Shaw. A folding chair, table and stool, and a small light carpet, completed the furniture. With tent, bedding, trunks, rifles, ammunition, tent poles, pegs, chair, and table, we had just three pony-loads between us.

For our interpreters and stores we had an A tent, about 13 feet long and 7 broad, made of light duck, waterproofed by the Willesden process.

My wife had, of course, brought her saddle from England, and had fixed a very strong dees and strap, to tie on cloaks, waterproofs, and a kind of saddle-bag to hold anything and everything. For the interpreter and myself I bought Kirghiz saddles, which are most uncomfortable till you get accustomed to them, and you have to ride almost entirely by balance, but after a few days I got used to it.

On our previous expedition we had found so much difficulty in getting the cooking done during the furious gale which almost daily swept over the Pamir, not only blowing the fires clean away but covering everything with sand, that we got a yourt from the Kirghiz for a kitchen. We then found that the thick felt was so much warmer than our tent, that we discarded the tent and used a yourt, stretching our tent over the top of the felt for extra warmth. We engaged two jiguits, who are a kind of unofficial policemen and watchmen, to come with us as a guard. They were both armed with guns, and agreed to turn their hands to anything.

On Thursday, 22nd May, we said farewell to Colonel and Mrs.

Deubner, who had been kindness itself, and had helped us in every sort of way, and started, a cavalcade of between twenty and thirty horses and eight men. I arranged that one interpreter and one jigit should always remain last, and follow behind the caravan, so that nothing could be stolen or tumble off without being seen. We left behind at Osh sufficient money to take us comfortably back to England, in case we had for any reason to return to Turkistan. On the road we met a Kirghiz judge, an old acquaintance, who said the snow was very deep on the Taldik Pass, and that we should not be able to get our horses over for at least ten days. Though up by daylight our men were slow, and we did not get off till eight o'clock. Langar was 5800 feet above the sea, and we had a couple of small passes to cross before reaching Gulcha, the first one 7400 feet, the second 6900 feet, above sea-level, and we skirted a small lake with lots of wild fowl, but the water was too horrible. On arriving within a few miles of Gulcha we were met by a Kirghiz, who said his chief was following; he was coming to escort us safely across the Gulcha river. Shortly after the chief arrived, wearing a magnificent silver belt given to him by the Amir of Bokhara, of which he was immensely proud, accompanied by fifteen or twenty Kirghiz, and he immediately ordered them to ride into the river to find out the best ford. A caravan from Kashgar passed; they had taken sixteen days coming. They had crossed by the Terek, and stated there was no snow on the pass. Some other Kirghiz stated that it would be quite useless to attempt to cross the Taldik for another fifteen or twenty days.

One of the difficulties of travelling in this part of the country is the almost impossibility of getting reliable information. Here was a caravan which had just crossed the Terek Pass, and the men reported that there was no snow on it at all. The pass is over 12,000 feet, and other Kirghiz stated that the Taldik, about 1000 feet lower, would not be possible for horses for a fortnight or three weeks. Our scheme was to follow up the Gulcha river, and then cross on to the Alai Plateau over the Little Alai range. There are two principal passes, the Taldik, 11,600 feet, and the Shart, 12,800 feet, which are closed during the winter months. But supposing I found it impossible on account of the snow to reach the Alai that way, then I proposed crossing by the Terek Pass, which is used in the winter by the caravans coming from Kashgar, who trample a road in the snow; and it is not considered a difficult pass till the spring, when the snow gets soft, and it then becomes impassable altogether till the snow is gone. As the Kirghiz said that we should not find any grass at the head of the valley, we thought it best to keep our caravan at Gulcha, and send on an interpreter with some Kirghiz to report on the actual state of the passes, otherwise we might have to make serious inroads into our supply of barley if all our horses were kept waiting at the foot of the passes for a fortnight.

I tried to hire a dozen horses belonging to the Kashgar caravan. The men in charge were very wild and picturesque, but with most villainous countenances, and if the face is any test as to a man's character these gentlemen were certainly murderers readymade, and although they were quite ready to come for the sum I offered, 40 kopeks a day, they wanted so much in advance that I thought it prudent to decline their services, as once south of the Alai, and on the Pamir, I should have nothing to depend upon but my own right arm, and they would almost certainly have deserted, taking the precious barley with them. So I sent one of the jiguits back with a note to Colonel Deubner at Osh, asking him to engage ten or a dozen horses, load them with as much barley as they could carry, and send them to Lake Kara-kol, where I would wait for them.

Gulcha is situated in a grassy valley, a couple of miles wide, with groves of timber. Up a valley to the north-west there is a beautiful view of some fine snowy peaks forming part of the chain of the Little Alai Mountains; there were a great many Kirghiz encamped in the valley waiting until the snow should melt on the higher ground, then they would gradually push on to the Alai Plateau.

We had to wait four days before the interpreter returned, and it rained almost incessantly. We bought as much barley as our caravan bashi said our horses could carry, then I bought some more and hired some Kirghiz horses to carry it to the foot of the Taldik Pass. I determined to have plenty of barley, as our chance of crossing the Pamir with our baggage depended as much upon our keeping our horses fat and strong as upon anything else.

On the 29th May, Joseph, our interpreter, returned, reporting that there was deep snow on the Taldik; the party forced their way to the summit, but they could not get down to the Alai, their horses sank into the snow; they then tried the Achat Davan, another pass a few miles east, but it was no better. The Kirghiz said it was hopeless to attempt the Shart Pass, which I quite believed, as it is higher and the track leads up a very precipitous valley on the north side, which would surely be choked with snow. We determined to start the next day and go up the valley to the point where the path over the Terek Pass branches off to the east, and see whether the Terek was open.

In the early morning of the 30th May the weather was threatening, so we did not get off till 7.40, and arrived at Kizil Kingan about noon, and pitched our tent close to the river. The road from Gulcha followed the river banks, crossing and recrossing by bridges made in the same manner as the bridges in Kashmir. Marching up the river, the scenery was very picturesque, every now and then up some side valley we got glimpses of snow-peaks; the path in one place rose high above the river, and passed round a rocky buttress overhanging the water, round which the horses were carefully led one by one to prevent their packs



catching the rock, and a possible accident ensuing; but before our horses reached Kashmir they would have laughed to scorn being led past a comparatively easy place like that. On the road we passed some jigits, who were carrying despatches to the Russian consul at Kashgar. They had tried to cross the Terek Pass, and after a very bad time of it had to return, so we gave up all thoughts of the Terek.

At Suffi Kurgan it was 6700 feet, and perceptibly colder, and from there to Akbosaga was a long fatiguing march for the horses. The valley opens out, and is a mile or more in width, with here and there clumps of poplars in the river-bed, and pines higher up on the hill-side. We passed some fine peaks close to where a valley leads to the west to the Shart Pass.

We found two good yourts ready, the one for us being very large. We also met many acquaintances among the Kirghiz, our old hunter among the number. He was most anxious to come with us, so I said I would give the same wages as before, but they wanted me to feed them. I knew if I agreed to feed them no amount of food of all kinds would satisfy them, so I was firm on that point, though, practically, I should have to feed them, but as anything I chose to give would be a present, they could not grumble. Then we arranged for a couple of yourts, two men, and four horses to carry them, for one and a-half roubles a day, the men to find themselves. We also hired seven horses to carry firewood and barley for a few marches, and a flock of sheep was also added.

By the time these arrangements were completed a couple of days had melted away, for the Kirghiz are dilatory to a degree, and most exasperating. We insisted on seeing the yourts that we were to take with us before taking them, and by picking out the good new felts from our big yurt we thought we should be warmly housed. Placing a hunter as sentry over the felts and framework of the yourts, we packed up and started for Taldik.

The previous day a large caravan from Kashgar had passed over; they had tried to cross the Terek from the other side and failed, and had to make a six or seven days' detour round by this place. They reported not much snow.

We had been camped at an elevation of 9300 feet, and had to climb about 3000 feet to the top of the pass. The snow lay in patches, and we could undoubtedly have crossed without difficulty some days sooner. On the south side there were some places where we had trouble with the horses, owing to the drift. On the Alai Plateau we found no snow, though we skirted the edge of it all round. The Great Alai Mountains looked grand, appearing like one long wall of snow-clad peaks, running up to 22,000 or 23,000 feet. Seen across the twelve or fourteen miles of plateau, the air was so clear, they looked much nearer, and they stretched east and west as far as the eye could reach.

There seemed to be such masses of snow as to preclude all chance of our being able to cross them for a long time to come.

In the Kirghiz tongue Alai means paradise, but that is hardly an accurate description of the plain, for from the end of August till the middle of June, or nine months and a half, owing to the severity of its climate, it is quite uninhabited, and as we saw it on 3rd of June it looked very desolate; the ground was quite brown, the snow having only just melted, and, except marmots and some great bustard, not a living thing was in sight. There were no trees or bushes; the last we saw for many a long day were at Akbosaga, just before crossing the Taldik. Our camp at Katin Art had an elevation of 10,800 feet.

Next morning there was a general strike on the part of the Kirghiz with the yourts. They said they had received no money—their chief had apparently grabbed the whole of what I paid in advance—and they would not go any further, but saddled their horses and tried to go off. About three hours' incessant talking and negotiating put matters on a fresh basis, i. e. when they have worked off the money I advanced their chief I am to pay them every evening. They appeared to be contented with that. The Kirghiz are very exasperating in many ways, but as regards money they are so swindled and cheated by their own chiefs that they naturally think that every one else is a rogue.

We crossed the Alai Plateau, fording the Kizil Su, and camped two or three miles up the defile leading to the Kizil Art in a sheltered place where there was some good grazing. The Kirghiz carrying some of the firewood had agreed to come as far as we liked, provided they were paid daily. These gentlemen, directly they got their money, announced their intention of returning, and as they were a mischief-making lot I thought it best to let them go, retaining, however, a couple of their horses, the hire of which I was to pay to another of their tribe. Early next morning I started with some Kirghiz, taking lots of rope, in case of accidents, to see if the Kizil Art was passable, and to our astonishment, with the exception of the last 200 yards, there was absolutely no snow whatever. On getting down the other side we found hardly any grass at all, so on our return home we decided to leave the main body of the caravan camped where it was, under the charge of the Persian interpreter, while Mrs. Littledale and myself would go a couple of days' march to the valley, where I hoped to get some *Ovis Poli*, taking with us as few horses as possible in order to economise barley, as where we were going there would be probably nothing for the horses to eat. As soon as the new caravan with barley from Osh arrived they were to march to Lake Kara-kul where we hoped to join them.

In order to save the firewood we gave out only a small allowance every day, and had the faggots all piled up in front of our yurt so that no one could take any without being seen during the day, and our

Kirghiz puppy, who had turned out to be an invaluable watchdog, would certainly allow nobody near at night.

Our small caravan crossed the Kizil Art, 14,200 feet, without difficulty the following day, and camped at an elevation of about 13,600 feet on the Markan Su, whose waters find their way into the Kashgar river; there were little patches of grass here and there, but not much, and some root fuel.

We had rather a troublesome lot of men to manage; the young Russian told me that he suspected our Kirghiz cook of stealing a packet of tea. Not at all improbable, I thought, but I told Yudin that he was on no account to say anything to the cook as he was a very violent tempered man and would be certain to say he would leave, and he would have been a great and irreparable loss; for besides being the quickest cook we had ever had there was no possibility of replacing him, and further, he spoke Russian, and we had no other means of communicating with the Kirghiz except through our Persian, whose English was rather weak. So I was very much annoyed on going into the cooking yurt to be greeted by Azim saying that he wished to leave because Yudin had said he stole the tea; it took us quite an hour to soothe him, and at last he consented to stay, and then I gave Yudin a sharp scolding for having so little tact. Of course any one of them would steal, the only way was to keep the things locked up. Our valuable stores were carried in old tea-boxes made of thin wood, but having the sides dovetailed together they were both light and strong. I fixed leather hinges and a padlock on each.

Some men had brought some extra felts for the yurts and we made ourselves quite warm. I went out to see if I could find any *Ovis Poli* with a couple of hunters. The Kirghiz left in camp rolled the old hunter's dog up in a felt belonging to the yurt and sat on it till we were out of sight so that the dog should not miss his master; the dog howled, which was not surprising! On returning to camp the men said there was another man shooting *Ovis Poli*, his camp was close, and he was coming to see us, but they did not know his nationality beyond that he was not Russian. Presently up came Major Cumberland dressed in native costume; he had come from Kashgar and was on his way to Turkistan. We handed over to him all the books we could spare. Next morning he gave me a Ladak fur cap, which proved invaluable, being just as warm and a quarter the size and weight of my Kirghiz cap. We said good-bye, and he started over the Kizil Art Pass. Some of our horses had strayed, and when the men who were looking for them returned, they said they had found Major Cumberland miles out of the road, and had shown him the way over the pass. I have never met Cumberland since to inquire whether it was another Kirghiz yarn or not.

The missing horses not having turned up by nine we decided to start without them, leaving a couple of men and one horse behind to look for

them. As we were three horses short, I walked. Azim our cook could hardly be induced to ride whilst I was on foot, but after doing three-quarters of the way I made one of the yourt men walk, as he had chosen to sleep all night instead of looking after his horses. It was a long march, and being my first good walk, and what with the soft sand and the elevation, it was a fatiguing day, and the wind was bitter at times.

We had crossed into a valley that emptied itself into Lake Karakul with the hope of getting some *Ovis Poli*, while we were waiting for the caravan with the barley from Osh to join us. We did not have great sport, and I did not see anything very big in the way of sheep, but there were some magnificent snow-peaks, considerably over 20,000 feet; close to the lake was very weird scenery, and some of the side valleys were choked with glaciers.

This Central Asian scenery has a type of its own, quite different from the Swiss or Caucasian mountain scenes, where your eye when tired wanders from grand ice-fields above to a pleasant change of green pastures and then forests of pine below. Here, though the mountains are higher, the glaciers, owing to the small snowfall, are much more puny, while below there is a picture of utter desolation that would be hard to match in any other part of the world. The all but complete absence of vegetation gives a weird and uncanny character to the scenery of the valley in which we camped, which is called by the Kirghiz the Black Valley.

After a stay of four or five days we started for the Karakul; we timed it so exactly that though we had had no tidings since we sent a man back from Gulcha to Osh, that at the point where we joined the track leading to the lake we met the new caravan and the remainder of our party marching along. It was a very good calculation.

We crossed the Kichkine Kizil Art, 14,200 feet, which is a sandy flat watershed between the Markan Su and the Karakul. Owing to quicksands we had found it impossible to follow the valley to the lake, so we had to cross some high rough ground, making a considerable detour before we could get down to the lake. We had passed plenty of root fuel, but before we could find any water we had left the roots a good many miles behind, and all the water we could find was a stagnant alkali pool. There is water on the hills, which look quite close, but I knew from experience they are miles and miles away, so we had to make the best of it. From the top of the hill the lake looked beautiful, the water the bluest of the blue, and completely surrounded by snow mountains. Two peninsulas jut out, one from the north and the other from the south, and almost cut the lake in half.

One of the Kirghiz hunters was sick, and said he wished to return, and as he gave us the impression that he was suffering from some complaint akin to itch, we gladly let him go. He was an excellent hunter,

and only came for the love of sport, for owning as he did 1000 sheep, the small wages we gave could have been no attraction to him.

On the 7th June we broke up camp and marched along the east side of the Karakul Lake, rather heavy travelling, with a little grass at first but getting less and less. At Oksali Mazar, where we turned up a very weird valley, the rocks looking like walls of iron, with absolutely no vegetation, there was a cairn composed of *Ovis Poli* horns, some very fine ones among them. After a desperately long march we camped at Muskol, on the Ak Jilga river, where there was water and a little grass, but no fuel of any kind; the bottom of the valley, about 200 yards to a quarter of a mile in width, was for several miles 4 or 6 feet in snow, and then a valley branched off to the east to Rang Kul. There were a couple of yourts here belonging to Kirghiz, subjects of China. We marched up the valley towards the Tuyuk Pass, called by the Kirghiz the Ak baital davan, which we crossed on the second day; there was no snow on the summit, 15,525 feet by the aneroid; there was a little grass here and there, but not nearly enough for our horses, and we had to be liberal with the barley to keep up their strength.

The descent of the pass was extremely steep for 500 feet to the Ak baital river-bed, which we followed downstream. There was a very heavy snowstorm behind us, which we escaped, but we came in for a desperate gale, which tried the yourt very highly; one old hunter was the only man we had who really understood pitching a yourt properly. The constant use of alkali water began to tell upon us, and our skin got burnt outside with washing, and inside with drinking, and our throats got so sore that neither drinking nor tubbing could be largely indulged in.

We camped in an alkali swamp, about five miles W.S.W. of the junction of the Ak baital and the Murghab. There was plenty of coarse grass, but no fuel. We had a fine view of the Tagharma Peak, called by the Kirghiz Mustagh Atta—Father of Snow. It is stated to be between 25,000 and 26,000 feet high. The head man of a Kirghiz encampment came to see us. I asked if he could read Chinese. He said no; so it was a fine opportunity! I produced my Chinese passport, and enlarged to him the fearful pains and penalties he would incur if he failed to get me a reliable guide. He was apparently much impressed, and he left and returned with the smallest, thinnest, and most woe-begone lamb either of us ever set eyes on, some koumis and cream, and in return we gave him a musical-box, needlebook, and some tea. Finding he was not satisfied, I added an extra fur-cap I had brought—as, although our presents were two or three times the value of his, we thought it prudent to get a character for liberality, otherwise the guide might not be forthcoming. We left with him a supply of barley, firewood, and stores, so that we might have something to fall back upon in case we had to return.

The Murghab, where we camped, was only 12,300 feet above sea-level; it was the lowest elevation we had been at since leaving the Alai, and would be till we arrived at Sarhad. From this point there were two routes by which we could travel; one by following the Murghab to the little Pamir lake down the Wakhan to Sarhad, the other by the Alichur and Great Pamir to Kala-i-Panj, and up the Wakhan river to Sarhad and the Baroghil; and we decided on the latter, as being by far the most interesting of the two. Before the Osh caravan left us we bought every horse-shoe and nail they could spare; for, though we had brought with us double the quantity of shoes the caravan bashi said was necessary, still I thought it prudent to be on the safe side. We also bought an extra horse, which was not a successful deal, as the beast ate the precious barley, and wore out shoes, and was never fit to carry much more than himself.

On 17th June, after one ineffectual attempt, we forded the Murghab, which was swarming with fish, apparently trout, and went up the valley of the Kara Su. Plenty of grass at first, which got less and less as we approached the summit of the Neza-tash, 14,200 feet, on which four valleys open out, and it is so flat that it is impossible to say when you are at the top. We camped 13,625 feet, about five miles down the Alichur at the junction of the Neza-tash and Bustin valleys; there was hardly a vestige of grass, but lots of root fuel; there was a very bitter wind blowing in our faces all the march, and we could obtain no shelter for the yurts which were exposed to the full blast. A man whom we had picked up temporarily as guide, said there was a way over the mountains to the Great Pamir Lake opposite our camp; but as we wished to pick up a better guide who was reported to be found lower down the Alichur, we decided to go on and cross by the Bashgumbaz Pass. We passed Chatirtash (stone house); it is a rock that stands up alone in the middle of the Alichur, and in the distance looks exactly like a house.

After a short but bitterly cold march, during which even our sheep-skin coats were unable to keep out the icy wind, we camped at the entrance of the Bashgumbaz valley, near some Kirghiz, who said the pass was blocked with snow, and baggage animals could not cross for a month. The most striking feature of the Alichur Pamir is the immense number of *Ovis Poli* horns lying about; they are literally in hundreds, some of them very large.

Failing to cross the pass we had to go down the Alichur to Burzula Jai, which is close to where the Chinese frontier ends and the Afghan territory commences. The head of the Kirghiz told me he could not find us a guide, so I said I was very sorry, but until he got me a man he could not possibly leave us; that put a new complexion on affairs, and a man appeared in a couple of hours. I had my doubts and cross-questioned him, when he stated he could take me to any place except

heaven or hell ; he turned out, however, to be a fraud, and lost his way a couple of days after leaving his yourt.

The horses were missing again this morning ; it turns out that all the horses we have hired belong to two men, with the exception of one solitary animal which belongs to the third, all the wages which he gets being the hire of this horse. This man being poor the others bully him, and expect him to watch the horses all night alone, while they are curled up in their sheepskins. It is of course impossible that one man can walk all day and watch horses all night, consequently he goes to sleep and the beasts wander ; being close to the frontier the chances of robbery are much greater, and if our horses were stolen we should be in a most serious condition. The men returned to camp to get some food, having found about fifteen of the thirty odd, and started again on a fresh hunt, when I found that, contrary to my express order, they had left their own horses in camp and had ridden out on our horses to look for the runaways. I was very angry and had all their horses saddled and sent every one of them out with Kirghiz on them to look for the runaways. They were all collected at last ; the caravan people were very angry at their horses being used, and said they would return home, and absolutely refused to pack the horses. I stood some distance apart and beckoned the head of the caravan to come ; he took no notice of me till I walked straight for him, when he saw I was not going to be trifled with, and he came. At first he was defiant and said they were all going back, so I told him that he was welcome to go but I had engaged their horses for as long as I liked, and I meant to keep them, and if they attempted to take them I would shoot every horse they had. I pointed out that if they returned to Turkistan and broke their contract they would certainly be put in prison ; on the other hand, if they did their duty they would not only get their wages but a present as well. The storm died out as quickly as it had arisen, and anybody who had seen them in the evening feasting on a sheep I thought it politic to discover I did not want, would have never imagined they were the same people who were so infuriated in the morning. They were just like children, but firmness at first, and then conciliation, got over all our difficulties.

We passed within sight of Lake Yashil-Kul and turned up a valley named Kundey, where we camped. Next morning we had a steep climb up to 15,150 feet, and a very steep descent the other side, down to a lake, whose shore was white with salt, the old hunter collected a large bagful of it. The poor man was sick all the time, owing, as he said, to the elevation. It was a curious thing that several of the Kirghiz were ill, and they all attributed it to the height, while neither of the interpreters, Mrs. Littledale, or myself, were inconvenienced at all. On the top we found our precious guide had taken us up the wrong valley, and our climb had been for nothing ; had we gone further on we should have avoided the hill altogether. We then had

a tiring ride to the Khargosh Pass, 14,550 feet, and down the other side to the Pamir river, a descent of six or seven miles. On my asking one of the Kirghiz if he was certain to find *Ovis Poli* on a particular range, he replied, you could not be sure, they had not got houses to live in. A very good answer, I thought.

It was about midway between the Victoria Lake and Kala-i-Panj where we struck the Pamir river, its width being about 100 yards, and near our camp quite unfordable. We determined to make a detour to the Victoria Lake on the great Pamir, shoot there a little, and then descend down the river to Kala-i-Panj and cross into Chitral by the Baroghil or other passes.

As we intended to return, we hid some of our firewood and barley under the rocks, as the Kirghiz horses that carried the yourts had been very much neglected, and their backs had been allowed to get into such a state, that we could not bear the idea of their carrying any loads; so as the weather was getting warmer, we decided to take the yourts as far as the Victoria Lake, and then pay the men and send them back. Having got rid of the barley and firewood, we used our own spare horses to carry the yourts.

The Kirghiz are absolutely callous to animal suffering, and one poor horse, whose back from their carelessness had been allowed to get into a fearful state, was thrown down while I was away shooting, and had great hunks of flesh cut from his back. It was a long march up to the Victoria Lake, 9½ hours, and in spite of her furs, Mrs. Littledale got very cold before the baggage arrived a couple of hours later.

We camped at the western end of the Victoria Lake (13,980 feet), called by the Kirghiz "Gaz Kul"—Goose Lake, I suppose from the number of Brahmin geese which frequent it. On the 27th June it was half covered with last winter's ice, in places from one to two feet thick. As we followed the Pamir river to the lake, the mountain to the south, dividing the Pamir from Wakhan, formed a magnificent sight; big glaciers and snow peaks running, I am sure, over 20,000 feet. There were the remains of old moraines right down to the river on both banks, but principally on the south; and far away to the south-west there was a very high triangular peak towering far above all other mountains. I think they must belong to the Hindu Kush. The view from our camp over the lake was very grand, but on ascending the slopes of the hills on the north side, the lake was very disappointing; it looked so narrow, like a canal, but the mountains came triumphantly out of the ordeal. They bear inspection well, but their icy slopes quite knocked on the head any idea I had of finding a pass across them direct to the foot of the Baroghil. Some Kirghiz I met on the Alichur stated that the grass grew so luxuriantly on the great Pamir, that unless we took care we should lose our horses, it being higher than their backs. I received that statement with the usual grain of salt, but I admit I was not



prepared for the utter barrenness we found at our first camp. Unless we had had barley there was certainly not enough grass to have kept them alive at the eastern end, but high up on the hills there was much more. Up to that moment this was the champion misstatement, but on reaching Badakshan the air so reeked with falsehood that a lie of only that dimension might have passed unnoticed! We had a bitter night, and the parts of the lake that were open water the previous evening were covered with a thin coating of ice in the morning.

Ali Bey, the guide that we had been promised, turned up to-day. He seemed to know the whole country well, but made a statement which to me was incomprehensible, namely, that during summer it was impossible to go from Kala-i-Panj up the Wakhan river to Sarhad, owing to the rivers being unfordable. He stuck to it so firmly that we altered our plans, and decided to find a pass across to the Little Pamir, and come down to Wakhan from the east instead of from the west. While I was shooting on the Great Pamir we sent some horses back for the firewood and barley left on the Pamir river. There was absolutely nothing to shoot, so we did not stay long; we sent back the yourts, and one of the hunters who was no good, and whose horse was lame into the bargain. Some miles to the east of the Victoria Lake we passed another lake, called by the Kirghiz "Aidin Kul," which was almost entirely frozen over on 30th June. Some of the Yarkand Mission in 1874 passed this road in returning from Kala-i-Panj, but being in early spring, and the ground deeply covered with snow, it accounts for their not having noticed it. We re-crossed to the head waters of the Alichur by a pass called the Kojiguit Davan, named, so the Chinese guide said, after a celebrated brigand, who flourished, robbed, and murdered here many years before. On the road we passed a stream, where there were quantities of small trout. After wasting numerous shot cartridges I arrived at the conclusion that if a fish has twelve inches of water over him he is safe. As we marched along we came round a corner right upon some *Ovis Poli* rams; the shikari in front carrying my rifle had not noticed them. I gave a low whistle to attract his attention, but an idiot of a man with us got so excited that he shouted in a loud voice for my rifle, consequently they made off.

Our camp was very exposed and windy, 14,800 feet. We had to drive the pegs in deep and place rocks on the pegs to keep them firm, the storms are so violent. With an improvised needle and mesh and a ball of twine I made a net, so as to be ready for the next lot of trout we might meet. We stayed till 7th July, having bad weather all the time, strong gales, and heavy snowstorms. Both the Kirghiz hunters have been ill, doubtless owing to the elevation; but why it should affect them who are so much accustomed to heights, while we escaped quite free from anything worse than an occasional headache, I cannot understand.

We camped at the foot of the Andemin Pass, but there was abso-

lutely no fuel, so we had to use our last sticks of firewood to cook our dinner and breakfast. There were five or six inches of snow this morning, and everything was soaked, but as we had no fuel we were compelled to push on, though it was snowing hard when we started. Cold and miserable we crossed the pass, which was only 15,500 feet. We descended to the Ak Su and followed it up to the Little Pamir lake—Chak Mak Kul, according to the Kirghiz—and camped about one mile east of the lake, which was 13,850 feet. We found plenty of grass and root-fuel. A Kirghiz we met says the Kunjutis have sent some fighting men on a raid. He had run away from them, and recommends us to be well prepared; but we were becoming very sceptical of all statements. Our caravan people are very much afraid of the Kunjutis, and they asked us if we were going to take them there. We discovered that our Chinese guide had been telling them that we were going to take them to India and leave them there.

The situation of the Little Pamir lake is very similar to that of the Great Pamir—low shelving banks in a flat valley, with high snow peaks around. Soon after leaving the lake we crossed the watershed between the Ak Su and the Wakhan Su. It resembled the Neza Tash pass in this respect, that the ground was so level that it was not easy to say when the ascent finished and the descent commenced. The net came in very useful; we found a stream swarming with trout, which we drove into the net by dozens, and the whole camp had a feast. Nine or ten miles from the lake the valley closed in, losing its Pamir character, and we commenced to descend more rapidly.

At Bozai Gumbaz, where the valley became narrow, another stream joined the Wakhan called Varjer. We saw here the ruins of an old fort or tomb, and as the valley led by a pass into Kunjut, it probably was a place of some importance. As we went forward the track became worse; we arranged to arrive at the Grundi early in the morning, as the guide said it was impossible to ford later in the day. It was only difficult because the bed of the stream was formed of large stones, and the animals stumbled over them a good deal; but the men stripped, and we had ropes ready to prevent any that tumbled being washed away. Only one pony fell, but the men got him on his legs again, and as he was only carrying the tents, which soon dried, no harm was done. As we got lower it was a great pleasure to see bushes, and later on stunted trees; we had not seen such things since we left the Gulcha valley in Turkistan. The track led along steep slopes, very narrow in places, and prudence made us dismount and lead our ponies, and the further we went the worse it got. At one place the track went down by the river edge over large boulders, and no room for the packs between the water and the rocks. The horses had to be unloaded, and the men and I carried the whole baggage on our backs along the river for a long distance, and up a steep slippery slab of rock.

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I reproached Ali through our guide for taking us the wrong way; he replied he had not been here for five years, and in such a country an hour was enough to destroy a road. Eris, one of the Kirghiz from Osh, astonished us to-day by asking us to take him to India. I asked him what he would do when he got there; he said there was no opportunity of making money in Turkistan, and that he had an uncle at Peshawur. Knowing he was married I asked what his wife would do, and our Persian interpreter told me that they frequently will leave their wives for five years at a stretch, and that she was living with her people. Eris stuck to it that he really had an uncle at Peshawur; and as he was our best man we agreed to take him, and send him to Peshawur if we did not go there ourselves.

On one occasion we were on ahead of the caravan, and I was spying the ground for ibex when below me I saw with the binocular fifteen horses and a few men. On looking with the telescope I found there were other men lying down, fifteen in all, and every one armed to the teeth. The Chinese guide pronounced them to be Kunjutis on a raid, so things promised to be interesting. We waited till the caravan came up, got an extra supply of ammunition for my pair of double express rifles, gave my gun to one interpreter, revolver to another, and the other men loaded their weapons and we marched to meet the foe. Mrs. Littledale, the Persian interpreter, and two hunters and myself went forward to parley, and four or five of their men came forward to meet us. We salaamed to each other, and then to our great relief they told us that they were Wakkis and were guarding the pass by order of the Afghans at Sarhad. They were civil and told us it would never do for such great people as ourselves to march into Sarhad unattended, but that if we would wait they would send word to the Afghan chief, and he would come and welcome us himself. On my saying it was very kind of them thinking of it, but we preferred to go on, the murder came out that they had had orders to prevent our passing. So I produced our passport, which was only a Persian translation of an ordinary passport, and said here was an important letter which I must deliver to the Afghan myself, and I meant to go on immediately. Then their head man said that we were better armed than they were and they could not stop us, but the Afghans would kill them for letting us pass. I compromised matters by saying I would go on till we found grass for our horses and we could camp, but they must send at once for the Afghan chief and bring us some fuel.

When we had pitched our camp I noticed that the men were drawn up across a narrow ravine we would have to pass had we wished to go on to Sarhad. Soon after the head man arrived accompanied by half-a-dozen soldiers armed with sniders, very picturesque, but very dirty, and with villainous countenances. We received them in our tent, admitting the two who seemed to have most authority. We explained that we wanted to cross the Hindu Kush into Chitral and did not want to stay

in their territory at all. I produced the passport, and pointed to Lord Salisbury's signature, saying he was the greatest friend the Queen had, and the Persian interpreter enlarged on the dreadful things that might happen if we were kept waiting. They said they would send the letter off at once to the general, and he would be certain to let us pass; an answer would be back the next day. I had no opportunity of seeing the head man alone, though I made several attempts. We gave them tea and some small presents. Directly they left I sent the interpreter after him and said I wished to speak to the head man alone, but back they all came, so that was of no use; they wanted us to go down to Sarhad that evening, but we declined; they evidently did not mean to lose sight of us, for they said they would not return to Sarhad, so we invited them to share the tent with the interpreter, and we gave them a good supper. To prevent any tricks we made three of our men sleep under the outer fly of our tent, one on each side and one at the back, and with our dog at the door. I don't suppose there was danger, but it was well to be prepared, and we had our weapons ready. On the morning of Sunday, 13th July, we marched down into Sarhad (11,340 feet by aneroid, 11,234 by boiling-point thermometer), escorted by a number of ragamuffins. Sarhad is quite a small village with a ruined fort; there is some excellent grazing for the horses; both we and they had earned a rest, but the moment the Afghans gave us leave we intended to move out of their clutches. The Wakhan river flows over a broad gravelly bed, and is cut up into six or seven channels. Across the river is a broad barren-looking valley at the top of which is the Baroghil, looking very low; beyond the Baroghil are some snowclad mountains which look simply impassable, with one big peak soaring up above its neighbours. On the other side of these snows lies Yasin, where we hoped to pass on our road to Gilgit. The general's headquarters are at Faizabad 225 miles off, so we could not possibly get a reply in a day. Knowing how the Afghans feel towards the Russians, I told Yudin, the young Russian, to keep in his tent out of sight whenever any of the Afghans came to see us, for fear any complication might arise. Imagine my dismay when coming out of my tent suddenly I found him ridiculing the soldiers' tattered and dishevelled appearance. I sent him to his tent on the spot, and he looked pretty grave when I explained to him the risk he ran of getting his throat cut, and told him that they had declined to drink their tea when they found he had made it. In time he might make a good traveller, but he was too young and thoughtless for a trip of this kind.

The following day, instead of an answer from the general, the captain in command at Kala-i-Panj arrived with six more men. They were perfect caricatures of soldiers, and would have made the fortune of any pantomime, dressed in all sorts of old uniforms, some with shoes with very pointed toes, curled up in front over the instep. The captain and his retinue paid us two visits to-day; during one of the visits we

discovered that the captain had intercepted the first letter that was sent, and destroyed it; he said the head man at Sarhad had no right to write to the general. Next morning we concocted fresh letters, one in Persian, another in English, and the captain promised that they should be sent full speed. There are stations about ten or twelve miles apart, and one man with fresh horses takes it right through. There was nothing for it but patience; but it was rather annoying to think that we only wanted to pass through about twenty miles more of Afghan territory and then we should have been out of it in Chitral, which is an independent State. They placed sentries round the camp, and if I went out for a walk my doings were watched.

The captain came to see us twice a day, and used to stay two or three hours at a time. It was difficult to find topics of conversation which interested him. He told us that three men had been sent to Cabul to be executed. They told the Amir if he would let them off they would tell him where he could find silver. They were sent under a guard to Iskasham, where they commenced to dig; a door was put to the mouth of the mine. They worked for twenty days and only found earth. They were only to be allowed a few days more, when if they found nothing they were to be executed. The next day they came to silver, very rich, and now more men are being employed every day.

On the fourth day we heard shouting, and a number of men arrived; it was the Governor of Wakhan, Gholam Russul Khan, a good-looking young man; he stated that he had nearly reached Faizabad when he heard we were here, and he had come to see that we were comfortable. He said "Our Queen was their Queen, their country our country." I had to reply, "Yes indeed, we were brothers," but I could not help wishing all the same that our new relatives would cut their hair, and be generally a little cleaner. He wore a smart turban, with the name "I. Greaves and Co., Manchester," stamped conspicuously upon it.

I asked about crossing the Mastuj river. The captain said, "When the order came he would make such a road that we should not know whether we were on land or water."

Outwardly the men were civil, but we know we cannot believe a word they say; they tell one story in the morning, and deny it at night. The Governor let out that he had intercepted the second letter we wrote, and had destroyed it, saying the captain ought not to have written to the general. So we wrote a third epistle to the general, which the Governor said should be sent off. In the night the captain quietly came to the camp and said, "The governor was a bad man, and had not sent our letter, but if we would write another, he would send one of his own soldiers with it." So a fourth letter in English and Persian was written, and we took the opportunity, the first we had, of saying we should feel generously disposed towards any one that helped us to reach Chitral.

The days passed very slowly, and we quite despaired of being allowed to pass. We determined, in the event of being turned back, to try and find a pass into Kunjut, and come down through Hunza into Gilgit. It would have been a forlorn hope, as I don't think we could have got a guide, and I question if any of our men would have dared to come; failing that we should have gone east to Yarkund, and if it were not too late in the year have crossed the Kara Korum to Ladak.

The governor told us that last year a Russian party arrived at Kala-i-Panj, and wished to pass through to Kaffiristan. They also, like us, were told that they must send and ask the general, who sent word to say that they were not to be allowed to pass. Then they said that they were Russians, and they never turned back; the general was consulted again, and he sent word that if the Russians refused to go, they were to take stones, break their teeth and send them back. That was the Afghan version of the affair. On our previous expedition we had made the acquaintance of Grombchevsky, the ruling spirit of the Kaffiristan expedition, and very pleasant he was. I should like to meet him again, to hear what really passed on this occasion. Since the governor's arrival, they bring us every day presents of chickens, butter, sheep, &c., far more than we could possibly eat, and as it is the poor Wakhis who have to supply them, we take as little as possible, and then endeavour to find out the owners, and pay them.

A courier arrived to-day, full gallop. When questioned, the governor appeared ill at ease, and then said the man was bringing food—a palpable falsehood. We do not know how we stand, with these people, and their excessive politeness made me very uneasy. Yesterday they showed a portion of a letter purporting to come from the general, asking for more information about us, and why friends of the Amir should be travelling in company with a Russian. We had to be diplomatic, and explained that he was only a boy who came as interpreter, and he was going back with the caravan to Turkistan. We found it was madness to think of taking him with us.

In this atmosphere of deceit and lies we did not know what the day might bring forth. I tried another tack to-day; we would not receive the Afghans in our tent, but I met them in the servant's tent, and did not ask them to sit down. I reminded them that they had frequently said that we were brothers, but when I asked so simple a thing as to be allowed to make a day's journey across their country, they had kept us waiting ten days, surrounded our tents with soldiers, so that if we had been enemies they could not have treated us worse. I got them to promise that if no answer came on the following day we might start without. The promise was not worth sixpence. The following day, the 21st July, I had a long talk with the captain and governor, and told them that we intended to start the next day but one, and that if they attempted to stop us, they must not talk any more about the Afghans being friends

of the English, and I did not know what the Queen's Prime-minister would say when he heard that his letter had been torn up. They told us we could ford the Wakhan river to-morrow and camp, and the following day cross the Baroghil. We pointed out to them that if we sent our caravan back to Turkistan, and they afterwards stopped our crossing the Hindu Kush, it would be absolutely impossible for us, with only two men and the few horses, to recross the Pamir. They then said we had better take the whole caravan across. We refused point blank, as we did not understand the motive for the move. If it was that we were eating up their winter supply of grass, so much the better, for we should have a decided answer all the sooner.

That evening a messenger arrived with a letter purporting to come from the general saying we could go. Directly we were told we set to work and separated our clothes that we wanted, and food supplies; had all the horses' feet looked to, and picked out shoes to fit each horse, and nails, and by the time I had paid off the men and written some letters it was two a.m. We were called at four. The Afghans, when I asked them to supply me with fifteen men to help us over the Hindu Kush, said I could have 1500 if I liked. I also asked for six yaks to help to carry our baggage over the ice. We left behind us everything we could possibly spare to lighten our baggage as much as possible. We offered very high wages and three ponies to the caravan bashi's brother if he would come with us to Srinagar. I told him I would send a man with him to Leh to see that he joined a caravan returning to Yarkund, to which place he had often been before; but in the morning he said no; he was frightened to go so far away from home. The Chinese guide told some man, who repeated it to us, that he intended to get some Kirghiz together and rob the caravan, as they returned. I called him up, and explained to him that I had photographed him, and if our caravan was robbed I should write to the Governor of Kashgar, send his photograph, and say that he was the man who did it, and ask to have him crucified and disembowelled. He seemed impressed with the reasonableness of my remarks, and simply said, "Then it was not worth the risk."

Next morning we made a present of money to every Afghan soldier, and we gave field-glasses, watches, clothes, &c., to the chief officers before we finally got out of their clutches. We started our old caravan off, feeling rather uneasy about their getting back safe, but they did so eventually. Our party now consisted of Mrs. Littledale and myself, the Persian interpreter Joseph, and Iris the Kirghiz, and twelve horses.

We had not the faintest notion what kind of a reception we should meet in Chitral and Yasin, so we took with us enough flour, &c., so as to be, if it came to a pinch, independent of the country for supplies. The governor escorted us to the edge of the river, and said good-bye, and the captain and some soldiers came with us. The Wakhan river was divided into

many channels; the water, fortunately, was a good bit lower than it had been, and the horses all got over just without swimming. We had packed their loads very high, but some of them got wet. On the other side, where they suggested our camping, the midges were simply unbearable. After we had gone some distance a friend of the governor came galloping after us, and we feared fresh complication, and a great row took place between the Afghans. The captain's version was that the friend wanted him to leave us to find our own way.

We crossed the Baroghil, which is an extraordinary depression in the Hindu Kush, two or three miles in width. On either hand the mountains rise to a great height. We forded the Mastuj river, which was much the same depth as the Wakhan, and camped on the further bank. We held a kind of durbar, and I wished to present the captain, who had been the best of a very bad lot to us, with a watch, so I took my gold one off the chain, put it in my knickerbocker pocket, and replaced it with the silver one. At a suitable moment I took it out and off the chain, and presented him with my own watch, which he received with protestations of gratitude. We gave our final presents, and got rid of the last of them. When I put my hand into my pocket to replace the chain on my watch, I found, "Heigh presto," it had vanished, and the humiliating truth dawned upon me that the Afghan had got, not only the silver watch, but my gold one as well. The Governor's friend to whom we had given a pair of fur gloves sent them back, and said he did not want them. If we could have spared anything better to give him we should have done so as a matter of policy, for he was a demon; but we had to keep some presents for the Chitrali and Yasin people.

Our fifteen men were reduced to seven. Three of them and a yak started ostensibly to get food and never returned, the others were going off and I forcibly stopped them, and at last made them confess that they had all been told to desert us. I talked to them and promised them high pay; they wanted an advance. One of them, by good luck, happened to have owned a sheep, which the Afghan Governor had presented to us, and which when we had afterwards discovered its owner, we had paid well for, and he said that people who would do that could not be thieves, and they would stay. We took however the precaution of putting them to sleep in the tent and watching them all night.

In the morning a small Tajik official appeared on the scene. We were afraid of fresh trouble, so we crossed his palm with silver, and he frankly admitted that he had been sent by the governor's friend to get these men to desert, and to tell us to wait till to-morrow, by which time he would probably have concocted fresh devilries. So we packed up and started forthwith, and went on till we were right at the foot of the ice. There was no grass for the horses, but we had enough barley for to-night and to-morrow. There was also no place to pitch a tent, so we



slept out among the rocks. The men wanted us to stop before, but we were so uncertain of the intentions of the Afghans, that we placed as much distance between them and us as possible. After arranging our bivouac we set to work with axes to cut steps for the horses up the ice on the glacier in readiness for the morning.

Our Tajiks seem a happy, good-natured people. We take care to give them plenty to eat—a full stomach works wonders. Our interpreter has just discovered that the Yasins are Shias, and told us that to make things comfortable, when he gets there he will be a Shia Persian. In Badakshan he passed as an Arab, ridiculing to the Afghan the idea that he was a Persian.

We were up at three next morning, and as soon as there was a glimmer of light we started and got on to the glacier by the road we had engineered up a steep ice slope. Once up the travelling was easy, and we made good progress till the sun got up and softened the snow; then our troubles began, and the horses were continually breaking through the crust and tumbling, and their loads had to be rearranged. I began to think that we should not reach the top that day, but soon after we left the soft snow behind. There were a few crevasses near the summit (15,950 feet), which had to be avoided. There were glorious views all the way up the glacier of icy peaks on either hand. When we arrived at the top and looked down the other side it was hard to believe that it could be possible for horses to descend, and I questioned the guide to make sure we had not come up the wrong glacier. The slope of the ice, as far as we could see, was not great, though very much crevassed, but, beyond, the sides of the valley were so extremely steep that it certainly would be no child's play going after ibex on that ground.

We could not see the actual place we had to descend, but I never saw a more unpromising look-out. One of the Tajiks and I went in front sounding with our alpenstocks through the snow for crevasses, which were very numerous. At last we came to a place where we were compelled to leave the ice, and crossed over a small moraine on to another small glacier. It was easy enough getting on, but when at length this piece of ice also became impassible, we had great difficulty in getting off it; the ice had melted away from the rocks. There was a gap of several feet, and worse than that the ice was in most places undermined, and was only a thin slab. We had to find a place where there was only a few feet of space between the ice and the bottom, and fill it up with rocks.

There was a second small moraine now between us and the main glacier, and our horses got on a steep piece of ice covered with snow, down which we were compelled to go. One of the horses behind fell and, in rolling down the slope, knocked the horses below him off their legs, like a row of nine pins, and down four or five of them went rolling head over heels. The first one lodged in a crevasse, filling it up, and the

others went over him, down on to a snow-bank. The yak was the only animal that came well out of the business; he declined either to fall or be knocked over, but slowly and surely descended with his load intact. For this kind of work they beat ponies altogether. All the other animals had to be unloaded, and we packed on our backs their loads. Then we got all hands to work to get the pony out of his dangerous situation. We first cut foot-holes in the ice for those who had to stand on the upper side of the cleft, for a slip would have been serious. We nearly gave it up once as hopeless, but with the aid of tent poles as levers we at last got him out, and collecting all the odds and ends that had been scattered about on the snow, we made a fresh start.

The crevasses were mostly covered with a thin coating of icy snow, which made slow progress imperative. One horse broke loose and trotted away, till it found itself on a tongue of ice between two enormous crevasses. There was only just room for it to turn, and, as it carried our bedding, we watched the movements of the beast with considerable interest, but a man cleverly piloted it out of danger. When we got off the ice we had a long and extremely steep descent down the moraine, and by the time we reached the bottom of the valley, 11,050 feet, it was getting late, and both man and beast were glad of a rest. Next day, on arriving at the village, the head man presented us with the most attenuated little lamb we had ever seen. The houses were wretched, and the whole population seemed most miserably poor. They have all jet black hair, with rather an effeminate expression, but very wild-looking eyes. They wear their hair very long; it is often dressed in two plaits and fastened to the back of the hat, which is like a pork-pie with a thick roll round the bottom.

The news of our arrival had spread far and wide, and we received a letter from the governor welcoming us, and sending a basket of apricots and grapes. Our horses' feet were getting in a bad state after crossing the Darkot. I don't think there were six shoes left on the forty-eight feet of our twelve horses, and we found that our caravan bashi had substituted a bag of worn-out nails which he had for the new ones, and we could only shoe very few of our horses, and those only in front, consequently the poor beasts, as time went on, got very foot-sore as the roads were always stony. Every village here has its stone fort, inside which are generally a number of houses, and room for their flocks, showing the insecurity of the country in the past.

At one village the head man insisted on putting a watch round our camp, saying there were some bad characters about. Probably he knew there were rupees about, and he wanted to earn some. We paid a visit to the Governor of Yasin. He came out to meet us, and led me by the hand into his tower. We gave him some presents and a sheepskin coat. The old reprobate said he was obliged for the presents, but he would like some money too. I told Joseph to talk civilly to him, but we paid

a hurried adieu; for we felt if we stayed longer we did not know what fresh demand might be sprung upon us, so we fled. The apricot trees are the feature in Yasin; it was just the season for the fruit, and they were lying rotting upon the ground by the thousand, the little irrigation streams were choked with them, so that we had a grand feast. The weather was getting very warm, and we felt the change from the Pamir. We tried very hard to induce the Tajiks from Wakhan to come with us to Gilgit. They were such handy men at packing the horses, but they were afraid, and we were reduced to having Yasins, and a more lazy, worthless set I have never had the luck to come across. We had two men for each horse, but only two or three out of the whole lot were of any use whatever.

One of the horses as nearly as possible came to an untimely end; his pack caught against a projecting rock, he was sent on to his knees, his life hung in the balance, but he just, and only just, managed to recover himself. One night we camped by a river across which there was a Jula or rope bridge, over which we had to go in the morning. These bridges are formed by three ropes made of willow twigs; you walk on one, and the other two you hold on by your hands; it starts high above the water from the rocks, and sags down in the middle. Mrs. Littledale had always announced that she was ready to go anywhere or do anything except cross a rope bridge, and how I was to get her over in the morning I did not know. We selected a strong man, and she got on his back, and they started off across the bridge. I had previously arranged my camera to photograph her in the act of crossing. She had got one-third of the way across and I climbed down to pull the shutter thinking all was right, but she had opened her eyes, and the height, the rushing water underneath, and the swaying of the bridge had frightened her, and she was telling them to take her back. The interpreter unfortunately was not there, but I shouted to them in Hindustani, in Russian, and in Kirghiz, to go on quickly and take no notice, but they did not understand me, and thought I was telling them to return, and back they came. Mrs. Littledale said she was ready to try again if we would tie her on, so that if she fainted she would not fall, but it could not be arranged.

We had to think what was to be done. The men said if I would go away out of hearing they would carry her across whether she liked it or not. Women are little thought of in those parts. I suggested a raft; they said at first it was too dangerous, but, since there was no other course, we tied inflated sheep-skins to a camp bed, and sent it on a trial trip with five men swimming alongside, each man having his own skin. It was so buoyant that Mrs. Littledale said she was willing to cross in it. They made her lie down, tied her fast and started. The river flowed over great boulders, and though the raft was often lost sight of in the spray, it got across safely, having been taken by the current a quarter of a mile down stream. We took some dry things over the bridge for

Mrs. Littledale, who had been lying half under water when the raft was stationary, and when she arrived on the other side a more draggled specimen of humanity was never seen. Our horses had to swim across and three or four of them were nearly drowned.

We received a letter from Ali Merdan Shah, a Wakhan refugee, welcoming us to the country, and offering to be of service. Our poor horses' feet were getting in a dreadful state, the roads were so stony, and their shoes were almost entirely gone. We kept Mrs. Littledale's pony shod, but all the rest had to limp along as best they could. At one village a man said he could make shoes if we would give the iron. We had two iron bars on which they rested the pots over the fire, and I also gave some tent pins, and the man made a few shoes and nails, which we put on the lamest of the horses. The men are very poor specimens, and we made very little progress, the road being so bad that we had to unpack the horses and carry the baggage over difficult places twenty times a day. The heat in the middle of the day was very trying, and our Kirghiz dog felt it very much. He used to lie down full length in every stream.

The head man of Gakuch came to meet us. He said there was a short way by the river if we chose to walk, but the ponies must go over the mountain. It was a rough scramble over rocks and round corners on logs jambed into crevasses of the rocks, and then down a perpendicular crack in the rock by ladders formed of single poles with notches cut for steps. One man went in front to hold Mrs. Littledale's feet in the notches, while another held on to her dress above. The dog was held by his tail, and passed down from one man to another, and he evinced great joy when he found himself safe at the bottom. It was bad travelling, but we saved a long round, as the horses did not come for several hours afterwards.

I addressed a letter asking for horse-shoes to "the Englishman in Gilgit" on the chance of there being one there, and on the following day got a letter from Mr. Manners Smith, acting in the absence of Col. Durand as political agent, asking us to stay with him on our arrival at Gilgit. Our letters had crossed on the road. At Gakuch we camped under apricot trees, which were a perfect marvel; nobody seemed to pay the least attention to the thousands upon thousands of the fruit that lay rotting upon the ground. The apricots were only equalled in number by the flies; the roof of our tent inside was covered with them as thick as they could find room, and the noise was like a distant waterfall. We kept under our mosquito curtains, otherwise it would have been impossible to remain in the tent. We passed at a place called Cher, a very long and high rope bridge, which 12 years ago broke, and 15 men who were on it were all drowned. We saw the natives come down the river on skins, in which they put their clothes and then inflated them with air; they said you could go down to Gilgit that way,

but you had to leave the river several times, as the rocks were dangerous. I should liked to have gone down that way, and have avoided these tiresome hills.

Mr. Manners Smith kindly sent his own syce with a supply of shoes, and he met us and shod our horses all round; poor beasts! they had got very footsore. While the horses were being shod, I watched the natives play a game; they stood on one leg and held the other up with one hand, and with the other hand they wrestled and tried to throw their adversary. They might catch hold apparently anyhow or anywhere; one little imp watched his opportunity, and while two men were struggling hard sent them both sprawling on their backs into an irrigation channel. We had not been able to get any grass for our ponies, and could only give them chopped straw and a little grain. To give our horses a rest we got coolies to carry our baggage, they went a shorter way; the bearer told us that one package had fallen into the river, and was swept away in a moment. It was an anxious time till we knew which, but by the greatest good fortune it contained nothing of any importance.

On the 7th August we came round a corner and saw the town of Gilgit ahead of us; a green patch among the brown-looking mountain. We went through narrow lanes, the trees loaded with peaches not quite ripe, and the branches festooned with vines, the grapes of which "had not arrived," according to Joseph the interpreter. We were most hospitably entertained at the Agency by Mr. Manners Smith. We disposed of our baggage ponies in Gilgit, and also left our dog, who would never have stood the heat of the plains in India. Ali Murdan Shah sent us a present of two hunting dogs, and some young snow leopards to Mr. Manners Smith. It would have been a great triumph if we could have brought the leopards to England alive. After spending a few days shooting, we went down to the Indus to cross by the ferry to Boonji, which took us all day as the raft had to be towed up stream again after every crossing. In crossing this ferry three days before they had overloaded the boat and seventeen men were drowned, and Dr. Robertson, who was going on a medical mission, lost all his baggage. The Shikari who told us about it looked astonished when I said "seventeen poor men," and remarked "there are lots more coolies, but the Sahib's baggage has gone."

A white face was supposed to be all powerful, but at Damot and Boonji Mrs. Littledale established a great reputation of another kind; a sick man had come to her to be healed, and she thinking that certain widely advertised pills would please the man, and at the same time could do him no possible harm, gave him a couple; the effect was marvellous, and the fame of the cure spread through the country; our tent was besieged by poor creatures for whom of course we could do nothing.

On leaving the Indus the track leads straight up the side of a mountain 6000 feet without a drop of water to be had. We saw the

bodies of eight dead ponies, and smelt several more, killed by the very severe pull up the hill. At Astor we met several old acquaintances among the natives who remembered us 12 years before. Our old Shikari met us here, and it was quite like old times seeing him again. He made all the arrangement for coolies, &c. We had a visit from a Kashmir official who had been with Colonel Lockhart in Badakshan; he appeared very surprised when we said we had passed through undisguised, for he said there were (as Joseph expressed it) "plenty of wrong people and thief man there."

We reached Srinagur on the 4th September. We sent Iris, our Kirghiz, to Peshawur with letters to some traders in case he wished to return home through Afghanistan. He had done so well that we paid him handsomely and were sorry to part with him. We were much amused at hearing that one man had stated that he did not leave Kashmir until he had seen the lady who walked from Europe. We sold our remaining ponies, and after ten days' stay, left Srinagur for Simla, where Mrs. Littledale and I were most hospitably welcomed. We felt in capital spirits at having successfully accomplished what we had attempted. Our clothes were in a very dilapidated condition, but we had neither of us had a day's illness since we left home.

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The foregoing paper, was read to the meeting by Mr. Douglas Freshfield, Secretary, who prefaced it with the following introductory remarks:—

Time will compel me to abbreviate the paper it is my duty to lay before you to-night. It will be printed in full in the 'Proceedings,' and there you will be able to read Mr. Littledale's complete narrative, showing not only how he crossed, but how he reached the Pamir.

To-night he and you must excuse me if I substitute for several pages of very interesting detail a brief introductory statement such as the occasion seems to call for. I propose as shortly as possible to answer these three questions:—What is the Pamir? Why did Mr. and Mrs. Littledale cross it? How came it that they crossed it from north to south?

On the large map of Asia we note the spot, where the three great empires that divide Further Asia meet. There is the Pamir, a name introduced, perhaps, into English poetry in the noble description in which Matthew Arnold, at the end of his 'Sohrab and Rustum,' showed how the imaginative faculty might be linked with physical geography—

"Oxus forgetting the bright strength he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere"—

a name made more familiar lately by the special correspondents who emulate and even excel the poets in their application of that faculty!

This Pamir or Pamirs—for Pamir is a generic term; the different

strips of tableland are distinguished by separate names—is a vast table land averaging 12,000 feet in height and 280 miles in length by 120 to 150 miles in breadth, ringed by a rough horseshoe of mountain ranges, and intersected by snowy ridges and shallow trenches that deepen westwards, where the streams of the Oxus descend towards Bokhara. The numerous photographs taken by Mr. Littledale exhibit a characteristic type of landscape:—tent-shaped, glacier-coated mountains divided by broad easy gaps; bare heights naked of verdure and shorn of forests by the bitter winds and frosts; desolate lakes; a region where for the most part there is neither fuel nor fodder; an Engadine of Asia, with nine months winter and three months cold weather; the home of the wild sheep, the summer haunt of a few wandering shepherds; nomads' land if not no man's land. Long ago Marco Polo described it well. That is the scene of Mr. and Mrs. Littledale's adventures; that is the region where the emissaries of three nations are now setting up rival claims.

“The half-way house to heaven” is a Chinese appellation for the Pamirs. “*Cœlum ipsum petimus stultitiâ*” our and the Russian soldiers and diplomats may now almost say of one another; for the tales of summer pastures of extraordinary richness told to Marco Polo and repeated to Mr. Littledale refer, so far as they are true at all, only to isolated oases, and the fertile tracts described at the end of Mr. Littledale's paper lie in valleys outside the Pamir region. The country in question cannot feed the caravans that cross it; far less could it sustain the baggage animals of an army on the march.

No one in his senses could consider that in itself the Pamir is a desirable acquisition. Any value it may have is in relation to adjoining lands. From the north there is comparatively easy access to it from Russian Turkistan. From the east the Chinese and their subjects climb up the long ascent from the Khanates, and pass through gaps in the encircling horseshoe of mountains on to the portions of the tableland they claim. From the south-east M. Grombchevsky found a pass a waggon might cross into Hunza. From the south a route, which seems from Mr. Littledale's experience to be anything but a military route, leads over glacier passes, and through well-nigh impassable gorges into Yasin and Gilgit, and so to Kashmir. To the south-west easier routes, little known or little described as yet, lead into the wild regions of Kaffiristan and Afghanistan.

We do not here deal with politics, but we do deal with the geographical and cartographical facts on a knowledge of which politics and policy ought to be—but unfortunately for our country have not always been—based. Certain portions of the Pamir have been more or less closely attached to Afghanistan. The Amir now lays claim to Wakhan, Shignan, and Roshan, tracts stretching along the sources of the Oxus. It is obvious that England may claim an interest in these, but probably,

owing to the deficiencies in exact knowledge of the geographers of Cabul, we have not as yet publicly defined our claims.

Russian maps show Bokhara as extending to the great snowy range that descends at Tash-Kurgan, on the Lower Murghab, to the Oxus, but no further; and it is in respect of Bokhara alone that Russia seems to have any plausible title in these regions. For the assumption, that whatever is nobody else's is hers, that she is the presumptive owner of all unannexed districts, the "picker-up" of all "unconsidered trifles" in Asia, can hardly be put forward as a serious argument by statesmen in the study, although it may be acted on occasionally by energetic officers in the field.

The Chinese Government, through its officers at Yarkand, raised its flag in 1883 in the district of Sarikol. At many places on the Pamirs Mr. Littledale met with Chinese subjects. The Chino-Afghan frontier was, he found, at Burzula Jai. His paper was in print before the events of last summer, and his observations were made, therefore, without any eye to subsequent events. It would appear to the impartial observer that whatever part of the Pamirs south of the Murghab is not Afghan has been *de facto* for some time Chinese.

The accidental presence of Russian official travellers, of course, is no evidence of title, the extent of M. Grombchevsky's travels, indicated on the map by a black line, reduces such an argument *ad absurdum*.

With this preliminary remark, I may point out the spots, the Alichur Pamir and Bozai Gumbaz, where Captain Younghusband encountered Russian officers last summer.

These are some of the facts as to the present condition of the Pamir. We may confidently trust that the courtesy hitherto shown on both sides will be continued, and that the wisdom of well-informed diplomatists may settle a matter, the importance of which may easily be exaggerated, so as to satisfy the claims of our ally the Amir without involving England in a dangerous extension of valueless territory.

I proceed to answer my further questions. Why, undeterred by the experiences of which that entertaining traveller and Anglophobe, M. Bonvalot, had lately given so alarming a picture, should an Englishman and his wife cross this desert? Mr. and Mrs. Littledale are eager in the pursuit of rare game. They were old travellers; they had sojourned in the forest wildernesses of the Western Caucasus; they had on a previous occasion penetrated Central Asia. A pair of horns were to them what a bit of rock from a maiden peak is to others.

And lastly, why did Mr. and Mrs. Littledale go from north to south? Why did they, being English, make Russian territory their starting point? Thereby hangs a tale.—Because our Anglo-Indian Government prohibits all independent travel in its trans-frontier lands. Something may be said for this course, but it does not stop there. It also gags its own official explorers. It carries yearly farther and farther the policy



deprecatd by Sir H. Rawlinson in this Hall, when he said, "Russia deserves all honour for her services to geographical science in Asia. I only wish I could say as much for ourselves as regards our own frontiers."

No one, least of all the Council of this Society, would ask for the publication of any tactical information our military authorities desired to withhold. But the military authorities go along with us in asking for an intelligent censorship in place of a wholesale system of suppression of the mass of knowledge, general and scientific, acquired by the servants of the State in our frontier and trans-frontier lands. We believe, and the Council have represented to H.M. Government, that the present practice is not in accordance with the existing official rules, that it was intended and has been ordered that expurgated copies of all official reports of public interest should be given to the public. They hope that the departments concerned will before long be instructed to give practical effect henceforth to any such instructions that may exist, and thus that the forward march of English power may once more, in Asia as elsewhere, be accompanied by a general advance of scientific knowledge.

Meantime we have to-night to be glad that the Pamir has several sides, and to acknowledge our debt for the kindness and courtesy shown by the Russian Government and its officers, and more particularly by Colonel Deubner, the Commandant at Osh, without whose aid Mr. and Mrs. Littledale could hardly have effected the journey the story of which I shall proceed to read.

The following discussion ensued :—

Mr. H. СЕВЕРОВ (Hon. Secretary R.G.S.): It may interest the meeting to know that the birds of the Pamir district have been collected and studied by the celebrated Russian traveller Severtsof. The last time I was in St. Petersburg, when I had to leave it rather hurriedly in consequence of the assassination of the Czar, and went on to Moscow, I spent a week with this savant, turning over the magnificent collections he had brought from Turkistan and from the Pamir. He afterwards wrote a paper upon "The Birds of the Pamir," which was published, with a considerable amount of interesting geographical information, in the ornithological publication known to many of you here as 'The Ibis,' published in London. Among his remarks about this country, the Pamir, he describes it as being four-fifths composed of huge mountain ranges, with comparatively no valleys between, the lowest valley being twice the height of the Engadine, or 6000 feet above the sea, and the ridges many of them rising 1000 feet higher than Mount Blanc. On the northern slopes, he says, the perpetual snow begins at 15,000 feet, and on the southern slope at 18,500. The climate, as you have heard described in Mr. Littledale's excellent paper, he mentions as being ultra-arctic, the last half of July is the only time of the year in which the thermometer does not go down to freezing-point. He says that the waters freeze in October, and the rivers do not thaw until the end of April, nor the lakes until the end of May; and he also describes the climate as being very windy. Nevertheless he was successful in obtaining 120 different species of birds. About half

these species are those common to the Palaearctic region, and whose range extends, either in summer or in winter, from the British Islands as far as Japan. Of these some breed on the Pamir, but a considerable number of them only pass through, on migration. There are scarcely any birds peculiar to the Pamir, because, of course, a great many of them cannot live there in the winter; but there were two very interesting birds which he obtained—the sand partridge, a large partridge as big as a small turkey, and the sand grouse, not the one which has visited us here during the last half century in considerable numbers, but a very nearly allied species, the Thibetan. He gives in his paper a number of interesting particulars which it may interest you to read, but which I will not detain you any longer by mentioning this evening.

Sir PETER LUMSDEN: I do not know, Sir, that I can add anything to what has been already so carefully described by Mr. Littledale, or to the paper that has been referred to by Mr. Seebohm. It is a great satisfaction to me to see a map of the Pamir, such as the one hanging on the wall. More than thirty years ago I had to draw up a plan of the Pamir from information derived from a guide that went with Sir Douglas Forsyth to Yarkand. Of course that map was a very different thing from the map now before us. I think the Geographical Society extremely fortunate this evening in having had a paper from such a high authority as the author, and every bit of information we can get on this country adds a great deal to our knowledge of what is at present one of the most interesting parts of Asia.

General R. STRACHEY: The description given by Mr. Littledale of his journey across this great mountain region, shows, what really we have known for some considerable time past, that this Pamir region is nothing more than the extension of the Highlands which form one of the peculiarities of the great region of Tibet. The Pamir, in fact, is the extreme west end of the Tibetan tableland, as we call it, in reality it is as rugged a mass of mountains as well could be conceived. The description Mr. Seebohm has given from the Russian naturalist who visited the Pamir applies in reality to the whole region from the westward boundary of the map before you, eastward to the boundary of China. Tibet is characterised by its huge mountain ranges with narrow valleys, having comparatively flat bottoms with small streams in them and lakes, such as are described by Mr. Littledale, impregnated with what he describes as alkali, but which is in reality closely allied to Epsom salts, and a great many of these large lakes are in reality huge reservoirs of Epsom salts or glauber salts. The whole characteristics, both of the vegetable and animal life on the Pamir, are quite similar to those of the parts of Tibet that I myself have seen, and the regions of Tibet further eastward which other travellers have gone through.

It is a wonderful thing that rational people should talk about a region of this sort as something to be coveted and something even possibly to be fought over, and one might really almost as rationally talk of fighting for the possession of, shall I say, a square mile of the Moon, or of Sirius. This would be just as wise, really just as rational, as possibly you will be able to judge for yourselves from Mr. Littledale's account of his journey. With a very small number of horses—ten, twelve, or fourteen—gradually dwindling away as they perished, obliged to carry his food with him, nothing in the shape of fodder available, having to carry fuel to cook their dinners. The possibility, of anything like military operations being carried on over a country of that sort is so perfectly ridiculous, that to my mind it is astounding that it should appear to be seriously discussed. The way in which the question of the occupation of this region, either by Russia, Afghanistan, China, or Britain, occupies some people's minds, I can only regard as an illustration of the folly of humanity.

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Dr. LEITNER:—I wish to state that Col. Grombchevsky's account would answer a question put by Mr. Littledale, an account which will shortly be published in the 'Asiatic Quarterly Review,' describing his visit to the Pamir late in July and at the beginning of August, and which gave him a somewhat more favourable picture of the Pamirs or Pamir than that represented by the gentlemen who have spoken to-night. What he says in his account is this:—"The Pamir is far from being a wilderness. It contains a permanent population, residing in it both summer and winter. . . . The population is increasing to a marked extent. . . . Slavery in the Pamir is flourishing; moreover, the principal contingents of slaves are obtained from Chatrar, Yasin, and Kanjut, Khanates under the protectorate of England. . . . On descending into Pamir we found ourselves between the cordons of the Chinese and Afghan armies. . . . The population of Shignan, numbering 2000 families, had fled to Pamir hoping to find a refuge in the Russian provinces from 'the untold atrocities which the Afghans were committing in the conquered provinces of Shignan, &c.' . . . I term the whole of the table-land 'Pamir,' in view of the resemblance of the valleys to each other."

It is just as correct to talk of Pamir in the singular as it is of Tibet in a general sort of way. We certainly have Little Tibet, Great Tibet, South Tibet, but do not say Tibets, as we might; and geographically speaking I daresay the Pamir represents a fact in the construction of this earth. It would be well to know what Pamir means. In the expedition led by Sir D. Forsyth, in which he was seconded by Col. Trotter and others, they agreed that Pamir meant "desert"; in other words, if you come from the Khokand side, it is "the desert" that way; if from the Afghan side, if indeed there is an Afghan side, there is a desert that way. Each side is approached through a particular desert, and would get the name "Pamir." But in reality it does not mean desert at all; it means "plateau." It is a Turki (Yarkandi) word, and the Kirghis also call it Pamir. If you find a name predominant all over a certain region, it points to its occupation by a certain tribe; thus, if you see on the one hand words like Sarhad, Murghab, you think of a Persian population; when you find words, on the other, like Yashil Kul, "green lake," Sari Kul, "yellow lake," you know the Kirghis have used it either temporarily or permanently for pasturage. Now Mr. Littledale's paper is most interesting, but if he had gone a month or so later he would have had more success as a sportsman, because nothing can exceed the abundance of game to be found in the direction, say, of the Taghdumbash Pamir; and the existence of the horns of dead *Ovis poli*, overtaken by the severity of the climate, shows at any rate that there were living ones. In the Arctic regions you have abundance of life, both fish and animal, and this to a certain degree is repeated on the Pamir, where there is an abundance of animal life to attract a sportsman and ornithologist. Now I have with me the map of Col. Grombchevsky, which is in one important respect not so correct as that of Mr. Littledale, because on his map, which is in its way invaluable, we find Hunza on the wrong side of the river, where Nagar ought to be, and the rest of the country is called Kanjut, of whose people Mr. Littledale professed to have had some little dread; certainly, if he had gone into the country he would have found a most remarkable and interesting race, and felt, if he is a linguist, that there indeed was, if not the cradle of the human race, at any rate, the cradle of human thought expressed in language; however ferocious the Hunzas may be, they are, like other people, amenable to reason, and I have not the least doubt that Mr. Littledale's prudence, which he so well showed, would have enabled him to overcome any difficulties with them.

I was sorry to find from Mr. Littledale's account that the Wakhis and Yasinis have so fallen off in physique, as they are a splendid race, and I will read to you what Col. Grombchevsky says about the Darwáz Tá'yiks, who resemble them. "They

are pure Aryans, and of exceptional beauty. The women are especially lovely, with their pale delicate faces, remarkably regular features, and wonderful eyes.”

To show that the people are not such very great barbarians, I have some articles of their own manufacture to show you (textiles, horn-carving, &c.). As a result of all this we can see that, just as it is precipitate to allege that the Pamirs are always uninhabited or uninhabitable, so it is equally precipitate, as General Strachey says, to say this is the road to India. Above all would it be a mistake to take away the natural boundaries which the situation of the Pamirs has given, by interference with the autonomy of the native rulers around them, both our peace and that of Russia being dependent on the strengthening of that autonomy. The letters I have received, and which I have with me, from Nagyr and Yasin, point out that for the maintenance of pleasant relations between Russian and our sportsmen on the Pamirs, nothing is needed for the preservation of peace—no demarcation commission, no diplomacy, and certainly no army.

The climate of the Pamirs is variable, from more than tropical heat in the sun to arctic cold in the shade, and, in consequence, is alike provocative and destructive of life. Dr. G. Capus, who crossed them from north to south, exactly as Mr. Littledale has done, but several months in the year before him, says, in his ‘*Observations Météorologiques sur le Pamir*,’ which he sent to the last Oriental Congress, “The first general fact is the inconstancy of severe cold. The nights are generally coldest just before sunrise. . . . We found an extreme amplitude of 61° between the absolute minimum and maximum, and of 41° between the minimum and the maximum in the shade during the same day. . . . The thermometer rises and falls rapidly with the height of the sun. . . . Great cold is less frequent and persistent than was believed to be the case at the period of the year dealt with (March 13 to April 19), and is compensated by daily intervals of elevation of temperature, which permit animal life, represented by a fairly large number of species, and including man, to keep up throughout the winter, under endurable conditions.” Yet “the water-streak of snow which has melted in contact with a dark object freezes immediately when put into the shadow of the very same object.” The solution of political difficulties in Central Asia is not in a practically impossible, and certainly unobtainable, demarcation of the Pamirs, but in the strengthening of the autonomy of the most interesting races that inhabit the series of Circassias that already guard the safety alike of British, Chinese, and of Russian dominion or spheres of influence in Central Asia, &c.

The PRESIDENT said: I think it only remains for me to say that we are all extremely grateful to Mr. Littledale for having brought the Pamir from the region of poetry down to the region of reality. It appears to be an extremely horrible country; if its name does not mean desert it certainly ought to do so, and I think that the moral which was drawn so well by General Strachey, from all we have heard this evening, commanded the general approval of all who listened to it. It is extremely agreeable to me, knowing that there are present two gentlemen from the Russian Embassy, to acknowledge—and it is by no means the first time that a President of the Geographical Society has had to acknowledge—the extreme courtesy shown by the Russian Government to an English traveller.

I am persuaded that you will direct me to tender our most sincere thanks to Mr. Littledale and to Mrs. Littledale, and that you will include in your vote of thanks our Honorary Secretary, Mr. Freshfield, who introduced Mr. Littledale’s paper with such exceedingly apt remarks.

Mr. LITLEDALE returned thanks for himself and Mrs. Littleale, and the meeting adjourned.



