

Kafirs and Glaciers

Travels in Chitral

By R.C. F. Schomberg



BAGHASHAI

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R. C. F. SCHOMBERG



MARTIN HOPKINSON LIMITED
30 GERRARD STREET LONDON W.1.

1938

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INTRODUCTION

RATHER over forty years ago, Chitral was a name well known throughout the British Empire, and the story of its siege and of the subsequent operations that led to its relief aroused great interest, for all happened at a time of profound peace.

Since then the state of Chitral has disappeared from public view, and happily nothing has occurred to disturb the serenity which has been its lot. The principality lies in the North West Frontier Province of India and is politically under the care of its Governor; it does not, owing to its peculiar situation, come under the immediate control of the Government of India.

The state consists of a large valley, some two hundred miles from north to south. Its situation is remarkable. At its head the boundary is close to Soviet Russia-in-Asia and to Chinese Turkestan where the Pamir-like formation of its upper valleys proves its claim to kinship with Central Asiatic conditions. A low and easy ridge divides Chitral from the Oxus, and the caravans of Kashgaria and Badakhshan find their way through the state to railhead in India. The south of Chitral abuts on the Peshawar plain, and the peaceful conditions of the north are exchanged for the alarms and sallies of the Pathan borderland.

In a country such as this the varieties of climate and scenery are many, and I have tried to give some idea of the singular wealth of beauty to be found in the valley.

Geographically, Chitral has but a doubtful claim to inclusion in the Himalayan system, but that is a geographical nicety. What is more to the point is that northern Chitral possesses magnificent peaks and glaciers whilst the southern part of the country holds glens and forests often of great beauty and richness, abounding in flowers and pastures, with waterfalls and rock scenery that cannot be equalled in India. The fauna, too, should be worth attention, but the famous shooting grounds of forty years ago are now but a memory. The animals of Chitral are being extensively and steadily exterminated; the markhor and ibex will in a few years' time be as mythical as the unicorn or extinct as the quagga.

The people of Chitral are, on the whole, a mixed, indeed a mongrel, collection. The country lends itself to immigration, and the proof of its suitability is the variety of the communities that have established themselves in it.

The Chitrali proper, if indeed a proper Chitrali exists, has few of the virtues but all the defects of other hill-men. I have seen no reason for whitewashing him. I have described him as I found him. I know that he has admirers, but I think his partisans would be wiser to cure his faults than to advertise his virtues. And I am in this respect an optimist. I finished my journey in 1935, and the late Mehtar of Chitral, Shuja-ul-mulk, died on 13th October 1936. He was perhaps unable to shake off the environment of his early boyhood, for though only fifteen years old when he was placed on the blood-stained throne of his ancestors, in those wild

regions a boy is a man at that age. Intrigue and murder were the commonplaces of the world into which he was born, and Shuja-ul-mulk could never quite free himself from their influence. His son and successor, Captain Nasr-ul-mulk, is a man of education and experience. He has served in a fine Frontier Force regiment, has been trained in civil administration in the Frontier Province, is well read in English and Persian, and is a remarkably good historian. His knowledge of Eastern politics is exceptional. Besides this, he plays a first-rate game of polo, which counts in Chitral for more than all the book learning in the world. He is active, generous, and sympathetic. I know His Highness well, and I feel that in him lies the one and only hope for the Chitrali. If anything can be done for these people, then the new Mehtar is the only one who can do it. No one expects him to work miracles, or in the span of a human life to sweep away the rubbish of centuries. But the new ruler will give his people hope.

In the past there has been much oppression, intolerance, and confiscation of land, and the Mehtar will do all he can to lift these burdens from the people; for conditions of life in Chitral compare very unfavourably with those in Kashmir, or in the Gilgit Agency. Of course, this very unsatisfactory state of things may be due to inherent defects in the Chitrali character, but if there are other influences at work, they will now be eradicated. Telephones and motor roads have brought no happiness to the country. If His Highness be spared, then in ten years' time I am confident that those who know the country now will find that the people are

happier, their simple wants are filled, that at least they can call their souls their own, and that the bogey of confiscation and of daily petty tyranny has gone for ever.

His Highness Nasr-ul-mulk has the heartiest good wishes of all who know him and his subjects, for his task is not an easy one.

The great interest of Chitral for the outside world is the Black Kafir or Kalash race. I have, so far, been unable to find any serious account of the habits and customs of this strange and attractive people. I have written about their religious practices and customs as I saw them. I stumbled on their ceremonies and shrines, and have made no effort to associate them with those of other religions or with the customs of other races. There are, of course, a number of brief references, but if any elaborate account exists it has escaped me. I hope that my narrative will interest readers, especially those who can help these Kafirs to preserve the customs and creed of their ancestors, and save them from the consequences of the proselytising that I have reason to believe now exists. It is not fair that these decent harmless folk should not be allowed to live as they always have done.

The Kati or Red Kafirs, once the fellow-heathens, neighbours but fierce enemies of the Kalash, have vanished from the face of the earth. One old man and two old women were, at the time of my visit, the sole professors of their age-long faith; the rest were converted to Islam. Happily, Sir George Robertson and Professor Georg Morgenstierne have written accounts



KALASH GIRLS

of these fierce pagans, so that at least some record exists.

I received, as I am always fortunate in receiving (far beyond my merits), much kindness from the various personages and officials concerned and, as special leave for travel in Chitral is necessary, and very properly so, I desire to record my thanks. H.E. Lt.-Col. Sir R. E. G. Griffith, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., the Governor of the North West Frontier Province, Mr A. J. Hopkinson, I.C.S., the Chief Secretary, and Captain Alexander Napier, the Assistant Political Agent in Chitral, gave me every help, and much good advice.

To the garrison in Chitral, especially to Major St. G. Adams, M.C., to Captain Geoffrey Vaughan and to Captain R. J. Lawder, both of the Chitral Scouts, and to Captain Pope, R.I.A.S.C., I owe much hospitality and great thanks for their constant help. I have had much help also from Brigadier C. G. Lewis, O.B.E., Surveyor-General of India, as well as from Colonel C. M. Thompson and Colonel E. A. Glennie, both of the Survey of India, and from the Staff at Dehra Dun.

Finally, H.H. Sir Shuja-ul-mulk, K.C.I.E., the late Mehtar of Chitral and a most hospitable ruler, showed me courtesies and thoughtfulness that I often found embarrassing, so constant were they. He gave me every facility to visit his state and, whenever I needed help, it was forthcoming. To him, and to his sons, particularly Captain Shahzada Nasr-ul-mulk, now H.H. the Mehtar, I wish to record my gratitude and indebtedness.

My personal servants consisted of Daulat Shah, a Hunza man, who thus completed his tenth year of

service with me and to whose resourcefulness, energy, wit, and help I have made references in this book. It is not often, whether in the East or the West, that an efficient man who will act on his own initiative can be found. My experience is that Hunza is a favourable recruiting ground, and there is a certain detachment in the Hunza character as well as a blithe contempt of others, and a pride of race and country, which make an admirable combination. The permanent shortage of food in Hunza makes its people ready for service and they do not suffer from nostalgia as do so many other races. Indeed, I sometimes think that they do not feel their home ties strongly enough.

Besides Daulat I had Muhib Ali, who was a good cook but a difficult character. One of his peculiarities was an insatiable appetite, amazing to the lustiest trencherman. It was so remarkable that I thought Muhib was entertaining strangers unawares, but I was assured that he was naturally a great eater. He was a small man, and we all wondered where the huge masses of food were stowed away.

There was also Abdulla Rathar alias Subhana, a long-suffering Kashmiri who had been dragged at my chariot wheels for many seasons. He was willing and hard-working and never took the slightest interest in his surroundings. I often tried to break down his detachment, but I never succeeded. I had also another Hunza youth, Inayat Ullah, a very silent child, who only ate, worked and slept. Subhana was loud in his praises, and well he might be, for Inayat always lit the fire—which was not his duty—early in the morning.

Inayat had a short violet coat of his own, and a high cap, like a brimless top-hat, a much admired form of head-dress. His most serviceable garments were supplied by me. I never discovered why he had left his country to drift about India. We had, fortunately, grabbed him in time, ere worse befell him.

R. C. F. S.

CHAPTER I

'Do not trust a bright sky or a laughing woman.'

Chitrali Proverb

THERE is no better day on which to begin a journey than the 23rd April, the feast of St George, who was a man of parts, energetic and vigorous with plenty of enterprise. We had intended to start on that day for Chitral, but we had to put off our departure till the next day, and to set out under less favourable auspices.

We had been staying at Peshawar with Mr J. S. Thomson, C.I.E., I.C.S., the Revenue Commissioner, and I cannot conceive a better base or a kinder host. There we had made those endless preparations which any enterprise in India always demands. Daulat spent his time and my money delving into the bazaar for all things from cowrie-shells and pantaloons to golden syrup and aniline dye. At the last moment, my host's niece, Miss Anne Wilson, thrust on me two cakes and three pots of jam. The numerous and hard-working servants of the house collected, received their vails, and bowed us out as we left in an efficient but vulgar-looking lorry painted a red as brilliant as the roses in the garden.

We left the city in perfect weather along the level cultivated plain. The roads were blocked with tongas overloaded with fat and honest Pathans, all busy on their unlawful occasions. We crossed rivers in spate from heavy rain and melting snow, and finally ground up to the Malakand Pass and fort, thus crossing the

first of the barriers that protect Chitral from the mere plains-dweller. I saw Captain A. Napier, the Political Officer in Chitral, who gave me advice and lunch, and was helpful in every way.

We then went on through the no-man's-land of Dir, a description which is apposite if unpopular. In the spring it was a pleasant enough country to look at, but at no time a very agreeable place to live in. The road was narrow and precarious, but by nightfall we reached the fort at Dir, the capital, and slept the night safe and sound. There was a latticed shrine at Dir, a beautiful thing in itself with clumps of great white iris, but even those could not atone for the monstrous corrugated roof that was rammed down like some huge extinguisher on the delicate carved woodwork.

The town of Dir ought to have been striking in appearance. Hovels ran picturesquely enough up the hillside, and in front were the snows and pine forests. The scene was spoilt, however, by the hideous iron roof of the Nawab's fort. It was a fine fort, new, large, and strong, but the corrugated iron ruined it, and the town as well, as completely as a sun-bonnet would the Venus of Milo.

We had our own private room in the levy post, and very comfortable it was, with electric light, a roaring fire, and a guard of soldiers—local ones. 'Better than Kashmir', said Subhana.

A pretty but uninteresting valley leads to the Lowarai Pass, which is the portal to Chitral. The coolies (for the road was still under snow and unfit for pack transport) were the local Pathans of Dir, the road was good,

the stage short, and the charges high. At first we passed a few fruit-trees in blossom. There were also a few flowers, chiefly wood violas and *Tulipa stellata*, small and stunted. The many hamlets and scattered houses were all rather ramshackle and very dirty, for it appears that the folk of Dir have no appreciation of a decent house. The materials are at hand but the inhabitants have not that desire for comfort which is the first step to social advancement.

The road to Chitral is well known, as a garrison has been kept in the country for a long time, and the reliefs take place every two years. There is a good deal of traffic, since this is one of the routes to Central Asia; and there is, besides, considerable local movement. Stray Europeans, like myself, were often to be found going up, and behind me was Major H. M. Banon on his way to advise on trout stocking in Chitral.

Owing to the snow, we did not get beyond the levy post of Gujar (7,800 ft) that night. It was a dirty place. Snow was all round, and the courtyard of the squalid little fort was full of it. We had been six hours coming up from Dir and, much as I should have liked, I did not dare to push on and under such conditions it was a welcome halting place.

We crossed the Lowarai Pass on the 26th April 1935. I was delighted to escape from the dingy fort where the havildar in charge howled for bakshish in an unsoldierly manner. He had already grossly overcharged us for wood, but he received his tip. We remembered that we should be returning by the same route, so a cowardly liberality triumphed.

It was an easy but dull ascent to the pass, which is but 10,000 ft. high. On the summit I was met by a very pleasant youth, a jemadar in the Chitral Scouts, and several affable Chitralis. The Dir levies who had escorted us received their pay and vanished. Everywhere there was snow. A cold wind nipped us, and we hastened down.

A small sleigh was offered me but I prudently declined. Daulat was more enterprising, and tried a trip on it, but upset in the snow, and soaked the seat of his 'shorts'. It was hard work going down the precipitous slope in the soft snow. It rained and hailed, but finally we reached Ziarat or 'The Shrine', the first halting place on the Chitral side. There I was welcomed by Ghazi-ud-din, one of the sixteen sons of the late Mehtar of Chitral. I was taken into a warm room, my boots removed, and sat down to tea, cake, and conversation, and greatly did I appreciate the hospitality.

The Lowarai Pass—known to the Chitralis as the Rowalai and accented on the last syllable—is one of those low and dangerous passes which are far more dreaded than the higher ones. Situated near the plains, the Lowarai is very subject to the vagaries of the climate. It has an evil reputation for avalanches, especially on the Chitral side, and the snow, being much wetter than at greater levels, makes this all the worse.

As we descended the pass, we noticed the remains of several of these avalanches, including an enormous one which lay in great billows athwart the bed of the glen. The avalanches on the Dir side were much smaller. As the Lowarai Pass is frequently used, its evil repute

is spread far and wide: passes which enjoy few visitors receive much less abuse. I was surprised to see a miserable shelter on the top of the pass where there should be a proper stone refuge. 'Good enough to save one's life', sniffed Daulat, 'that is all', as we stood regarding the ramshackle byres with disapproval. I suppose it is no one's business. The crest of the pass is the boundary between two states, and let the devil take care of the traveller. All the same, something better than the present shelter is needed, especially as blizzards are frequent.

The next day was beautifully fine. We descended, passing the first considerable village, Ashret, where the people are Dangariks, with a language of their own. The 'laburnum'¹ was in flower, and the hillsides were golden with it.

We reached the main valley at Mirkhani, where there is a large levy fort and a river flowing below. This is variously called the Yarkhun, Mastuj, Chitral, and Kunar river on its way from the north to flow into the Kabul river. In spite of its variety of names, it remains one and the same river.

Here we halted. The Shahzada and Major Banon had ridden on and were awaiting me with tea, a guard of honour, and much patience—a great honour for a mere pedestrian. The tea was hot and sweet as syrup.

We were now at last in Chitral proper. We turned up the main valley, which was broad and dull. The hills were barren, the cultivation sparse, the stream flowed drumly, and even the dazzling sunlight could

¹ *Sophora mollis*.

not soften the angry face of nature. However, we all stopped for lunch at the Shahzada's house, and I was shown the spot where our host, the driver and his motor-car had all tumbled over the cliff. The driver was never found, the car was smashed to pieces, and our host conveniently stuck in a tree above the river, sustaining no more damage than a cut on the jaw and on the left eye.

The Mehtar had sent a full-sized car for us, but this tale did not encourage me to travel in it. The road was narrow, unwallled and provided with a fine cliff to the river below. Even Daulat, who has no nerves, disliked a drive, and I frankly hated it. So we decided to walk to our destination at Drosh.

We found Drosh to be an open cultivated plain on the left of the Chitral river. High above the settlement was the fort where the garrison of Indian troops lived. Below were the offices, bungalows, and mess of the administrative services, and two very bad, dreary and dirty bazaars. When I called to mind the bazaars at Gilgit and Kargil, much farther from a railway or metalled road than the shops of Drosh, and saw these dingy booths with their dingier owners, I was astonished.

Drosh was wholly devoid of natural attractions. It is about as wretched a place to dump troops in as can be imagined, but in a mountainous country space is rare, and Drosh is certainly the most open as well as the most convenient place in Chitral. Thanks to the great kindness of Major A. St. G. Adams, M.C. and other officers, I much enjoyed myself there; nothing

could exceed their hospitality. But as a residence or a place of interest, Drosh would detain no visitor.

On 1st May 1935 we started for Chitral town, the capital. It was a true May Day, and the road—it really was a road and used by motors—led through an open plain covered with waving green cornfields, agreeably diversified with scattered graves and red poppies. The snow was still low on the hills and the dowdy valley looked its best.

Just above Drosh the valley divides. The main valley comes in on the right from the north-west. Up this we went, keeping (mindful of local advice) on the left or shady side.

It was a walk of fifteen miles to Ayun (Owin), our halting place for the night. A muddy river, barren hill-sides, and a bewildering glare were the chief ingredients of the landscape, and the country might have been anywhere from Karachi to Kabul or Kabul to Kashgar.

The road turned and twisted, and once we found in one of its crooked elbows a single noble mulberry tree, growing gracious and aloof, in a cleft in the barren hill. It drank the scanty water of an early spring. These unexpected gifts of nature always encourage me in a land where she is seldom genial. Such a sight is a great relief amidst the grey sheets of stone.

We met hardly anyone. A few men do a little unpaid labour on the road. One was an old man with a wooden bowl, black with age and dirt, full of dark green boiled vegetable. He walked slowly lest he should spill the contents. In his left hand was a kerchief of bread. He was taking this meal to his son, and when we

stopped him for a brief chat, he was afraid that we meant to eat the food.

We passed Kesu, a big dull village with not a soul stirring. There was wild pomegranate everywhere, and a foul wind. The valley, wide and desolate, contracted suddenly at Gahirat, ten miles from Drosh. Here was a watch tower on a black rock, with a fine village beyond. We crossed to the right of the valley by an impressive suspension bridge.

Two hundred yards after crossing the bridge, we were cheered by the sight of Terich Mir, soaring into the sky. It is a gorgeous mountain, and indeed it is the great glory of Chitral. I shall describe and refer to it often. Its manifold charms and delights are equalled only by its moods and caprices, for a more difficult mountain to approach, or to see when close at hand, I have never encountered. It is 25,426 ft. high and is the highest mountain in Chitral.

We soon lost sight of the mountain, but this glimpse of it had refreshed us. Opposite, across the wide stony river-bed, a hideous red lorry, belonging to the Mehtar, was lurching down the narrow road. Our Chitrali levy (orderly) pointed it out with great pride.

At Ayun (Owin) we halted. The place is famous for the luxuriance of its trees and crops, abundant water and healthy site. Certainly the chenars (plane-trees), and the giant mulberries were magnificent. So, too, were the fields, which lay in orderly terraces, shaped like large shovels, between the sides of the wide nala mouth. I noticed no poplars. Apparently it was too hot for them. As to the chenars, 'Of what use are they

to the farmer?' asked Daulat. 'The people must be fools to plant them.'

On leaving this oasis we skirted a large graveyard situated on the stony fringe of the village, true to the wise principle of not wasting good land on the dead. In Chitral the headstones are thrust in at each end of the grave at a slant. This gave the whole graveyard a grotesque and (for the stones are at all angles and planes) almost raffish appearance, like so many drunken dummies.

Opposite lay the village of Broz, famous for its chikor drives and at an earlier epoch for the murder of the Mehtar Nizam-ul-mulk in 1895. We crossed a high spur, from the top of which we had a view, bleak, austere, but captivating, over blue-black barren hills relieved by a background of snow peaks. Those who travelled in motor-cars on the opposite side of the river were spared the climb but lost the view.

As we walked along, we passed a boy asleep by the road-side. He sprang up and pursued us, clamouring for medicine for the qazi's son. Now a qazi is a religious man, and where justice is delicately balanced in the scales, it is his duty to weigh it in accordance with Mohammedan law. Here, in Chitral, qazis and mul-lahs are all-powerful. So we bade the boy begone and tell the qazi to say his prayers, for then he would need no medicine. It was absurd that we should be importuned for medicine by a man of the most pious and most powerful party in the country, and with a fully equipped dispensary a few miles off. It was a typical piece of cadging.

We entered the town of Chitral in pouring rain, through an avenue of rose-trees, oleasters, and apricots. Neither they nor we looked our best. Although Captain Napier was away, I was very kindly permitted to occupy one of the rooms in his house, and in these comfortable surroundings I pulled off my wet boots and clothes.

CHAPTER II

‘He who takes my country is my ruler.’

Chitrali Proverb

CHITRAL TOWN, the capital of the state, is no more than a broad sloping stretch of houses and green fields on the right of the river. The houses are scattered about haphazard, with a complete disregard of planning, in truly Asiatic fashion. All the same, there is a centre to this sprawling settlement, and it is, of course, the bazaar. As bazaars go—and that is not very far in this region—it is just a bazaar, selling most things lawful and unlawful, for the shopkeepers, though few in number, are varied in race.

Close to the bazaar, hidden in the trees, is the palace. Once it was the fort, and was the scene of the famous and now forgotten siege of 1895. Since then, Chitral and its ruler have grown in importance, and the fort has been promoted to palace. It has, moreover, been supplanted by the new fort where the regular Indian garrison dwells, which is a mile and a half away farther down the river, and is an isolated, well-built, fairly comfortable structure.

A good half-mile from this fort is the post office, the most inconveniently placed building in northern India, whilst above the bazaar, also some half a mile away, is the Political Officer’s bungalow. The latter is a comfortable house, built partly in the Chitrali style. It has a garden full of purple iris, roses, and huge chenar-trees. It was in this garden that the final and futile discussions

between the British and Chitralis took place before the siege.

I lodged at this bungalow on my first visit to Chitral, in a pleasant native room with short black carved pillars, and an adequate octagonal skylight. The first fort ever built in Chitral occupied the same site, but not a trace of it remains. Years ago this old fort was besieged, and it fell only because the attackers diverted the water supply.

The garden leads up in tiers to the mess of the officers of the Chitral Scouts, as the local militia is called, but a careful approach is needed, as on one side is the cliff that falls direct to the Chitral Gol, that is, the nala which provides the water of the town. I was most hospitably entertained here by Captain Geoffrey Vaughan, the Commandant, and envied him his home, with the noble chenar-trees surrounding it.

Near the bungalow is an ugly brick mosque with a graveyard in which the members of the ruling family, so many of whom have died a violent death, are buried. Amongst them is Amir-ul-mulk who died at Madras and who, thanks to the piety of the late ruler, rests amongst his own folk.

The great feature of the town is the new mosque, built by the late Mehtar, Shuja-ul-mulk, which must be unique in this region, for it is fashioned in the orthodox and conventional style with large onion domes, minarets, and abundant whitewash, and looks as out-of-place in its setting as a mermaid.

I called on His Highness the late Mehtar at the palace, and was received with due honour. The body-guard saluted, a bugle blew loud and true, and I was

received by the ruler in a very dark room. We had tea. We all sat on sofas, and a number of his sons were present.

Sir Shuja-ul-mulk was, in 1935, a singularly well-preserved and well-built man of fifty-six. His beard and moustache were a glossy black. He had been on the throne exactly forty years, a period unprecedented in the blood-stained annals of his dynasty. He was an admirable host, and his arrangements for the comfort of his guests during the Silver Jubilee celebrations were excellent. His Highness had a taste for modern amenities, and the palace was furnished with a wireless set, electric light, and other advantages. A telephone service connects the whole state, and all business is done by it. The fact that a telephone is liable to abuse as well as use never strikes the Oriental.

During my stay in Chitral, I saw a good deal of the Mehtar, and I realised that he was a man of considerable charm and dignity, with a wide knowledge of modern politics and tendencies.

He had a fleet of motor-cars and lorries for which the local roads were but ill adapted. One car had no brakes at all, and a drive in it on the narrow tracks, with a steep drop to the next world on one side, would test the strongest nerves. Personally, I made a vow never again to enter a Chitrali car, as it is tempting Providence to do so—a vow I broke only once.

The Silver Jubilee celebrations engrossed most of our attention at Chitral. They began with a review of the Mehtar's bodyguard, a collection of slightly trained hillmen, in all about a thousand strong,

but of whom only six hundred turned up on this occasion.

They were armed with Enfield rifles, and presented arms admirably, which, considering that they had only just arrived from their villages, was very creditable.

The Mehtar arrived amid the cheers of his loyal subjects, who clapped their hands vigorously, not in a hole-and-corner furtive manner, but holding their hands above their heads. In the East it is no use merely being loyal. You must show all the world that you are so. Thus the ruler and his court realised the devotion of their people.

After collecting all the crowd round him, the Mehtar explained what the occasion was. A salute was fired, the band played, His Highness left his chair, which had been covered with a splendid cloth of gold and red velvet, and all was over.

After this solemn celebration, the rest of the week was spent in sports and jollification. The polo was particularly good, but otherwise there was little to differentiate the sports from those held elsewhere or anywhere. The hillside rose steeply above the polo-ground, and there the spectators sat. It was an admirable place of vantage.

But the crowd made but a sad spectacle, huddled up wearing their dull and dirty homespun, the only relief in this drab expanse of humanity being afforded by the men of the Baluch regiment in their smart white mufti.

I begged one of the Mehtar's sons to have an order issued that all clothes should be dyed red or blue, but he said it would not be possible. It would cost too

much, an excuse which diverted me, for the pockets of the people are not often considered in their country.

The last team that I saw playing polo was that representing Chitral town. The Commander-in-Chief was an outstanding figure, but the Subedar of the body-guard was the real attraction. He was a great mass of bulging fat. How he rode or how his pony carried him was a miracle, but he played a magnificent game, as good as anyone more gracefully endowed by nature.

We spent a week in Chitral. The weather was indifferent, being dull and cold. It is not an attractive place, though tolerable enough for a short stay. It is not quite 5,000 ft. above sea-level and can be very hot in summer.

Chitral is an Eastern state, and great interest, which an abundance of leisure enables all to satisfy, is taken in the movements of all visitors. Residents, too, are subject to the same inquisitions, and it is apt to grow irksome.

Whenever you raise your eyes, you see a flat-capped brown form in a brown dressing-gown or choga staring fixedly at you from a distance of a hundred yards. If, too, you know that every insignificant act of yours is noted and reported, this control becomes irritating, and even unfriendly. The Scouts' mess was happily free from this espionage, a result produced not by the weariness of the watchers but by a more effective sensation. So sick had the officers become of this ceaseless and senseless observation that a shot was fired near, but not at, every brown face that showed itself. The watcher did not know whether or no he had had a narrow escape

from death but deemed it prudent to take no further risks. The cure was as complete as it was safe. The inquisitive aborigines disappeared, and the superfluous supervision ended. Several of the chenar-trees in the vicinity were like small lead mines! Now that the regime has changed, I fancy that things will be different, but in a community like that of Chitral where diversions are few, the doings of one's neighbour, especially if he be a stranger, are of overwhelming interest.

The late Mehtar of Chitral—the title is the Persian word for 'prince' and a very honourable designation—had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and was a devout and orthodox Moslem. As a result of his exemplary piety, of which it is said his youth gave little promise, the mullahs are held by him in high esteem. Indeed the rest of the Chitralis, who are united in detesting all mullahs, say that they flourish like the green bay-tree, so it would appear that the country is priest-ridden.

The Mehtar was blessed with sixteen sons, and he took much trouble to educate them all properly. At the polo tournament I saw a large number of small boys, and was told that they were all his sons. They were not, however, but only grandsons and nephews. I was also shown a lorry-load of mullahs, and heard some ribald remarks, and not a few wishes for their early demise. How easy it would be for the lorry to fall over the roadside! I realised that the Chitralis are not always religious and are without reverence for their mullahs.

Both the Mehtar and the mullahs were strict members of the Sunni sect, and regarded members of other

sects as little better than carrion. It was regrettable, as the adherents of the Aga Khan, the Maulais, are very numerous and the eye of favour is seldom turned towards them. In the East, if the glance of the great be not kindly, those so affected languish incontinently.

After a week of Chitral town, we had had enough, but both the weather and the social attractions continued to delay us. At last we packed up and escaped.

CHAPTER III

'I prefer a handsome Kafir to a Moslem.'

Chitrali Proverb

WE set out on a perfect day in May. Our route led us back to Ayun and then to the Bumboret valley where the Black Kafirs lived. Daulat had to be left behind in hospital as he was laid up with pharyngitis, and our Hunza lad, Inayat, had to stay as well.

After the rain the country looked beautiful, and so brilliant was the weather that the snow peaks seemed to burn in the sunlight. The views pleasantly relieved a hot march.

On our way from the small hamlet of Urghuch, we had a fine view of Terich Mir, better than that from Chitral or from Ayun, as the lower slopes were not so much hidden. Ayun—the real name is Owin—was seen at its best and as I looked up its valley from the hideous concrete bridge over the Owin stream, the view was typical and perfect. At the edge of the water was an old mosque with carved wooden verandas; below it the irrigation channels took off, and below again was the wide grey stream, gay and tumbling in the sun. Near the mosque were chenar-trees with their pointed leaves, opposite were willows hanging over water-mills. Above the broad and boulder-filled river were orchards of apricot and mulberry, and in the background shale slopes ran up to pine-trees. Everything was fresh and green, and the new foliage twinkled in the sun.

In the bazaar all was silent. The shops were shut.

Everyone was asleep, and the few stray wayfarers lay in the dust in the middle of the highway, which was dry and soft—truly a peaceful scene.

We started next day for the Kafir valleys. It was a tedious march, for we had to toil up a steep slope with the sun on our backs and sweat in our eyes. First we went through a loose forest of holly-oak then in bloom, with insignificant tassels of yellow flowers. In two and a half hours we reached the deodars (cedars). A cuckoo cried somewhere on our right; dwarf wild geraniums were under our feet, and quantities of wild almond (*kandu*) were blooming on the hillside. When we reached the deodars, I found many edible pine (*chujin*) trees, as well as tulips and small purple anemones. It was blazing hot, and the only water was from a small inconvenient spring.

At last we reached the top of the spur, and descended through fine deodars. I noticed that many young trees, three to five years old, had been cut down to make into charpoys (string beds). The damage thus done was very great, as trees of that age could ill be spared in a country where fuel and timber were already problems, and the loss of soil through constant and merciless deforestation already serious. Those whose duty it was to prevent the wholesale destruction of the forests did not care a button.

We then passed through quantities of a laburnum-like shrub with masses of yellow flowers (*Sophora mollis*) and came to walnut-trees at the foot of the Bumboret valley. Looking down from above, we much admired its fertility. Every possible use was made of

the ground, and the skill and care displayed were far beyond the average in Chitral.

We forded the stream, and ascended the stately valley. Trees, especially walnut, chenars and fruit-trees of all kinds, were abundant and well grown, and the hamlets were all close to one another. We passed four jolly little boys with large purple irises saucily stuck in their flat caps, and bows in their hands. They were peering up into the trees, looking for birds, a practice which explained why there was hardly a bird to be seen.

At Anish Gram we came upon our first idols, proof that we were in a pagan country, the land of the Kalash or Black Kafirs. These idols were small wooden figures, each sitting on the top of an upright pole which was placed in a square pillar of loose stones. We found a pair of these images near every village, the tutelary guardians. Usually they were some way from the houses but near enough to guard their interests. At Karakal, higher up the valley, the images were in an adjacent field.

As we went up the Bumboret valley, a very heavy storm with rain and thunder suddenly broke, and it became cold and dull. We pushed on, and were rewarded with a fine evening. Our clothes soon dried, and we pitched camp near a ruined rest-house, the veranda of which I wanted Muhib, the cook, to use, but he declared (quite wrongly) that it was not safe. As the funeral would have been his, I could say no more.

After a violent altercation with the coolies, who would not be satisfied with their proper pay and a fair

tip, we settled down comfortably. Bumboret is a charming place. The Kafirs say that when God created the world, he kept this valley for himself, and then graciously decided to give it to them. The scenery is attractive but can hardly be called grand; there is abundant deodar forest, abundant water, and no excuse whatever for failing to cultivate the soil.

The greater part of the valley is occupied by Black Kafirs, with a very few stray Chitrali settlers. But there are also some interlopers, namely, the Kati or Red Kafirs who fled from their own valley in Bashgal on the Afghan side of the frontier and were allowed to dispossess the Kalash or Black Kafirs, and being a turbulent race, became troublesome to their neighbours. These Red Kafirs have almost all become Mohammedans.

When Dr. Georg Morgenstierne visited the place in 1929 there were still twenty male pagans of the Kati. In 1935, there were only the old chief, his wife and another woman who remained faithful to their creed. The rest had all embraced Islam. When I asked why all these Red Kafirs had abandoned their creed which they had practised from time immemorial and which, in Chitral, they might have continued to practise, no man forbidding, I was told that, as the Afghan Government had compelled the Red Kafir tribes to become Mohammedans, the Kati in Chitral had to follow suit, because when their relations came over from Afghan territory to see them, it was very awkward from a religious and social point of view. It is true that in Afghanistan the land that for centuries had been known

as Kafirstan has now been re-christened Nuristan, or the Land of Light, and the former pagans are now zealous followers of the Prophet. But I am not at all certain that I was told the whole truth, though I believe that the stimulus given to conversion in Afghan territory had a certain effect in Chitral.

The Kati, I was told, were called Red Kafirs because they looked red, because they were fierce and aggressive, because they wore red clothes and so forth. I felt sure that most of these reasons were wrong, and that the Kati were called Red Kafirs to distinguish them from the Black, and, as will be seen later on, this was so. Undoubtedly they are a fairer race, but, as I shall show, the terms Red and Black, to distinguish the two races of Kafirs, are purely British inventions.

The village of Brumbutul was close to my camp, and there I visited and photographed the three Kati pagans. The old man, who told me that his name was Baghashai, was wearing a gorgeous garment of crimson and gold. His wife wore a very picturesque head-dress, but the third woman was very simply dressed. The sons of the old man had become Mohammedans.

The village, now no longer pagan, was unchanged, except for the addition of a smart new mosque. The houses were generally solid, well-built and picturesque, and I thought that all the houses in the Kafir valleys compared favourably, in point of construction, with those elsewhere.

The weather was glorious after the downpour we had had. The fruit-trees were in blossom, and looked lovely, though I should have preferred the ripe fruit.

I retraced my steps down the valley, and came to the first village, Karakal. There I found some Kalash men round an iron pot, with four curious 'ears' for lifting it off the fire. I was told that the pot was made at Dagroz in Badakhshan. The Chitrali levy (orderly), by name Aslam Khan, said, 'They are washing their clothes.' 'Never', I replied. 'No Black Kafir ever washes himself or his clothes', and I looked at one of the men who was scantily draped in two small goatskins and a filthy black clout.

'Well, as a matter of fact', admitted the levy, 'they are boiling the newly woven cloth, to shrink it', and that was what it was.

Just beyond I found six women weaving. They worked with great deliberation, and certainly wove extremely well. The cloth was closely woven, and every thread of the warp was beaten in thoroughly. They achieved a pattern too, with natural-coloured wool, which, since they used no dyes, was very clever. In the whole course of my journeys in Chitral I never once saw a Mohammedan woman weaving.

In the field close by were two little images. On asking who these were, I was told that they were Māra and Rāshuk, the two sons of a famous village headman of former times. The figures were exactly alike, and in vain I sought for any difference. Perched on their sticks, thrust into stone pillars, they faced the village, looking as useful and benignant as a couple of Aunt Sallies.

The following day we went up the main Bumboret valley, and just beyond the village came to a group of

effigies. One was a mounted man meant to be Shiniar, the father of Baghashai, the old Red Kafir. On the left was a figure propped against the wall. This was Turuk, an ancestor. Next was Chamaning and then Mating. I did not know the names of the others, but all were relations of the old Kafir, who said that the father of Shiniar, by name Barmok, had been the first to cross the pass from Kafiristan and to settle in the valley. The figures had been deliberately damaged, and two of them had been thrown down the hill, below the path. I suspected that the old man's son, now a smug Mohammedan, had shown his zeal for his new creed by insulting his forebears.

We continued up the valley, and came to a burial place of this colony of Red Kafirs. It was their habit to make a large oblong box, unornamented in any way, and with the ends projecting twelve inches below the bottom of the box, so that it should not touch the earth. The lid was kept down by large stones. By the side of the road were several of these simple coffins, and farther on, along an outcrop of rock that ran down the hillside, there were many more, placed one above the other, wherever the steep slope would hold them. Several of the boxes, owing to falling stones and rocks striking them, had tumbled down and burst open, and the contents had been flung about. The bodies had been well wrapped up before burial, as it was the custom to place all the clothes in the coffin, and the hillside was covered with a grisly jumble of boards, bones, and rags.

On a ledge of rock, projecting above the stream and extremely difficult to reach, we found a kind of small

shrine or chapel. Inside was the large plain coffin of Malikh—who he was, his degree, or why he was so honoured, I failed to discover. Close by this coffin, above it, but under the same roof, was a smaller coffin, probably that of his wife.

As to this neglect and desecration no one troubled their heads. I asked the old Kafir to perform some religious ceremonies. He was willing enough, but declared that he could not possibly act alone. I felt extremely sorry for him. He was the sole and proud survivor of an age-long creed. His gods were gone, his traditions forgotten, his creed insulted. His clan had all succumbed to the forceful persuasion of the mullahs. As I passed the mosque, I saw the ex-heathens all piously at prayer, led by one of the many mullahs who infest Chitral. Well, no doubt it was all very right and proper.

The upper valley of Bumboret proved to be very pretty. There were charming sites for camps under the deodars, and the rocky hillsides were picturesque enough, but nowhere could the scenery be described as grand or impressive. The passes into Afghanistan were still deep in snow, and I gave up all idea of approaching them. There was a good deal of cultivation above the main village, and huts for occupation during the summer. Ploughing was being done, and the fields were manured. There were abundant pear and apple-trees in blossom, including one with a strange dark purple flower. There was plenty of good water and, where the grass was damp, stepping-stones had been laid, rather an unusual convenience. Conical baskets,

bound with alternate bands or stripes of black and white wool, lay about, and numerous goats were doing as much damage as they could to the young willows.

It poured heavily during our last night in Bumboret, and the vagaries of the weather during what was supposed to be the dry season quite unnerved me. The next morning it was fine, the tents soon dried, and we started down the valley on our way to the Rumbur valley, adjoining but not very easy to reach.

At the Black Kafir village of Burun there were two effigies—one of a man mounted, and the other of a man sitting. I met an old Kalash called Mogul Beg who said that the seated figure was that of his son, Rahim Shah, who had died a natural death four years ago. The mounted man was Rahim Khan, who had been murdered five years previously by the Kati, whilst he lay asleep, at midday, in a hut higher up the valley where he was tending sheep. The horse's head had been broken off, and old Mogul Beg declared that the Kati—now all good Mohammedans—had come at night and knocked it off.

The resonant and orthodox Mohammedan names of all these pagans greatly amused me, but they nearly all used them, and no one would imagine that their owners had as little respect for Islam as any Buddhist.

The Bumboret valley, which we had ascended in pouring rain, looked very different in the gay sunlight. The noble walnut-trees, waving corn, and clear water all combined to present a prosperous and fertile scene, and I was indeed sorry to depart.

Our journey was not too easy. We had to cross the



KATI GRAVES AT BRUMBUTUL

main torrent four times by bridges of a single plank, and Muhib lost his Turki cap, a prized and elegant confection, whilst going over. At last we reached the valley's end, crossed to the left of the Rumbur by a scanty plank, all awash, and were cheerfully told by a woman that all the bridges upstream had been swept away. She was unfortunately right. We had only one course to follow, to struggle along the precipitous left side of the valley as best we could, climbing up the cliffs, and nursing the coolies as much as possible round the many awkward corners. As we were struggling round one of the worst cliffs, we suddenly saw an old man wading round the corner. With his long grey beard and short skirts he looked like a true Father Neptune, and he hailed us as cheerfully as a sea-god should.

At last we reached the bridges and cultivation, and the rest of our way was easy. The coolies, a mixed collection of converted Red Kafirs and resolute Black ones, went well, and we reached the large village of Balanguru after eight hours. I examined the coolies carefully, but in no way could I see externally or superficially any difference between the Red and the Black. It was true that of the former some were fair, and of the latter some were dark. The trouble was, however, that many of the Kalash were equally fair so that the colour of the body was no guide to identification.

We saw maidenhair fern growing in the cliffs, plenty of pink balsam, a tall gentian and quantities of yellow *sophora*. As we approached camp, a Kalash woman walked up to one of the coolies, took his face in both

hands, and kissed him, loudly and affectionately, three times.

The coolies had done well, and I gave them the tip that they had so well earned. They were very cheerful, and one man played a tune on our aluminium kettle. We could not camp in a delightful spot where we wanted to. I was told, for reasons that will appear later, that it was improper and immodest to do so.

So we had to cross the stream to Balanguru, and camp under two huge walnut-trees. The wind howled down the valley, the sky was gloomy and overcast and, if the weather were any index, we were two or three months too early.



RAHIM KHAN

RAHIM SHAH

CHAPTER IV

'Let him be born of a donkey, provided he be a good man.'

Chitrali Proverb

WE spent several days in the Rumbur valley, at Balanguru, one of the hamlets of what is known as Kalashgram or the village of the Kalash. I believe, however, that this word is properly applied only to a single hamlet and not to a group.

I had intended to push farther up the valley, and see more Red Kafirs there. The unwelcome news was brought that all the inhabitants higher up had become Mohammedans—or Sheikhs as they were termed, the word used for converts to Islam. As a matter of fact, as it turned out, I could not have done better than I did, for the chief annual festival of the Kalash was to take place in a few days, and we naturally stayed to see it.

As we approached the Kafir village, all of us, Kalash coolies, Sheikhs, Christians and Mohammedans, came by the easier and broken track. In doing so we had committed, unwittingly, a very serious misdemeanour. We had walked by the Bashali, or house for women, frequented by women during their monthly periods or before childbirth.

This particular house was used by all females in the neighbourhood. No one, man or woman, is allowed to come near the Bashali, touch the inmates or enter the house. Any infringement of this rule has to be expiated by the sacrifice of a goat as well as by personal purification, failing which heavy rain follows.

Thanks to our *faux pas* it rained heavily the next day, and I said that I should be happy to provide a goat as atonement, since we wanted fair weather as much as anybody.

It sometimes happens that an outsider (of course always a woman) has to visit the Bashali. To do so, she has to strip naked, leave all her clothes outside, and when her business is over to bathe before dressing. As all washing is abhorrent to Kafirs, such visits are rarely paid.

Women whose period of menstruation is due spend only six days and six nights at the Bashali. Those who are likely to bear a child go there as soon as they know conception has taken place.

The women are fed by food being placed on a stone outside the Bashali and, later on, fetched by the women themselves. The women in seclusion have to do their own cooking. In fact the inmates of the Bashali are treated and regarded as lepers. If flour has to be brought from outside, the bringer—always a woman—comes near, holds out the vessel with the meal, and pours it from a height into the receptacle which the inmate holds out. It must not be touched, and so all contamination is avoided.

When a woman's confinement is at hand, one or two old women go from the village to act as midwives. They remove all their clothes outside the Bashali, enter naked, and remain naked, no matter how bitterly cold it may be. As soon as the child is born the midwives leave, and the other women in the house look after the baby. A woman remains secluded for one

month after delivery. She then bathes, washes her clothes, and returns to her home.

In the event of a woman dying in the Bashali, she is buried close at hand. I was shown a large walnut-tree under which some had been buried. Some stones indicated the place. No man, relative or otherwise, may attend the funeral or have anything to do with the burial. If it does happen that a man by some accident enters the Bashali or its enclosure, he has to throw his clothes into the river, and provide himself with new ones.

There was a space round the Bashali which was quite bare, and close by five may-trees were in blossom. To enter this area was pollution for man or woman—other than those obliged to be in the Bashali—and as it was a particularly attractive site for a camp, both I and my Chitrali orderly went to examine it, and became unclean. A two-rupee goat expiated the offence. The Kafirs showed no sign of being annoyed by our action. On the contrary, they were much amused, and gained a goat.

Close to the village, but set definitely apart, was the Jestakan, a commodious one-roomed building, with well-carved wooden pillars. When a man dies his body is taken inside this building, and laid on a charpoy (bed) in the centre. For two days and two nights the people collect, coming from the neighbouring valleys of Birir and Bumboret, and are fed. They dance round the corpse in single file, in a sort of loping run, singing as they dance. If the deceased person be a woman, there is no dancing but only singing.

The Jestak—the 'J' is soft rather like the 'Z' in azure—is a wooden board, in this particular case thirty-three inches high and twelve inches wide, resting on the wall of the hut. It is, in fact, the identification or localisation of the female deity of the same name, to whom a reference is made later. The well near it was adorned with a conventional horse's head, and below with zigzags incised in the wood. I should say that it is the conventional form now of what was once an image. It is, in fact, a piece of religious furniture, an emblem of great importance. I wished to remove the Jestak outside to some place where I could photograph it, but I was told that this could only be done by sacrificing a goat. My proposal, too, was not very welcome.

The Jestak, the materialisation of the female deity, is the spiritual protector of all children born. It is the duty of the goddess to look after all children, especially small ones, and she is the patron of women in labour, and guards the houses also.

When the Chowmas ceremony is held—it occurs a few days before Christmas Day—a man sits at a fire kindled in the centre of the Jestakan. A pot is placed on the fire. The man takes a goat, cuts its throat, and with his hand throws half the blood on the Jestak and half into the pot. This ceremony is frequently done on other occasions, as shown later. During the Jyoshi festival in May, the women sprinkle the Jestak with milk. The old Jestak was lying against the wall, discarded, which indicated that the significance of the emblem was symbolic and not inherent.

On the steep side of the right of the valley, about



JESTAKAN AT RUMBUR

half a mile away, was the burying-place of the Kalash. They call their cemetery Mandaojao, from Mandao, 'a coffin', and Jao, 'many'. Unless actually concerned with a duty to the dead, such as burying a body or erecting an effigy, no one is allowed there. The bodies are buried in boxes, and males and females are treated alike. Small children of either sex are laid in a hole lined with flat stones, and another stone is placed on top. The Kalash place their boxes or coffins in the ground, and do not lay them on the surface as do the Kati or Red Kafirs. There was, however, an exception. I was shown a tumbled-down hut very like that which I had seen at Brumbutul in Bumboret. This was made for a wealthy man, called Mahadin. The coffin was placed inside, the door locked and all was left.

This cemetery on the steep hillside covered with holly-oak and wild almond-trees, was a very interesting place. There were many effigies of either mounted or dismounted dead Kafirs. If a man were very rich, he was mounted on a horse with two heads. For instance, there was a life-sized group of Achayak on his two-headed steed. When this man died, two hundred cows or bullocks were distributed by his relatives amongst his countrymen, in honour of him. Behind this effigy were full-sized dismounted figures of his brother and his brother's son. Kalash women never have effigies. Kati women do.

Above this group was a large mounted figure, and by his side was a smaller one, also mounted. Kalash Amir was on the big horse; Khush Beg, his son, was the smaller man on the smaller horse; and it is this

Khush Beg who, across the river, at the village of Batit just opposite, is represented in miniature as the guardian of the place. Later I went to the village, and saw the image of Khush Beg. He was a little sitting figure, only thirty-one and a half inches high from the top of his cap to the soles of his feet. He was the oldest effigy. In the same village was Mahomuret, sitting too, but larger, for he measured forty-six inches vertically.

Above the mounted Khush Beg was an extra large horseman on his two-headed steed, the above-mentioned Mahomuret. He is commemorated for the distribution on his death of two hundred cattle. Close behind him was the standing figure of his son, by name Mohamed Umar, and his son Khanek, grandson of the rider and farthest from him. There were also four standing figures in a row, propped against a large holly-oak. The one on the left was sculptured wearing the usual round flat cap, as worn by the Kalash men. The other three—who were the sons—were shown wearing the bulbous head-dress which is common to most images. I was told that formerly all the images were made with the flat cap. The Kalash, however, had noticed that the effigies of the Red Kafirs or Kati were usually portrayed wearing the more ornate head-dress—meant, of course, to be a turban—and this struck them as so ornamental that they had them copied. I have never seen a Black Kafir wearing a turban, and I hope that I never shall.

Near Mahadin's tomb, dilapidated and neglected rich man though he was, there stood a solitary horseman. This was Safar, the tutelary guardian of



ACHAYAK

Balanguru, the village where we stopped, and standing behind him was his brother. I shall refer again to Safār.

These effigies, usually made of deodar wood as being easy to work as well as being of convenient size—and never made of holly-oak, which, though nearer at hand, is too hard—cost five rupees for a plain standing figure, twenty rupees for a mounted one, and forty rupees if the horse has two heads. The customer provides the wood.

These images are not erected till a year after death. They are first of all placed in a convenient part of the village and the neighbours are invited. They all come, whether Kafir or Mohammedan, for mankind is much the same the world over, and a free meal is a great harmoniser of religious differences. A feast is given, and afterwards the image is taken away to the burial ground, and set up without more ado.

I noticed that many of these images had fallen down, often lying very profanely on their faces. I was told that to put them back in their places would entail feeding twenty men. No impiety was intended. No one ever came to the Mandaojao, not even to collect the abundant firewood lying about and very conveniently near the village, except on business, that is, to attend a funeral or set up a statue, so the figures had to take their chance.

It does not matter if no effigy is erected in honour of the dead. There is no question of the spirit of the dead being insulted or liable to haunt the village, or being in any way vindictive. To make or not to

make an image is merely an expression of the piety of the surviving relatives, much as the question of a tombstone or of a monument is in Europe.

As we entered the burial ground, I noticed that the Kalash with me took off his small talisman or charm, and tied it to a tree. When I asked him the reason of this rather unusual proceeding—he was Mohamed Isa—he said, ‘That is a charm which I bought from a Mohammedan mullah in Chitral, for my right eye. I see very well with field-glasses, but not without them. It is not wise to wear a charm in the graveyard.’ When I upbraided him as a loyal and orthodox Kalash for having dealings with a mullah, he merely said: ‘Where else can I obtain a charm? What am I to do without it?’

Close to our village of Balanguru was the little effigy of Safār, referred to above. Sitting on his horse (which had lost its nose) with a little turban of a few rags on his head, he looked exactly like Punch. He was, however, an important personage, for he was the dispenser of favours to the village. It was on his death that one hundred head of cattle had been distributed in his honour. Whenever a birth, death, or any great event takes place in the village, a basket of bread is taken and laid at the foot of the image. Three or four men eat the bread and take away the basket. If anyone is ill, bread is taken from the home of the sick person, and the same procedure is followed.

I was shown a remote secluded place, on the side of the hill, far from all dwellings. This was the Sajjigor. Strictly speaking, this is the name of the god who looks



KHUSH BEG

KALASH AMIR

after the world, under the command of the Creator, who is called Dezau. Sajjigor is the counterpart of Bagisht amongst the Red Kafirs. Here, under very old holly-oaks, dark even at midday, was a cleared space. Round it were rough plank seats, and the circle was marked by flat wooden uprights, incised with a geometrical pattern.

It is remarkable that at no time of the year is any female allowed to approach within half a mile of this place. Near this spot I observed a large pile of loose brushwood, and it is customary for all the young lads, who do not yet know woman, to come to the place and throw a branch on the heap, which is eventually used for cooking.

The festival of Jyoshi was now at hand. In preparation for it, no milk is used for ten days but is collected for the festival. Only one man in each household is allowed to milk.

I also saw children carrying branches of *Sophora mollis*. With this flower, the Jestakan, Sajjigor, all goat-houses, and many private dwellings are adorned.

The weather improved as the festival day approached, and my two rupees had been a wise investment. Indeed two goats were procured for that amount. One was killed across the river away from our village, and the other at the village itself. The meat was given to the children. Whilst I was in Rumbur news was brought that a boy had been bitten by a snake. I went up to see him, and found the poor child very frightened. The people had treated the case carefully. They had made incisions at once at the site of the puncture,

and had also cut the leg higher up where it had begun to swell. Snakes were rather plentiful, I was told, and snake bite was not unusual. I did what I could, but not very successfully, and I had to visit the boy daily. Just before the festival began, I walked up the valley again to attend to him. I found him much better, and my chief task now—and no small one either—was to clean the injured limb. It took a long time, but there was a fine clear stream close by, which removed the first few layers of filth. I stopped his relatives from defiling or spitting into the stream.

After I had washed and bandaged the wounds, the boy's father offered me some honey, but I refused it and told him to give it to the child.

The festival of Jyoshi began in the late afternoon of Saturday, 18th May 1935. The site of the celebrations was a spur which projected on the right of the valley above the stream, and on which was a small hamlet merely known as 'The Village'. I was told that formerly this was a large place, and was enclosed by a wall with only one entrance. It certainly seemed to be an ideal place for a fort. There used to be a spring of water inside, but a woman one day washed her child and some dirty clothes in it. The spring at once dried up but burst out at the foot of the cliff, and thus was no use to the dwellers in the fort, who had to abandon the site. Even now, for the inhabitants who occupy the few huts, it is a long steep climb to bring the water up. The Kalash, however, require so little water that I dare say this does not matter.

Here the men assembled for the inauguration of the

feast, and on this day no women were allowed. Cat-calls, made by putting the fingers in the mouth and a common form of melody throughout the proceedings, ushered in the ceremony. One large and two small drums were beaten. All the men formed a circle, clapping their hands, whilst outside it the drummers banged as hard as they could. The singing began, a high lilt, 'Ho, ho, ho', gradually falling almost to a whisper. Little boys danced with gusto outside the ring. The dance had a curious prancing step which was intended to frighten away leopards. The cat-calls and whistles were for frightening the snakes, and the 'Ho, ho, ho' was imitating the noise made by a bear, and meant to drive away that animal.

Throughout the festival an old man, Lamson, led the singing and directed all the ceremonies. In spite of his years, he was full of energy, perhaps because he came of a long-lived race. He was mourning his father just dead at the age of a hundred.

A boy took some fire and went up to the Mahandeo Dur, or House of the Great God. This is the shrine called Mālos by the Chitralis. It was a stone altar built against the hillside, adorned with wooden horses' heads, and about fifty yards above the dancing-floor. Saruz (juniper wood) was lit, a kid was seized, its throat cut close to the altar and its blood sprinkled on the fire.

Crows collected eagerly on the neighbouring trees and rocks, springing like magic from nowhere. To show that the sacrifice was completed rocks were rolled down the precipitous hillside, to the great discomfort

of a belated worshipper who had chosen this short cut to the scene of the ceremonies. He moved very quickly when the rocks began to reach him.

I looked at the dancers and the congregation generally. There was no sign of any ceremonial dress. Everyone was clothed as his wardrobe permitted. One man was wearing a cotton shirt and pyjamas; another a goatskin and drawers; some had the cast-off raiment of the Chitral bazaar, and very horrid they looked, but most of the folk were wearing fringed trousers or Būhūt (Būhod) and choga or dressing-gown, their native costume. The altar was high above the dancing-floor, an awkward climb. Between it and the floor was a curious oblong wooden erection, rather like a pen. This was the Shingmo or 'Markhors' Horns'. There were two or three pairs of horns there, placed by shikaris, but most of the pen was laced, or adorned, with fresh branches of the walnut-tree. After singing and dancing seven distinct tunes, worship was finished for that day.

On the morning of the 19th May, I was awakened at 3 a.m. and told that the ceremonies were beginning. It was a fine morning after a wild night, but the moon had set, and a torch of pinewood was welcome. Above our village I saw a fire, below on the left were three more, and down the right bank of the river four or five twinkled. Drums were beating to rouse the people. Already, when the sacred fire had been first kindled, two kids under four months old had been slain and flung whole into the fire.

Now a number of kids some two or three weeks old were brought to the Mahandeo Dur on which a fire of

juniper (saruz) blazed. Boys, who must be virgins and must never have eaten onions—they are called On-jesta-mozh—cut the goats' throats and caught the blood either in their hands or in a bowl and sprinkled the shrine with it. The rest of the blood was then poured on the fire of juniper. Seven chupattis (flat, unleavened cakes of bread) were brought and a small piece was broken off from three of them, and flung into the fire.

Strictly speaking, the whole of the three chupattis should have been sacrificed, but even the simple Kafir is economical in his rites. Four chupattis were kept to be taken later to the Sajjigor. These chupattis had been cooked with nine others in an enclosure near the dancing-floor. When the ceremonies were finished, all the worshippers collected by this hearth and ate the remaining nine bread cakes. They were good cakes, quite two inches thick. No one was allowed to eat outside this enclosure.

During the sacrifices, burning branches of juniper were waved round the shrine and over the fire, and old Lamson intoned prayers or incantations the whole time.

I noticed that the heads of the goats were completely severed from the body and held over, but not in, the fire. Afterwards the offerers of the sacrifices went away with the bodies and heads of the victims—the head of a goat or a sheep is locally esteemed the most delicate part of all—and took the meat home. By rights, the whole of the victim should have been cast into the fire, as a whole burnt-offering, but no doubt the intention was there, and that sufficed.

Milk and curd, mixed together, were then brought and cast on the shrine. This was done by everyone who had offered a victim. During all these rites no women were allowed to be present.

When this had been done at the dancing-floor we descended to the Jestakan, and the same mixture of milk and curd was flung on the Jestak, but I observed that the bunch of juniper and holly-oak, suspended above the Jestak, was more the object than the sacred board itself.

I then returned to camp, and went to bed, and so—judging by the complete silence—did the rest of the village.

The ceremonies continued later in the day, but not before noon. The rites which now followed were more general, as if the preliminary observances had been to sanctify and inaugurate the public functions. The women, who had not so far been allowed even to look on at the religious performances or to stir out of their houses, took part in all the subsequent observances. They came along in a sort of procession, all with boughs of walnut in their hands. They also had baskets in which were empty goatskin bags.

When the women had assembled just outside the village the boughs were taken away, and an old man distributed the milk of the hamlet which had been saved up for the last ten days. It had, of course, become quite sour, but the people here are more sensible than those at home, and discovered the value of sour milk long before the learned scientists of the West, so this was no drawback, rather the reverse. When each



TUTELARY EFFIGY OF SAFAR

woman had had her supply in her goatskin, she went away. The women now began to go down in small parties to the side of the river. Each woman took five chupattis. A man accompanied her, and a fire was lit. The man then dipped his left hand into the stream and took up a palmful of water. With his right hand he seized a branch of juniper, lit it at the fire, dipped it into the water in the hollow of his left hand—this was done very quickly as the man did not wish to be burned—waved the branch over the woman's head and flung it into the stream. The woman then ate the chupattis. About four o'clock in the afternoon, we all assembled at the dancing-floor, where everyone danced vigorously till dusk, and was very gay.

Besides the round or congregational dancing there was also solo dancing when each performer seized a wand, stick, or even the ramrod of a gun, and danced with great energy. It was not unlike an Irish jig, but rather slower, and was a cheerful thing to watch. The choir or orchestra consisted of a circle of men who sang and clapped their hands, whilst outside this circle the drummers beat and banged with fury.

The set dances then began. The men were in lines of four, five or even more: the women likewise, but the sexes never joined. The lines advanced, with heads lowered, prancing towards the choir. They then circled round the choir, retired, and again drew near it. Feet were stamped, cat-calls given, and the lilting song rose again. Verily the snakes, bears, and leopards must have been terrified out of their senses.

Everyone began to shine with sweat. All enjoyed

themselves. There were no refreshments for anyone. Lamson seemed tireless. There were pauses for rest, but the intervals were not long, and the old man was very scathing about the slackness of the spectators, urging them to come forward and dance.

After a while, the whole of the dancing-floor was full of lines of men, with the fringes of their trousers swaying, necklaces jingling, and sweat trickling. The women danced more sedately, with their cowrie-covered head-dresses shaking and their garments moving modestly. I thought that the women looked extremely pleasant, decent creatures. One woman had her face completely blackened to prevent sunburn, but her appearance was hardly improved by this precaution.

Children were in abundance, and Mohamed Isa's little son was very prominent in a new cotton coat, meant to be silk. When I asked who he was, his father said proudly, 'Ah, that is little Zulf Khan' (the tyrant chief). 'I called him so because he gave his mother so much trouble at birth. Her confinement lasted five days.'

The 20th May was the final day of the festival. About noon the children all danced on the gri—the Kalash word for a ridge or spur—and at one o'clock the elders began. The dancing was much the same as on the previous day but more individual and more spirited. Mohamed Isa's old father was in great form. He had an embroidered wool cap, a necklace, a coloured silk coat, and a spear, and he danced many a *pas seul* with another elderly man clad in drab duffle. Both whistled



MOHAMED ISA'S FATHER

shrilly. His son, however, seemed to think it beneath his dignity to join in the gaiety of his clan, but I told him not to be a fool and to go and dance. He seized my alpenstock, and spent the rest of the day with it, dancing or helping the orchestra, and thoroughly enjoyed himself. The dances grew livelier and the people more cheerful.

After two hours a complete change occurred in the performance. A very slow and mournful tune was started by the choir, and everyone danced round them in a wide circle. When this measure was finished, a man in a coat of sprigged chintz suddenly saw a fairy—thousands of whom were known to be present but hidden from human eyes—rolled on the ground, struggled violently, and had to be held down by three of his friends who clearly enjoyed their task. The quick dance began again, very jolly and merry, and much appreciated by all. The spectators were now numerous, and a very melancholy-looking party of 'Sheikhs' (Kafirs who had turned Mohammedan) were huddled apart on a roof, watching with longing eyes the merriment of their former co-religionists whom their new religion bade them despise as unbelievers. Their sober new faith did not permit such extravagances.

The fairy-ridden man howled, bent up and down, to no purpose. His friends did not relax their grip, and little notice was taken.

Hitherto we had all been sitting on the same side of the gri as the Mahandeo Dur, the altar of the four horses' heads, but now all Mohammedans were asked to go to the far side as their presence interfered with the

prayers, which were not able to reach the deities. I am not a Mohammedan, and there was no objection to my staying, but I crossed to the opposite side, and sat close to, but well above, the crowd.

Beneath me the women were sitting, packed together, and a curious assemblage they were with their singular shell head-dresses (called *küpās*) and their black dresses. Many, even children, had blackened their faces to avoid sunburn.

The slow dance was again started, and great circles of men and women swept sedately round. The women when dancing always put the right arm on the shoulder of the dancer on their right, and the left arm round the waist of the one on their left. The men did exactly the reverse, clutching their partners on the left with their left arm, and round the waist with the right. I counted no less than twenty-seven women dancing in one circle. Little girls danced in threes. The musicians, who (including Lamson) by this time had put walnut leaves in their caps, were surrounded by women, but the men, especially the young ones, preferred to dance in lines, going up and down the gri.

The forty women packed together below me did not budge. The wind blew in great gusts and the dust was stifling. Another quick dance followed, and then a very slow chant arose, almost like a dirge. Men were sent to bring walnut branches as the climax of the festival was approaching. If walnut cannot be obtained branches of other trees are allowed, but I noticed that on this occasion only walnut was used, which was abundant and growing close by.

Below me I saw a woman crouched on the ground, enveloped in a brown wrapper, sitting apart from everyone. This was the sister of Mohamed Isa, who had forsaken her home and her faith to marry a Mohammedan. She disliked her mate, and returned to her home but not to her creed. I was somewhat taken aback to find, when I began to ask about her, that her husband was sitting next to me. He did not seem at all disconsolate, and bore his loss calmly. Her brother said that she was off her head, the simplest explanation both in the East and in the West of a difficult situation.

A long pause now ensued, broken but not enlivened by the dismal chant of the choir. The walnut boughs were being cut into convenient lengths.

The women and the men again began a slow dance in long lines of performers. There was another quick dance, of a jig-like kind; and I was fascinated by a truly black Kafir, with black face and beard, black ragged cap and sombre clothes, treading a measure with alacrity.

Brisker and brisker grew the drums and the song. The women skipped round in threes; the men, with sticks, axes, spears and wands brandished on high, hopped and bounded with vigour. The whole dancing-ground was choked with a mass of jolly dancers whistling, leaping, and sweating.

We all enjoyed it. I know that I did, and I should have liked to join in, except that the performance was restricted to believing Kafirs only. The spirited dance was soon over. Everyone rushed for the branches, and wild enthusiasm ensued. The sun was just sinking behind the mountain, and the May evening was drawing

in. The crowd could hardly be seen for the mass of waving walnut boughs. All talked as hard as they could. I looked down with deep interest on this swaying green sea of leaves and branches, with cowrie-shell head-dresses, flat caps, and drums appearing in it. Above, a lad—a virgin of course—was standing by the Shingmo, the curious pen-like place. No women are ever allowed there. It is essentially the preserve of the fairies who collect there, as well as between it and the Mahandeo Dur, during the festival. To the Kafirs all this area was full of fairies, and some of the men were in an ecstasy and could see them.

This lad was milking a goat on to a spray of walnut, and every few minutes shook the milk over the cliff into the valley below. The crowd now began a chant, slowly waving their branches. The men were in front, at the edge of the cliff-like hillside, the women behind.

The song was mournful and impressive. It was the Dagainai song, the last ceremony of the Jyoshi, and is the lament of a young man who fell in love with a woman who poisoned herself. Her name was Mura-yik, and when she died, her body became yellow from the effects of the poison. When her lover beheld it, he cried, 'Ah, Dagainai, as yellow as the laburnum has thy body become.' This is the motif running through the song.

The wind blew, twilight grew deeper and, with the sorrowful song, slow-waving branches, steady rhythm and solemn cadence of the whole performance, the effect was stirring.

The fairies, goblins, and hill-spirits are attracted



KALASH WOMEN DANCING AT SPRING FESTIVAL

by the waving of the branches, but when they approach it is only to learn that the festival is ending. The Dagainai song now gave place to the fairy song, which was known only to Lamson. Were he to tell it to anyone, he would fall ill and die. Later, when he feels that his end is approaching, he will communicate the secret words to his son.

'Ho, ho, ho; ha, ha, ha', shouted the men. The goat-herd milked his animals, and sprinkled the dripping bough over the cliff.

For twenty minutes the chant continued, always slow and solemn, subdued and stately. It was a moving and emotional scene, and one could hear the gentle soft movements of the fairies and the spirits as they hovered over the swaying worshippers.

Suddenly a woman saw a fairy, and fell down writhing. Four women seized her. She had become possessed. A minute later, a man saw a fairy and was in like case. Then a second man, and then a third fell fainting and unconscious at the sight of the fairies. Another woman collapsed. An old man, fairy-ridden, dashed about tearing his hair. And all the time the song and the waving continued, and the performers took no notice of these events. The throng pressed a little nearer the cliff. The goat was milked for the last time. Suddenly all the branches were hurled into the abyss and the music stopped.

The branches were flung towards the west, to show the fairies which way to go, and the leaves were for them to take with them. It is when the branches are waved that the fairies prepare to leave, but they do not

go until the next morning. I was told, most emphatically, that there was no question of this ceremony being to send away the fairies. That would be too dangerous. It was only a polite invitation accompanied with a hint as to the direction to take.

Branches of walnut were now peeled, and with the fresh bark, string rings or circlets were made. The drums beat, the singing began again, and a little impromptu dancing took place whilst the preparations were being made.

The famous snake-dance now began. The men first, then the women, formed one long line. They did not hold hands, but each caught hold of the rings or circlets of walnut bark, each holding one side so that their hands did not touch. A leading villager led the dance, holding a branch of walnut; behind him came the men, then the women, and the whole chain was finished off by a bevy of little girls. In and out, round about, wound the long line of men and women, singing and dancing vigorously. At last they stopped and flung all their rings of bark over the cliff.

I was assured that there was no religious significance in these rings. The Kalash say that it is a most unpleasant thing to clasp hot and sweating hands, and the rings obviate this.

The final ceremony now took place. The participants in it were confined to the men of Rumbur and no neighbours, Kafir or otherwise, were allowed to join in. Of these men, only the On-jesta-mozh and adult men who had not married within seven degrees of kindred, were allowed to take part.

A boy, a virgin, made a fire of juniper at the altar of the Mahandeo Dur. An offering was made of cheese (curd) and bread by one of the boys, and cast on to the altar and on the fire. The rest of the privileged males ate bread and curd.

The religious part of the festival was now ended. The women and older men went away, but the younger men and boys kept up the dancing and singing. I could hear them from my tent at one in the morning and I marvelled at their endurance.

CHAPTER V

'He who runs away with my daughter is my son-in-law.'

Chitrali Proverb

THE next day life in the village resumed its normal course. Old Lamson passed me driving his sheep, and no longer a hierophant; and I busied myself with learning something more about the Kafirs.

I again visited the dancing-floor, strangely dull after the recent gaieties. Close to the Shingmo a wand of almond-tree wood, about three feet long, was thrust into the ground. This was pulled out for me to see. Its bark had been removed all along its length for the width of half an inch, a complete band curling round from top to bottom, so that the stick presented half an inch of bark and half an inch of peeled wood, a curious piebald appearance. This was the Payer-gundik, the memorial or monument of a brave man: it must be of almond wood. The hero thus commemorated was one Mirza Hussain who died in 1934, and had during his lifetime killed a man with great skill and courage. I am inclined to think that the murdered man was a Kati or Red Kafir and, knowing the way in which these undesirable immigrants have bullied the Kalash—and still do—it is probable that bare justice was done.

I then went to Mohamed Isa's house to photograph his father once more, but the old man had gone to search for some lost goats. It is forbidden to Kafirs, by their religion, to keep fowls, and when chickens followed by a clucking hen rushed out of the house, I

asked how such things could be. I was apologetically informed that these unclean birds belonged to a Mohammedan woman, and I realised that it was Mohamed Isa's sister.

I then returned to the village as I wished to examine a Kafir house: on my way I passed a woman, overcome with fatigue, lying sound asleep by the side of the stream. She had been on the way to the mill, and her measure of meal was lying on the ground beside her.

The houses of the Kalash are two-storeyed. This sounds much more elaborate than it is in actual fact. The reason for the two storeys may be found in the heavy snowfall of these lower valleys. The ground floor is used for keeping grain: the upper storey, which is approached by a primitive ladder, is the dwelling-place. In front of the door of this storey is a built-out platform, which is used for enjoying the fine weather, and also, when it is hot, as a sleeping-place. The interior of the house is usually a single apartment lit by a central orifice which also serves as the chimney. This, of course, is the customary plan of all hill houses—and of most primitive dwellings elsewhere. The whole roof showed inside the effect of the smoke from the fire, as the soot hung in festoons like rotten seaweed and fell in dust at a touch. The room was very dark and dingy. In the centre, under the skylight and chimney, was the stone-lined hearth. Opposite the door was a shelf which held domestic oddments, and in a space between the hearth and the wall were kept the few utensils for preparing food. I noticed a long shallow wooden dish for kneading the dough;

a wooden mortar, shaped like an hour-glass, which was used for crushing the walnut kernels, one of the staple foods of the Kafirs; a small basket made of juniper wood, for carrying flour; and an earthenware vessel for water.

The really interesting thing about a Kafir house is its taboos. No woman may even put her foot between the hearth and the wall in the space in which the domestic utensils are kept, and no person may sleep in this space. In the morning the housewife rises, washes her hands in running water, returns to the house, and stretches out her hand to take any necessities out of the forbidden space. If a woman puts her foot in the enclosure or if any of the vessels are placed in an unclean spot, as for example the floor of the veranda, all the articles have to be destroyed. A man's foot does not, however, pollute the place.

I was severely reprov'd for asking whether the women did not sometimes put their feet in the tabooed area when no man was about. Apparently the idea of violating the taboo was unthinkable.

Against the wall of the house I entered were hanging two hideous inflated goatskins used for milk. There were two old charpoys on the right, for married couples, and on the left an enormous and very hard plank-bed for the old women and children. The plenishing of the house was of the most meagre description. In the farthest corner, curled up on a charpoy, was a woman covered with a blanket. She was not ill, but merely terrified by my coming.

Outside each house is a separate granary, carefully

locked and opened by a key of thick wire, semi-circular in shape and often half the size of a child's hoop. This wire is inserted, and after a great deal of groping and fruitless efforts to insert the 'key' in the bar of wood, a successful thrust is made and the door is opened.

When I looked in, I saw a shelf. Below it on the ground floor, were earthenware pots each closed by a well-fitting flat stone, chipped to make it do the duty of a cork. In these the grain was kept. On the shelf were kept the household treasures: a little snuff, a few prized tins and bottles, and the like.

The top or roof of the granary is a ceremonially clean place, according to Kafir law, and no defiling woman may put her foot on it. Consequently domestic utensils can be placed thereon without fear of pollution.

Another remarkable restriction amongst the Kalash is that no woman may eat the flesh of a male animal. She may only eat the meat of females. When a woman kneads and bakes bread, she has to wash her arms in running water up to the elbows.

There is much nonsense talked about the dirty habits of the Kalash. In my opinion they are certainly no dirtier than the generality of Chitralis, who do not even benefit by such customary ritual as washing up to the elbows or the like. I heard that once, at some games in Chitral town, a Chitrali refused to wrestle with a Kalash on the ground that he was so dirty. A comparison was made and it was found that the Kalash was the cleaner of the two.

Marriage is a very simple rite. The general rule is that no one may marry under the age of sixteen, and

not within the seventh degree of kindred, but this latter proviso is seldom observed or enforced. The bridegroom's parents give what they can as a bride-price, but the minimum is one milch cow, one bed and covering, one water vessel, one blanket, and twenty goats. All except the goats are handed over to the newly wedded couple. Sometimes if the boy's father is well-to-do he will add a gun, sheep, and the like. There is no obligation on the girl's parents to give anything at all, but they often do so, if they can afford it, and well-to-do parents try to increase the number of cows and goats.

The actual marriage ceremony is simple. The man and woman meet at the Jestakan, and a small kid is killed by one of the On-jesta-mozh (virgin boys) who sprinkles first the Jestak with the blood, and then the man and woman once.

The woman takes five chupattis in her hand—holding them out so that they do not touch her person. A fire of juniper is made. Burning branches are taken, dipped into water, carried behind the woman, and then thrown over her head. She then eats the five chupattis, and the rite is ended.

In the case of divorce, should the woman be to blame, four times the bride-price has to be returned to the husband. A man can divorce a woman by merely handing back the bride-price.

Having attended the Jyoshi, I was anxious for details of the Chowmas or December festival, the only other religious observance of the Kafirs. I was told that the ritual was as follows:

On the first day of this festival, the men and women bathe and wash their clothes, which, considering the cold, is rather remarkable. The houses are cleaned and swept out. The sexes then separate for nine days. The women stay at home and the men go to the goat-houses.

On the first day of the festival, the men and women prepare enough bread for seven days, the men in their byre, the women in their houses.

The same evening, thirty or forty goats, a combined contribution from all the villages, are taken to the Sajjigor and killed. When the goats have been slain a fire of juniper is made and the blood is sprinkled on the fire and also on the wall of the Sajjigor. The meat is then taken away by the men to their several goat-houses and eaten. During the Chowmas there is no music, but they dance and sing at the Sajjigor.

The following day, the men make chupattis, but only one for each male person. These chupattis are then taken to the Sajjigor. Each chupatti is broken there, and some of it is thrown on the juniper fire, some on the walls of the enclosure, and the rest eaten by the owner. That ends the ceremonies of the Chowmas. There is sometimes, in November, a minor feast at the Sajjigor when goats are killed and bread eaten. On this occasion two fires are made at the Sajjigor, one for baking the bread, the other for cooking the meat. At all ceremonies in this sacred place, the animals are slain outside the circle marked by flat wooden uprights.

The Sajjigor in Rumbur is the only one now existing, and is the most sacred place of the Kalash. Second to

it is the Mahandeo Dur, of which there is another in Bumboret. It was explained to me that the god of the Mahandeo Dur was the deputy of the god of the Sajjigor. Mahandeo Dur means the place of the great god, but I failed to discover what Sajjigor means, except that it was the name of a deity. A third place of sanctity is the Verin, of which there is one in each of the lower valleys of Birir and Urtsun.

I tried to find out from old Lamson the meaning of the word 'Sajjigor', but failed. He clearly knew the ritual but did not know the meaning of all he said; but that is the case with priests in many other far less primitive communities.

When the Jyoshi was completed it was usual to have a feast in the Sajjigor, which was supplied by the headman who led the snake-dance with a walnut bough in his hand.

On my return from a parting visit to the snake-bitten boy—for we were due to leave the valley and had only been delayed by heavy rain—I found a large number of men assembled and seated round the Sajjigor. At the fire-place which was reserved for baking bread, a man was busy cooking thick flat cakes, and behind him another man was kneading dough. The other hearth, reserved for the meat, was also ready. A lad climbed into a holly-oak, and cut down some fresh boughs. With these and juniper he made a third fire, outside the enclosure of the Sajjigor and close to the high stone altar on which rested the sacred twigs. A new branch of holly-oak was laid on these and some juniper also.



SACRED TREE OF SAJJIGOR
hung with horns of sacrificed animals

I sat and watched for some time. It was very pleasant on that bright May morning under the gnarled old holly-oaks, with the rays slanting through on to the strange scene. There was very little noise, but I had already noticed that, as a rule, the Kalash were not noisy folk and were much quieter than the Chitrali.

At last all was ready. A virgin boy—On-jesta-mozh—took a branch of burning juniper and waved it over the altar. The goats were then killed—they were two big he-goats. I felt sorry for them and in truth for all their tribe in the Kafir country, for they seemed doomed to play a prominent and fatal role in all the ceremonies of their owners. The spectators stood and prayed quietly, the boy caught the blood in his hand, and threw it first on the fire and then on the altar, doing the same act thrice for each goat. Both heads were cut off, and placed for a few minutes on the sacred fire. The goats' bodies were then taken on one side, and skinned by a man called the Pawajhow (Pawazhow). This was an hereditary office, and his small sons were there to learn the business. His reward was the right shoulder of the goat and a large flat bannock which had been put specially into a recess of the stone altar for that purpose. It had been taken out previously and shown me. Having skinned the animals, the Pawajhow put the fat in a pot, and said a prayer in which the bystanders joined, everyone praying in thanksgiving after him.

There is a Pawajhow in each of the Kafir valleys, for instance Birir and Bumboret.

I then left the Kalash to their feast, and went after

my kit which had already gone on. I was asked to let my coolies return as quickly as possible that they, too, might enjoy the feast.

I have already mentioned several of the taboos of the Black Kafirs but I was always encountering more. For instance, no woman may go to the goat-house. The goats, too, must never be milked by a female, but the cows may be: also the sheep, on the rare occasions that they are milked.

At one time the whole of the Rumbur valley belonged to two brothers, and the boundary between them was the bridge across the stream below the village of Balanguru. Now in that small village alone there are three tribes or divisions, and each has its own Jestakan, but otherwise there is no difference.

The Kalash have a tradition that they originally came from Siam, of all extraordinary places, and were much interested when I told them that I had been there twice. They said that, years ago, a Kalash had gone there, and reported that the women were charming, like their own, but that the men were dogs. They were anxious to know how true this was, and I said that although perhaps the Siamese men were not the handsomest of mankind, they certainly could not be called dogs. I have stated that the Kafirs are comparatively quiet in their behaviour, and this small point certainly connects them with Indonesian races, who lack the vociferous speech and raucous tones of most Indian peoples.

The Kafirs said that, when their countryman was in Siam, he was saved from the dog-like husbands by

a woman who gave him four bladders the size of footballs. When the men were pursuing him he threw behind him one bladder at a time, and this so delayed his enemies, that he was able to 'cross the pass' and so escape from Siam.

I could never understand why the Kafirs were called Black. Many of them were fair, neutral eyes were common, and generally speaking they were certainly no darker in complexion than most Chitralis. It is true that they were dirty, but as I have said, no dirtier than their neighbours and even less so. The Kafirs say that they were never called Black until the British came. Before, as they artlessly put it, they were called Kalash, or dirty, but I believe this to have been in the social or religious sense, the scorn of the orthodox Moslem for all that is pagan. Let me repeat that they are not dirtier than the Chitrali. They are accustomed, the women in particular, to wearing dark clothes, but I am sure that the word 'black' is applied to them as a term of contempt. It is a misnomer and meaningless.

The Black Kafir women struck me as modest and dignified. They were handsome rather than pretty, and seemed industrious. They could sew well, and were always busy with some job or other. The relations between men and women seemed sensible and unaffected. Indeed, I thought that the Kalash were a cheerful, well-behaved folk. They were desperately poor, but they were too fond of their valleys to go elsewhere. They grew tobacco, and were very fond of snuff which they took by the mouth. I noticed that their crops showed a lack of variety, and that they did not grow

potatoes or other vegetables. I was told 'it was not the custom', the usual idiotic excuse, when there is no real excuse for lack of enterprise.

The Black Kafirs have a taboo against hens, and even to touch a hen or an egg was abominable to them. All the same, I believe that this prejudice is disappearing.

I do not think that the lot of the Black Kafirs is a happy one. They are the helots of Chitral, but before very long they will be persuaded—so gently, so blandly, but so firmly—to become Mohammedans and will be bad Moslems instead of good pagans.

I doubt whether the change will benefit those for whom there is nowadays a supply of forced Kafir labour throughout the year, since when Mohammedans they will have to be treated as such. Their proselytisers may regret their fervour for Islam when their lands remain untilled.

The Kalash do not want to become Mohammedans. They are devoted to their old religion, and are ready to perform any corvée so long as they are left in peace.

As to the Black Kafirs' gods, a further few notes may be given. Mahandeo is their god of war, and corresponds with Gīsh, the war god of the Red Kafirs who, in recent pagan times, was honoured at Kunisht, but whose shrine has now been destroyed since his worshippers have abandoned their ancient faith. Their chief female deity is Jestak. They have another called Jatzh, the equivalent of the Kati goddess Kushumai. It was she who gave the order to the Kalash women to wear the cowrie head-dress. This goddess looks after the crops, and there used to be a place sacred to her at

Kolak, near Kunisht. When the Kati or Red Kafirs embraced Islam, Kushumai's shrine was desecrated in the same way as Mahandeo's. Later in the narrative more particulars are given of the customs of the people, which we saw on our return to the Kafir valleys.

It should be borne in mind that the Red Kafirs were interlopers. They took land which was once the property of the Black ones. Indeed the behaviour of the Kati has been a perpetual grievance of the Kalash. In fact the Red Kafirs first took the lands, and then profaned the sacred sites of the Kalash, and they deserve all opprobrium for their conduct.

CHAPTER VI

'I do not wish to be a martyr and the crows to pick my bones.'

Chitrali Proverb

WE camped at Kunisht in the Rumbur valley, where one branch goes to Gangalwat—wherever that is—and the other to the Lutkuh or Big Valley. My intention was to cross over into the Lutkuh and spend some time in that region. The people of Kunisht had burned their idols and grasped their Korans, and were now Sheikhs (as all newly converted Mohammedans are called, sometimes with a tinge of contempt, I fear). They were immigrants from Afghanistan and had not long been settled in Chitral.

We passed the mouth of the Bahuk Gol, a narrow gorge with, higher up, fine thick deodar forest. Although May was now well advanced and the altitude was only 7,300 feet, everything seemed backward, and snow was lying far too low for my taste.

We found that the newly converted Kafirs were a poor collection of folk in every sense of the word. The men were bone-idle and did not even sow and rarely ploughed. Perhaps their lassitude may be caused by their custom of giving every new-born infant a cold bath, but surely the survival of such a shock should make the men sturdy and hardy. We used to meet an ex-Kafir stalking along with his squaw following behind carrying everything. These Red Kafirs had, in the days of their paganism, a reputation as robbers, and I very much doubt if the change of faith had brought with it



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any change of heart. They still stole, and the Kalash were their victims. It would be to the benefit of Chitral if all these people were sent back to their own country. There is no longer any danger of persecution, and the Kalash would regain the land that they have surrendered to these useless people.

We left Kunisht and ascended through magnificent forest, in which were some of the finest deodars I have ever seen. There was also much *Pinus longifolia*, which the people said was only fit for firewood, and a great many edible pine-trees.¹ We were much astonished when the lazy Kati said that they did not collect the kernels, for we knew that these are very much esteemed, especially by the vegetarian Hindus, and command a good price in the Peshawar bazaar.

Looking back over the Rumbur valley, on to the Bahuk—which some humorist had marked on the map as the Kalash back-chat—where there is a fairy lake which will be described later, we beheld a magnificent crescent of dark-green forest, curving round the valleys, thick and impenetrable on the steep hill slope.

At last, after many weary hours, we reached a clear space just above the tree limit. This was Sun-o-mul or Dudara kot, meaning respectively the place of the hut or Dudar's House. Sun-o-mul is famous for the wind that blows for three days and three nights, then drops for a like period, and then begins again.

Below us was the Chimarsan Gol up which we had climbed, and beyond it the rock mountain of Pălar, a sheer precipice, where dwelt one of the two fairy queens

¹ *Pinus Gerardiana*.

of Chitral. The other lives in Terich Mir, and is the greater of the two.

At our camp were a sheep-fold and a steading, but the goats and sheep would not arrive for another two or three weeks, and we were told that the fairies were still there. Then, when polluting man arrives, they flee to the heights of the crags. At the end of October the herdsmen depart and the fairies return. We were assured that if any man overstayed his time, encouraged by a late season or any other cause, the fairies would call the offender by name and bid him begone.

The night there was not very cold, and we left the next morning at 3.45 a.m., first over an easy slope, and then up a precipitous couloir. The whole march was over snow. We were aided by a moon at first, and then the dawn came, but we had not started early enough.

The coolies, poor things, were incredibly bad. The Red Kafirs, whether before or after conversion, never, as I have mentioned, carry anything. Consequently, when they are required to carry loads, they are not able to do so. The fault was entirely theirs. We begged them, before starting, to let their women do the job, but they replied surlily that they dare not trust their virtue to us. We thought, however, that eighteen uncomely females could surely protect themselves.

We should never have reached the crest of the pass but for the exertions of Daulat Shah and Amir Gul, another Hunza man whom we had picked up in the bazaar at Chitral. All the work—and there was a great deal—was done by them. The coolies just marched behind and sat down for ten minutes every fifty yards.

The weather was beautiful, the sky was a deep velvety blue, and the sun burned in the sheltered gully as we toiled up over the snow. We had several spare men with us, but all they did was to sit and hold their heads and complain of pains. The Red Kafir may shine as a murderer and a robber, but when asked to do a task that the despised Kashmiri—very wrongly despised—would think nothing of, he shows himself for what he is.

We did not reach the top of the pass till 12.45 p.m., nine hours after we had left camp. I was growing anxious, as a night in the snow would have been a serious affair.

The pass itself, the Ashangar Pass (15,885 ft.), was a knife edge, and we did not pause an instant on the crest. A bitter wind swept down on us, tearing at our entrails and freezing our sweating bodies. Fortunately, the snow was firm and the slope a pleasant one, and we ran from the biting gale as fast as we could. We went on and on and on, unable to find a place for camp, as the snow was everywhere, and no wood was to be seen. At last, at 5 p.m., we reached the shepherds' huts of the Ashangar Ghari. We were all exhausted, but fuel was plentiful. We made the coolies a huge jorum of tea, and they slept warmly in their byre.

We were now in the Monur-o-gol, a fertile valley which joins the main Lutkuh valley at the famous hot springs. Next day we came on a party of women who were collecting, on the hillside, a succulent vegetable which is boiled, kneaded into a lump, and put aside to eat in the winter. I was assured that it was first-rate. We entered fields a little farther on, and passed through

masses of golden briars and yellow berberis. We were tired, and our poor coolies even more so. When we reached Izh, an important village, we stayed for three nights and I doctored the coolies for minor ailments. An Alpine excursion for stay-at-homes of their kind was bound to cause a few casualties.

Here I was met by the chirbu. He is the village official whose duty it is to attend to the wants of travellers. In Chitral he was usually conspicuous by his absence, as the sensible custom which prevails elsewhere, of one chirbu to each village, is not followed in this country, much to the vexation of the traveller.

He was a cheerful little man, gnome-like, with a nut-cracker face, a purple beard and a purple coat, and was very efficient. He came clamouring for medicine and, being ignorant of his system, I gave him half an ounce of Epsom salts in a mug of hot water, which he lapped down ravenously. As that had no effect, after a suitable interval I gave him a whole ounce. He sat by our camp, smiling and chattering, sipping with enjoyment his second mugful of this heartening drink. Alas! It was no use to him. These people eat chupattis or flat cakes of barley with the husks, and the consequences much resemble those of eating plaster of Paris.

I still had the chirbu on my hands. I hesitated to adopt mechanical treatment, so I poured five grains of calomel into his mouth, and then another half an ounce of the inefficacious 'Epsom'. Success crowned my perseverance. I have dwelt on this episode as it throws a light on the simple needs of the people. I believe

the man would have died if he had not met me, as nothing will induce these people to go to hospital until it is too late.

After we had rested long enough, I started to go up the Lutkuh valley, and I sent Daulat and the cook, with the spare kit, down the valley to Shoghor. From there Daulat went into Chitral, fetched the post, bought sugar, of which there was a constant shortage, and other oddments. I only took the bare necessaries with me. I disliked parting with Daulat but, after all, he had not been too well, and the Ashangar Pass had been exercise enough for some time.

The chirbu, thanks to my doctoring, was more cheerful than ever. He took an affectionate farewell of Daulat, and accompanied me to look after my creature comforts. We crossed the Lutkuh river by a rickety bridge, and ascended the valley which soon began to widen. The arable area was a mass of little fields, enclosed by fat white stone walls, whilst the scanty orchards were tucked away in sheltered corners. Rising straight up in menacing contrast were the barren hills: man was clearly here on sufferance only. If he left the valley, all would again be desolation. Yet it was a fine valley, open and spacious.

The people here spoke Yidgah, a wholly different language from Chitrali, which they said came from Badakhshan, the neighbouring Afghan province. But then everything good or bad comes from there. Strange men, odd customs, horses, domestic utensils—all have the same provenance, Badakhshan. This is often clearly wrong, but it satisfies the incurious Chitrali.

The Lutkuh area is predominantly Maulai¹ by religion. The Maulais are followers of the Aga Khan, and perhaps do not enjoy that reputation for orthodoxy which other Mohammedan sects cultivate. Nevertheless, the Maulai is in every way as good a man as his neighbour who differs from him in the form of his belief.

We passed opposite Birzin, the chief shrine in Chitral of the Maulai community. It had been visited by Nasr-i-khisrau, reputed to be the founder of the sect, some 1,300 years ago. His clothes, books, boots, and pillow were there, and very precious relics they were. At Izh, where we had been staying, was a lesser shrine of this blessed man. When the saint came there, he was attacked by the mullahs of the rival Sunni sect, but Nasr dealt with them by merely vanishing.

I am afraid that these Maulais still suffer a good deal from subtle and underhand persecution in Chitral. There is no one less fanatical in the world than the average Chitrali, and those who are not Maulais by creed would never dream of persecuting their Maulai fellow-countrymen. Unfortunately, the Sunni mullahs are neither so broad-minded nor so sensible, but wage a bitter and vindictive war on the Maulais. Things are not quite so bad as they were, but they are still by no

¹ Maulais or Ismailis: a Mohammedan (*Shi'ite*) sect, followers of the Aga Khan, who claims descent, in direct line, from Ali by his wife Fatima, daughter of the Prophet.

Shiah and Sunni: the Shi'ites regard the first three Khalifahs (representatives of the Prophet), viz. Abu Bekr (father-in-law of the Prophet), Omar, and Othman, as impostors, recognising only Ali, who, according to the Sunnis or Sunnites, was the fourth.

means what they should be. It says a great deal for the Maulais that the majority of them have remained faithful to their creed. The Maulais are entitled to complete non-interference in their religion or, to put it otherwise, to no unfavourable discrimination because of their creed.

The Lutkuh valley grew stonier and stonier, with little stone huts and closer stone walls. We came to the village of Imirdin, and beyond were pleasant grass stretches, willow brakes, clear water, and even wild rhubarb—not to be ignored. We met two parties of men from Badakhshan. Each man carried on his back a large square slab of purplish salt for sale in the Chitral bazaar. As the passes, both to India and Afghanistan, were still closed by snow to pack transport, the salt would give a fair return for all the trouble of carrying it. Later on, when the caravans began to come, it would not pay to import salt in this way. To our ideas, eight or ten shillings, as much as the salt would fetch, would appear inadequate for such a journey, but tea and other goods would be taken back. We talked with the men in the coarse Persian of their country, and discussed the one question that every traveller wants to know—what was the road like?

The villages at the head of the valley were inhabited by converted Red Kafirs, who resembled those we had met in the Rumbur. These, too, were known as Sheikhs as their entry into Islam had been recent. Their houses were distinguished from those of others, for instance of Chitrali immigrants, by having on the roofs square or, less often, round wicker receptacles

covered with mud, called in their language *chakki* (*guzuli* in *Chitrali*) and used to keep grain in. Only the Kafirs, converted or unconverted, use these strange receptacles, which look rather like a jumble of enormous chimney-pots on the tops of the houses.

We camped at *Shah Sidim*, the last village in the *Lutkuh* valley, a bleak place, though permanently inhabited. Just before reaching it we passed some splendid springs of hot water. One of these springs was so hot that I could not put my hand in it. In former days, so we were told, it used to be much hotter—really piping hot. A man, however, shot a partridge but did not make the bird lawful for a Mohammedan to eat by cutting its throat while it was still alive. But he was determined not to miss a meal by the omission of this custom. So he put the bird to cook in the boiling hot spring, and from that moment the water became less hot. The smell of the sulphur from the spring was very strong, and even in my tent, thanks to the breeze, I could smell the mephitic vapours.

From *Shah Sidim* I went to the *Dorah Pass* (14,972 ft.), one of the chief passes leading to Afghanistan. It was a long scramble up the snow, and bitterly cold, thanks to a polar wind. From the crest, we had a poor view of peaks and rocks inferior to those in *Chitral*. *Lake Dufferin* was not visible, as it was tucked away in the deep gorge-like valley below the pass. One of the charms of the *Lutkuh* valley was the abundance everywhere of pure water. Generally, in these regions, the water is turbid, and resembles Scotch broth, but here it was clear as gin.

Leaving Shah Sidim, we returned to a village a few miles lower, Gobor-o-bakh, decorated with its odd corn-bins. From here I determined to reach the upper Arkari by a direct route rather than return by the way we had come to Shoghor, where the Arkari valley joins the Lutkuh; and we made arrangements for the journey accordingly.

The inhabitants of Gobor, who settled here about 1897, had been Red Kafirs on arrival. When asked why they had become Mohammedans, they said that it was due to the forcible conversion of their co-religionists in Afghanistan by the Amir, Abdur Rahman Khan. It had all happened so long ago that the present generation had wellnigh forgotten that they ever had been Kafirs, and when I questioned them about their old faith they confessed, quite correctly, that they knew nothing at all about it.

A number of their social customs still persisted. Just like the men of Kunisht, the men would do no field work but they would help the women with ploughing. They also carried no loads at all. One pleasant youth, however, came to us and begged to carry a load—we wanted some men—but the constipated chirbu declined to allow it. He said that as the ex-Kafirs refused to do coolie work, he had sent elsewhere for the coolies. This was a just reply. I noticed, however, that one of the men carried a copper tea-pot of milk for eight miles to my camp, and was delighted with the payment. The fact was that these Bashgalis—as they are still called from the Afghan valley they lived in before their immigration—were quite ready to do anything for money,

and laziness was probably their chief objection to coolie work.

It is a singular custom of these people that all the milking of cows and goats is done by the men. The women are not allowed to have anything to do with the milk or the milking. The making of butter and cheese, and in fact all preparation of milk products is a male right. The women do all the heavy work in the fields and carry loads as well. The men in fact are dairymaids, and nothing else.

When a marriage takes place, the suitor gives ten, fifteen, or twenty milch cows, with their calves, as the bride-price, according to his means. The bride's father also gives so far as he can afford, ghi (butter) and twenty maunds of grain, as well as the plenishing of the home for his daughter. If, later on, the girl leaves her husband or objects to him, her parents have to return double the bride-price.

Nowadays, in case of adultery, both parties may be killed. The red-bearded Bashgali who told us this remarked in a melancholy voice, 'It used not to be the case before we embraced Islam.' Apparently in the old pagan days, free love was less reprehensible.

Before we left Gobor we said farewell to a number of seedy acquaintances whom we had picked up. The most affectionate adieu was to the chirbu, refreshed with four cascara pills. His little sunken eyes, like black-currants, twinkled with friendliness as he grasped my hand and wrung it warmly. If only he had not just blown his nose on his hand, I should have appreciated his cordiality the more. I have often regretted



KATI VILLAGE OF GOBOR-O-BAKH

that pocket-handkerchiefs have not accompanied the march of civilisation to these lands.

Since he had been with me the chirbu's beard was a richer purple than ever, as only the well-to-do can afford to grow old in Chitral.

We started on our way, being assured that it was easy. We had Maulai coolies, and went up the Siruik Gol, a beautiful valley. At first the path was over a slope covered with dwarf tulips (*T. Clusiana*), and with dwarf pink primulas close by. We passed the summer encampment of Siruik, a charming expanse of open level turf with a small stream fringed with red and white primulas. There were thickets of willow, also, and masses of yellow ranunculus. The chikor were chuckling on the hillside and behind was a great rampart of snow. Now all was deserted, but in a few weeks the whole valley would be full of the women and children from the lower Lutkuh, moving up with their flocks and herds.

That night we camped at Afsik, a small steading some 12,000 ft. high on a sward smiling with *Primula rosea*.

The next day was June 1st, and surely, I thought, summer was come by now. We left at 2 a.m. on a clear moonless night, but with the dawn came the clouds and at 11 a.m., after a wearisome ascent over the snow, we found ourselves at the foot of the Sut Qulachi or Seven Spans Pass. This was—we were now about 16,000 feet up—a wall, only 200 feet high, but a wall none the less. It was extremely difficult at this time of the year as it meant walking on ledges of rotten snow, six inches wide, for about 150 yards. Fortunately,

we had very light loads, and at one o'clock, to my profound relief, we had all reached the crest of the pass. As always happens, fortunately, one coolie distinguished himself by his pluck and energy, and was a great example to the rest.

The view from the crest was a grievous disappointment. All round us seemed to be peaks and cliffs of much the same height as ourselves, though in reality they were higher. The rocks were black, and were streaked impartially with snow, and the general appearance of the landscape seemed no more picturesque than cold plum pudding.

As we stood on the snow-swept crest of the pass, congratulating ourselves on our prowess (I saw one coolie who had arrived early rush up to a belated friend and kiss him on both cheeks) heavy snow squalls struck us, and we hastened down. The descent was long and steep, and much as I disliked the climb up to the Pass of the Seven Spans, I preferred it to the alternative of toiling for five miles over precipitous moraines and snow slopes, which would have been our lot if we had started from the other side.

On the way down we passed the famous stone from which the pass gains its name. This stone is seven spans wide, spans of the arms stretched out from middle finger to middle finger. No matter whether the span is that of a grown man or a little child, the stone is always seven spans to whosoever tries to measure it. The other explanation is that the name of the pass is Sad Qulachi. Sad is the Persian for a hundred, and the pass is a hundred spans. But in what direction—

up or down, sideways or slantwise? It is no use pretending that the pass has a hundred ledges because it certainly has not, and I am inclined to think that Seven Spans is its proper name.

We went on and on, ever downwards, and at 4.30 p.m. thankfully reached a summer encampment, now, of course, deserted. It gave us some shelter, however. We had no sooner pitched our camp than the snow began to fall. It snowed all night, heavily and steadily, and the servants' tent broke with the weight of the snow. I heard my devoted Kashmiri servant, Subhana, going round my tent at 3 a.m. shaking the snow off, and saying to himself, 'This swine of a country.' I rather agreed with him.

The poor coolies spent a damp night as the huts were but imperfectly roofed with stone, and the snow blew in on them. We left next morning, down a snow-filled, wind-swept valley, and we were delighted about 3 p.m. to reach Owir, the highest village in the Arkari valley.

We swept away the snow from the ground for my tent, but my servants I pushed into a Chitrali house, on the principle that many flea-bites were better than one bad chill. The men needed a good warm rest, and it was too cold for the local vermin to be abroad. I gave the coolies a good spicy he-goat, butter, and twenty pounds of flour. They were delighted and stuffed steadily.

This village of Owir in the Arkari has survived many vicissitudes. In old days the people lived near the ruined fort below the present village, the site of which

was long occupied by that pious but surly wonder-worker, Kwaja Khisrau. In his day expectant mothers had to spend seven months at the next village down the valley, and it was only by creeping into their houses at night that they were able to spend the last two months in their own homes. After confinement an offering was made to the saint, and he was thus appeased for the nearness to him of the natural consequences of matrimony.

Women were forbidden to approach his sanctum. He was, unquestionably, a tiresome neighbour; but there were compensations. During his residence in Owir the harvest was so heavy that the granaries could not hold the corn. Domestic animals were embarrassingly prolific. Disease was unknown. In fact, it was all too good to last. One day, by accident or design, a woman entered the forbidden area. The holy man at once left. With him, too, departed the fortune of the village: illness, scanty crops, and barren kine replaced the fecund beasts and teeming fields. Truly, it was a severe punishment for one offence.

The day following our arrival Daulat and Muhib arrived, and after another day's halt we ascended to the head of the Arkari valley. The scenery was fine, especially at the lower Gazikistan glacier, which flowed between a magnificent rampart of snow and ice. The view was really superb and we gazed at this enchanting prospect with delight.

I was agreeably surprised to find how much fuel there was in the upper Arkari valley. Indeed, in some places there were fine thickets of willow and birch.

I visited the Nuqsan Pass (15,647 ft.)¹ which leads into Afghanistan, but I found it rather uninteresting. The word 'Nuqsan' means 'harm' or 'damage', and I inquired how it had been given that name. Apparently the famous pir or religious leader, Dewana Shah, had crossed the pass and on the way his hands had been frost-bitten.

Before leaving Owir, I tried to get a better view of Terich Mir than the upper valley had afforded. I climbed to a considerable height, up the slopes of Khada Barma, the massif opposite the village, but I failed to secure any view. This mountain was named after a by-gone ruler who made himself famous by catching ibex with a noose at the end of a pole, which he threw over their horns. 'In those days', observed the villagers, 'ibex were tame and plentiful.'

We descended the Arkari valley, passing old fortifications as well as a number of the artificial ponds which are so common all over Chitral. They are used for shooting wild fowl in winter, or else for snaring them. In the latter case, the ponds are pear-shaped. At the narrow end or stem of the pond, a species of wicker cage is made, of a semi-circular shape. When the ducks settle, the villagers assemble in a circle at a distance of half a mile or so from the pond. They wear their chogas with the long sleeves that fall over their hands, and then advance slowly towards the pond, flapping their sleeves as they go. They gradually approach the broadest side of the pond, and the ducks move to the narrower end, and at last enter the wicker trap which

¹ Another reading gives 16,060 ft.

is built over it. When the birds are inside, the door is let down and the ducks are caught.

Our first halt was at Arkari, a group of villages. As we entered, we saw a collection of rags lying on the roofs, and were told that these were the village quilts. They were a truly deadly collection of insanitary remnants.

At Arkari, on the right bank of the river, is the conspicuous shrine of Shahzada Lais, his father and his son. This man was the leading Maulai pir of this part of Asia, famed and esteemed amongst his co-religionists whether in Afghan, British, or Russian territory. Indeed, the Shahzada was liked by everyone. He was very hospitable, and himself liked his glass and the sight of a pretty face. When Amanullah Khan became the sovereign of Afghanistan he restored to the Shahzada his property at Zebak, and there another son, Abul Maali, lives.

The tomb was hideous, with a corrugated iron roof looking very out of place in its surroundings.

As we went lower down the valley, the villages became very attractive, being embowered in fruit- and walnut-trees. The Chitrali, however, is a very poor agriculturalist, and takes little or no interest in his orchards. The fruit-trees round Shahzada Lais's property at Arkari originally all came from Hunza.

We found the Arkari Gol rather dull, a narrow precipitous ravine with no views at all. The sky clouded over, a cold wind blew and scuds of rain swept down the valley.

Half-way down at Besti we came on a large gang of

men repairing the road. For such work they received neither pay nor rations, and grumbled accordingly. But in the primitive state of Chitral, such labour is an appropriate village service; all benefit by it, and the roads could not otherwise be maintained at all. The Besti stream had little water in it but it had a bridge, to the great relief of our coolies who were terrified of water. No one in the Lutkuh valley can swim, except the people of Shoghor.

A little lower down we passed a large chenar-tree, under which Daulat had sat on his way up the valley. The shade was pleasant, and there was a large and suitable stone to sit upon. It was, however, the sacred seat of a saint, many years dead, so long ago that his name, but not his piety, was forgotten. Daulat had been severely taken to task for venturing to sit down, but how could he know that he was committing sacrilege? Higher up, where a great tree-covered splinter of rock stood like a huge spear-head in the river, was the spot where this holy man used to moor his boat. An adventurous saint he must have been to launch a boat in such a current.

Just beyond this place, we came to Momi, where the barley was now nearly ripe and better still the mulberries wholly so. This was an attractive oasis, with large chenar and other trees, and mellowing fields on both sides of the river. Captain Napier was encamped here, welcomed me kindly, and was most hospitable.

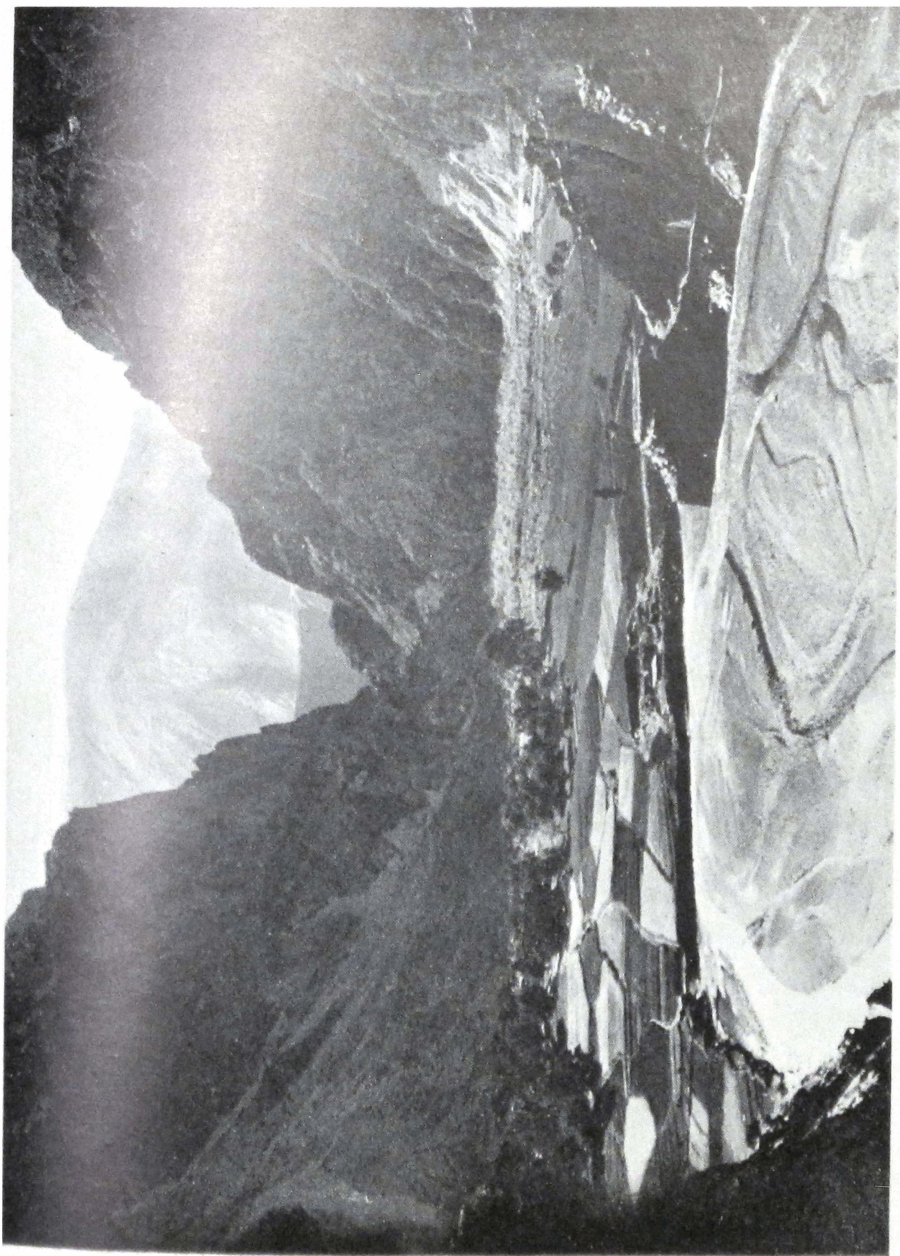
In the evening, we had some Chitrali dancing. One dance was new to me, the 'duck' dance, in which the performers go round in single file, hands flapping

behind them, head and shoulders bent, all waddling and flopping like huge ducks. It was all very peculiar.

Next morning I bade farewell to my kind host, and continued down the defile. Very soon we reached the main Lutkuh valley and river, and I saw that most odious and reactionary of modern inventions, a telephone wire. There was a fine view down the valley, where the perpendicular 'strike' of the rocks was most remarkable. After an awkward scramble round the cliffs, we looked down on Shoghor. Beneath us were fields of delicate green rice; ripe barley was standing in relief against a background of blue wheat; and behind all were the great cliffs of the Shasha gorge, through which the swollen grey river leaped and rushed. High above all was a golden eagle, soaring in the sky, a bird deemed in Chitral, as in Persia, a good omen.

Shoghor is a famous place. It has, however, been much damaged in recent years by a flood which came on a Friday in the time of Aman-ul-mulk. The water tore down its chenar-trees and orchards—the largest walnut-tree in the country grew here—and the site is now a wilderness of boulders amongst which an ingenious attempt has been made to plant new trees.

There are the remains of two forts at Shoghor, on the left bank. One was the dwelling of Khan Bahadur who ruled there about 1820, when Mohtaram Shah II was Mehtar of Chitral. The latter came with his army to seize the place, and the Khan fled for help to Badakhshan. Unfortunately, just after he left Shoghor, winter came, snow fell, and the passes were closed; so



SHOCHOR—LUTKUH VALLEY

that it was impossible to send back aid. He had left the fort in charge of his wife, who defended it valiantly for six months, when she had to capitulate; she marched out with the honours of war and rejoined her husband. Her fame but not her name is still remembered. It is said that none of the local folk would help the Chitrali Mehtar, although called on to do so, as they declared that their word was pledged to protect the lady. I cannot imagine the present-day Chitrali acting in the same manner.

Shoghor was the capital of Shah Faramurz.

Sangin Ali II, another Mehtar, used to like the place. He made himself notorious though perhaps unloved by building a long gallery high on the hillside as a shooting place, which he reached under cover of a wall. Up this he crept, and shot the ibex from either side of this corridor or passage.

The second fort is now a heap of ruins, but opposite to it, on the other side of the river, the late Mehtar built a noble castle for one of his sons. It is lit by electric light, has a long blue balcony, and is at once a surprise and a monstrosity. It is not yet completed, but it assuredly will be one of these days.

Shoghor is situated where four valleys meet. The wind howls, and whilst we were there rain fell in torrents. It is a rich oasis, despite the flood, and it was amazing to see this fertile spot shut in by lofty frowning precipices. A casual glance up and down the gorges showed nothing but barren slopes of stone, and gave no inkling that so many villages, orchards, and fields were hidden away in the folds.

There were, we found, several other famous things in Shoghor. Scorpions, snakes, mosquitoes, fleas, flies, and ticks abound. We camped under a grand chenar-tree, and the mynahs sat in the branches, and blessed us all the day. Fleas were specially numerous, large, energetic, and insatiable, and our tents were noisy with mosquitoes and saturated with flies.

Whilst we were at Shoghor the present ruler Shahzada Nasr-ul-mulk, with two of his brothers, came to see me. It was a great pleasure to see him; and his father, who was always most hospitable, had sent his cook as well.

We had games of polo in the afternoon, on a long bumpy ground close to the river. As I sat watching the game, I saw an old man, leaning on the arm of a younger one, come tacking up towards me. He wore a dingy wadded coat and waistcoat, both of strawberry-pink. His kullah (skull cap) was gold and purple, and between it and his turban was a sprig of sweet-william. This was Mohamed Shah, charvelu (headman) of Ojhor, 86 years of age, and with a memory unimpaired by education. He sat down and we gossiped. He said he remembered Mohtaram Shah III, an unlucky and unvalued ruler who only reigned for two years. This Mehtar was once at Shoghor eagerly expecting the arrival of a girl from Chitral. There were no roads in those days, and the damsel with her attendant had to climb over the high precipice on the right of the river. The Mehtar was in the fort, watching with keen anxiety the slow advance of his beloved. The girl reached the bridge. She began to cross it, when she stumbled, fell

into the river and was drowned. So furious was the Mehtar that our old friend and all who could fled away into the hills till his rage had abated.

Mohamed Shah could tell us little about the fairies. It is true that he had been to the mountains, and had seen the places in the ice where the fairies had washed their clothes, and the flat stones on which they had pounded them, but that was all.

Whilst this conversation was going on, another great character turned up—Ashrat Khan, shikari to Colonel Gurdon when he first came to the country, as well as to his successors. I asked him if he had seen the famous glacier frog of Chitral, said to be twelve inches long. He had not seen it, but he had found the body of a frog, left by a flood, which was ‘as large as a dog’, almost as good a sight as the live frog.

Close to the new fort, Mohamed Shah had a house and fine orchard. I noticed that the outer walls were fallen down, and a slight air of neglect pervaded the property. This was excusable in an old man, but surely not in his stalwart descendants. The land tenure in Chitral is so very uncertain that perhaps, on his death, the land might lapse to the State. A fine old man was our acquaintance, who in old days would swim across the river in the absence of a bridge, and in Chitral bridges often are absent. Here, I am glad to say, men can swim, as we saw when a polo ball fell into the river, and a couple of men at once jumped in and retrieved it. This was the only polo we saw at Shoghor as it poured for thirty-six hours. After three days we had all had enough of it, and we

departed, but I was very sorry to say good-bye to my kind friends.

Our destination was the Ojhor valley, at the head of which we should cross a pass that would take us eventually to Mulikho. So we left Shoghor, its fort, flies, and chenar-trees, and toiled up over 4,000 feet in twelve miles.

We passed through the inevitable gorge, and by the village of Hassanabad, famous throughout Chitral for its pir—who controls most of the Maulais in Hunza—his garden, and the strong intoxicating mulberry spirit distilled there.

The pir met us with a magnificent bunch of roses, and we exchanged affable imbecilities. His father was a great man, and a great lover of his garden; he introduced many new kinds of fruit and flowers into the country. He even tried to grow mangoes.

The present pir is not the man that his father was. Something, too, had gone wrong with his land, and he was clearly 'under the weather'. Real estate is not, in Chitral, the sound investment that it is in most countries, and this is regrettable in a wholly agricultural community.

We said good-bye, and I continued my way up the nala. We met a blind man who, pathetically, saluted me by cocking a perfect snook. My followers were amused, but I only felt sad and squeezed a coin into his hand. The track was steep, and the coolies often halted for what was elegantly termed 'a donkey's breather'—it meant just standing still and puffing, without resting the load against a rock or wall,

for the good reason that there was nothing to rest it on.

Flowers were numerous. There were quantities of yellow briar, staining the hillsides with gold; a purple vetch that grew in round tight clumps like heather; berberis, tulips, iris, and wild blue flax.

The valley now opened out in surprising fashion, and spread out like a fan, contracting again later on when it reached the glaciers.

The head of the Ojhor valley held a considerable population with abundant cultivation, but the people were most unenterprising. Their crops were barley, wheat, and beans. There were a few peas, and one or two apple-trees. They grew no other vegetables of any kind, not even the turnip, which does well at a high elevation. Their diet was milk, curds, and hard cakes of flour, made from beans and barley. The entire population had the belly-ache, and I was importuned for medicine. Remembering the chirbu in Lutkuh, I was hard-hearted, as I could not distribute cathartics to the whole valley.

We taxed them with their lack of enterprise, a euphemism for laziness. They had no excuse to offer for not growing potatoes, linseed, turnips, apricots, and the like. They merely said that it was not their custom. All day long groups of men squatted round our camp, and groups of women squatted in the village street. There seemed no work to do, except for a few men. In most countries, for instance in Kashmir or Hunza, the summer is a very busy period, but here there was no work for idle hands to do. Their fields yielded

ample if unvaried food. Women abounded, much outnumbering the men, and a few would go to the hillsides and grub up a handful of wild vegetables. The only real problem that the villagers had was fuel. They had planted willow-trees, and saved every stick they could.

I went into one of the houses, and found it warm, dark, and well built.

Grain, owing to the heavy snow in winter, was stored in great bins inside the houses, and not in pits dug in the ground, as is more usual. The walls of the living-room were ornamented with patterns made of flour dabbed on the walls (Pältäk). This is a custom found in Chitral, only among Maulais, and is done in the spring.

The heavy snow of winter means that there is nothing to do out of doors, but judging from the rags and tatters that draped all the inhabitants, little weaving was done. We asked the men what they did during the cold season. They said that as soon as they had harvested their crops, they went to a valley near Chitral town to collect resinous wood to use as torches. They then stayed indoors all the winter, eating and drinking, although a few went after duck. The women did a little weaving, and carded wool, but did not do much of either. I do not think that these villagers were an iota lazier or slacker than others in Chitral. They lived the normal life of the Chitrali peasant, whose object is a minimum of work. Considering how fond the Chitrali is of comfort and ease, it is remarkable that they are content to exist with the barest necessities of life.

I noticed that the prayer house—the people were

Maulais and do not use the word 'mosque'—was in ruins.

Being so near to the great mountain of Terich Mir, where dwells the queen of the fairies, we asked much about these beings. The people said that they had never seen the fairies, but had often heard them beating their drums and playing their flutes. They did so at the time of any threatened calamity. The terrible earthquake at Quetta had but recently occurred, and we inquired if the fairies had been heard playing. No music, however, had been heard, so it would seem that the fairies only play as a warning of local catastrophe. As to their abode, Terich Mir, we heard of a sahib who had come nine years before to examine the mountain and ascertain if it could be climbed. As he advanced, the mountain receded, and he had to abandon all idea of approaching it.

On the hill above the village two columns or pillars of stone had been erected close to each other. This was the village chronometer. When the sun, in spring, first shone through the aperture or space between the two pillars, the folk of Ojhor—or of the hamlet of Kiyar where we stayed—knew that it was time to plough the ground and sow their crops. I should have thought that the state of the snow would have been as sure a guide. At any rate, I was told, this simple device indicated what month it was.

My men complained much of the water at Kiyar, and declared that it had no digestive properties at all: and if this was so, then the villagers were doubly to be pitied, with such water to wash down their hard

food. It clearly was a different fluid from the water of the Arkari stream, which is greatly esteemed. In fact, when Mohtaram Shah III was an exile at Asmar, in Afghanistan, past which under a different name (the Kunar) the Chitral river flows, he used to make his servant bring him water from the bottom of the river; because, so the Mehtar said, the Arkari water always flowed at the bottom, and mixed with no other water.

The glory of the Ojhor valley is the superb view of the southern part of the Terich Mir massif which lies at the head. This mountain rises, a great wall of dazzling white, straight from the floor of the valley. Terich Mir is extremely difficult to see from close by. It is shut in by a network of lofty ranges of which it is the culminating point, and it is thus easy to understand the superstition that the nearer you approach, the farther the mountain recedes. On the other hand, it is visible, from a distance, at many places in Chitral. We had an excellent view of it from a point above Kiyar, in the Ojhor valley, and certainly on that side it seemed impossible to climb.

The climate, scenery, open fields, and rolling uplands of the head of the Ojhor differed greatly from the usual shut-in Chitrali valley. It was not surprising, therefore, that the late Mehtar had built a bungalow in the valley, with the inevitable telephone attached.

CHAPTER VII

'As clouds rest on Terich Mir, so does sorrow on a man.'

Chitrali Proverb

AFTER three nights in Ojhor, we left. Our destination was the Mulikho region with its magnificent glacier-filled valleys. To reach this part of the country, we had to regain the main Chitral valley, and then, turning north-west, cross a pass into the mountainous region on the west. This was the very centre of the Hindu Kush, the part of that range which possesses the highest peaks and the noblest scenery.

To escape from Ojhor without a long detour meant crossing the pass to the east, so we left at 2.30 a.m. on June 18th. It was a perfect night. There was not a speck of cloud, and the yellow full moon hung like a great cheese in the sky. We had no difficulty in reaching the top of the Kiyar Pass (about 14,800 ft.), after a trudge of five and a half hours, all over snow except for the first two miles. In another month this snow would have all disappeared, and the pass would be extremely easy. It is exceptional to have a fine view from a pass, but I was delighted beyond measure at the splendid panorama that lay before us towards the north and east.

The entire range of mountains east of the Terich Mir group and all the great peaks of the Hindu Kush were spread before us, unflecked by the lightest cloud and undimmed by a touch of mist. The whole mountain system was shrouded in that delicate azure haze that

mellows the stern outlines of the heights, and which merges imperceptibly in the deep blue sky. Nearer at hand were the major peaks on the left of the Chitral valley, that is, of the Hindu Raj range. Conspicuous amongst them was the Buni Zom (21,494 ft.). Terich Mir itself was hidden from us. We descended steeply, passing the ugly Owir glacier on our left. *Primula rosea*, iris, and other flowers were in great profusion. We were all surprised at the spaciousness of the Owir valley. Grass, water, and cultivation were abundant, and the whole of this upland was on a scale unusual in the tight, congested valleys of Chitral.

We had great difficulty in finding a dry site for our camp, and angry words ensued when an attempt was made to pitch our tents on a dripping bog. This unduly lengthened our march, as we had to go on until we found a dry patch. A sympathetic Chitrali, meeting us on the way, said with tears in his eyes, 'What a terrible time you have had.' As a matter of fact, he was wrong, but meant well. We were not particularly tired, but trouble haunts the Chitrali all his life. He is for ever avoiding it. It is the bogey of his existence and is never laid.

At last we camped on a little dry strip of ground near some stunted apricot-trees. The land belonged to the maulvi (religious teacher) who a few minutes before had been flopping about on his estate clad in a dirty ragged choga, but who suddenly reappeared in all the glory of a white turban and a new coat, looking quite the man of God.

The people of Owir said that the season had been a

severe one, that many of their fruit-trees had been killed by the cold, and that even the cats, dogs, and pigeons had all likewise perished. We prayed that a like fate had overtaken the bugs, fleas and ticks. Alas, we who had been welcomed on arrival left the next morning in a blaze of unpopularity. Everyone came round looking for money. It was just blackmail, as the few who had earned anything were duly paid. Our 'friend', the maulvi, was not the sole specimen of his genus, but had three colleagues. We paid our just dues and left.

It is one of the features of a journey in Chitral that the local village officials are seldom present. Up to date the only official we had found at his job was the constipated chirbu at Izh. Here, in Owir, one had gone to the Political Officer, another had gone to see the Mehtar and so on. This absenteeism removes all responsibility, and no one hates responsibility more than the Chitrali. One need not be long in his country to discover that the village administration is thoroughly bad. I write as a traveller who has found that in most places there is never a responsible person or, if there is, he does not appear; and this is not usual in the East, where generally some village official is present, even if dressed in very brief authority.

Fortunately, our path led down the hill, and we had not far to go. One of our coolies was a small brat—'just finished drinking his mother's milk', remarked Subhana, the Kashmiri. Another was so old that 'his head and beard swept the ground'—to quote the same critic. However, our feeble carriers tottered as far as

Barm, where we halted, as we could not go further with this sorry collection.

A pleasant elderly man, once a jemadar in the Chitral Scouts, came to see me. He had just returned from a tour of all the places of pilgrimage in India, praying for a son. His only surviving child was a girl five years old, although he had lost fourteen other children. A sad business.

Barm and its environs were attractive. The crops were good. The wheat had a fine head and a fine stalk, promise of ample flour and fodder. All the fields were dirty, and weeds were growing thickly, so much so that the heads of wild grass or oats were as plentiful as those of wheat. All day long the men of the village squatted round us, having nothing else to do. And as for the women, they were presumably in their houses equally well employed.

From here I climbed up to a point whence I had a magnificent view of Terich Mir (25,426 ft.), and the Barm glacier below. There was, unfortunately, a slight cloud on the peak, and it was astonishing how the weather changed. At noon, except for this one, there was not a cloud in the sky. At 2 p.m. the entire heavens were grey and a great wind roared down on us. It was disappointing to struggle uphill for two and a half hours, and to have a grand but imperfect view as the reward of one's labour.

We left the next day. I rose early, intending once more to climb to the spur and look on Terich Mir, but the weather was unpropitious and the sky overcast, so we marched away to the village of Lon.



SUMMIT OF TERICH MIR

We crossed a spur with a fine view, and saw Terich Mir, but it was wreathed in mist. From this point we looked down on to the main Chitral valley. At our feet was Reshun with its fields, yellow, green, and brown in neat squares. Farther up the valley was Buni, the most populous place in the country, and beyond were the mountains, remote and blue. Above and close by was the stone known as Roikushini, the place of human slaughter. The legend is that two women, a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, were walking together, when they were met and killed. Some say the murderer was the irate husband, who belonged to Lon, our destination. It was not the murder that impressed the people, but the fact that when the two poor creatures were slain on the stone, their blood flowed in different ways and refused to mix. The point is that just as in life mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are always at variance and can never agree, so even in death, the blood of one will not combine with that of the other.

When we reached Lon we encamped very pleasantly under a solitary but enormous chenar-tree, which provided ample shade for us all. I told the headman to produce the murderer of the two women, so that I might photograph him. Thereupon the elders all declared that it was a libel on their village. The man never came from Lon, and if he did, it was generations ago, long before any of their stock had ever come to the place. One man said that the whole story was false. There was a stone with a red and white line on it, and popular romance had built up this libellous legend.

There was a great deal of saltpetre in the soil about here, and many subsidences had taken place, with much damage both to pasture and arable. Great lumps of black earth smeared with white efflorescence were visible, and unsightly cliffs and narrow nalas, threatening collapse at the next rain, made ugly scars on the landscape.

The villagers always provided my servants with charpoys. It was a kindly attention but it entailed certain disadvantages. Inayat Ullah went round with a kettle of boiling water, holding the bed at every angle, seeking (I fear in vain) to slay the lurking inhabitants by pouring the water into the cracks. 'No more beds for me', said Daulat, a few days later, after a night spent under a glorious full moon in undressing and dressing, scratching and hunting. The resolution was broken, of course. Our Chitrali orderly was unaffected by the inmates of his couch. Accustomed from youth to such companions—and they to him—he slept undisturbed.

The country about Lon consisted of high rolling uplands with poor cultivation, and its appearance reminded us of parts of Turkestan. The fields were everywhere dirty and unweeded, and the agriculture slovenly. From here we had donkeys and ponies to carry our kit—a great relief from human carriers—but their owners were too stupid to load our gear, and it all had to be done by ourselves.

We continued over these uplands, crossing spurs holding hidden patches of cultivation, with water abundant. The views up and down the Chitral valley

were pretty. Iris grew in great quantities, and in the more barren places that common but beautiful plant, the wild caper. Its blossoms, steeped in water, make excellent vinegar or can be dried and eaten as a vegetable. Its buds make good pickles, and the seeds when ground yield a very sweet oil. It is a much appreciated plant and has, in consequence, a hard struggle for life.

The oleaster, grey and rather small, grew abundantly. Its berries, dry, powdery and rather like sawdust, are eaten willingly in the odd way the East has for enjoying food that is tasteless, indigestible, and innutritious. Curiously enough, in Chitral no one made any spirit from it, but it can yield a very potent arrack, and with the Maulai population, which is not teetotal, this was a strange omission, considering how they distil strong liquor from mulberries.

Beyond Lon we entered a Sunni area, as the graves told us. On the graves of the Sunni Mohammedan two stones are placed upright about a foot from each end of the grave; and as these stones are usually slanting, the appearance of the grave looks irreverently debauched. On the grave of a Maulai only a flat stone is laid in the middle.

We passed hamlets with strange names—Gohkir and Drungagh for example—but no one knew why they were so called. I found it quite exceptional in Chitral for anyone to tell me what a place-name meant. Some said that these unusual names dated from old heathen times, and I think that this is probable.

As I was walking along, a man suddenly came up and danced blithely before me, turning round and round

like a well-balanced teetotum. 'Oh, it is only charas (hashish),' said Daulat. 'You can tell that by looking at his eyes.' I am sure that he was right.

Suddenly—odd sights are always springing on one in the East—we saw, on a black exposed ridge, the very last place one would expect, a bungalow. This was the summer residence of Shahzada Khediv-ul-mulk, one of the late Mehtar's sons, and a number of men came up to say that the owner was on his way. So our march came to an unexpected end. I pitched my tent near the house, my servants went into a small room and I walked on to greet my host. He came at last and we both entered the bungalow. Gradually the weather grew worse and worse. We shut the windows, that is, the shutters, and as the room was only lit by some panes of coloured glass, there we sat, like canons in a cathedral.

The Shahzada observed that there was always a wind in the place and that it was always cool. Considering the height and exposed situation, it could not have been otherwise. A bleaker, drearier spot I could not imagine. My tent had been struck to save it from being blown away, and I was thankful to move into the bungalow.

Later in the day, Lieutenant D. N. B. Hunt, R.E.,¹ the Garrison Engineer, turned up and we were a cheerful party on his arrival. He had just returned from the Terich area where he had been reconnoitring Istoron Nal, or the Horseshoe (24,271 ft.), which he had hoped

¹ This splendid officer was drowned in the Chitral river on 15th October 1935.

to climb with Captain R. J. Lawder of the Chitral Scouts. The fairies resented his visit, plaguing him with bad weather, as is their wont, and his journey but not his temper had been spoilt. We were naturally much interested in his experiences as we were going to the same place, and we wondered how the fairies would treat us.

It rained all night, and the roof leaked, but I slept comfortably. Not so my poor servants, who spent the night chasing the Chitrali bug, about the only wild game left in the country, and as active as the human inhabitants are lazy. The morning was fine and we said farewell to each other as we were all going different ways.

Our destination was the Zani Pass (12,789 ft.), over the watershed of the Terich and Mastuj rivers. The valley of the Terich river is called the Atrak or Ataq, and it is only the comparatively short nala in the vicinity of Terich Mir and at the head of the main valley that is called after the mountain itself. It was, we concluded, too far to cross the pass that day, so we camped at the highest village on the way, Uthul by name. Below us lay the wonderful cultivation of Kosht, a great expanse of fields and fruit-trees, and as luxuriant as any in the country. It may be true that the water is apt to be scanty and brackish, but one would hardly imagine so from looking at the cultivation. Kosht shares with several other places the honour of producing the finest apricots in the country, and we wept to find that none were ripe.

Our path lay over many spurs, and on the barren

slopes were countless 'hol' plants, with their long yellow heads looking exactly like strange yellow sausages stuck upon sticks and thrust into the ground. The hol (an *Eremurus*) is a flower, and the leaves when young are good to eat, so there was no need for my men to deride it and say it was a worthless plant, growing on graves and middens. It was a lovely sight to see the hillside golden with the blossoms.

Our coolies were full of vigour and wanted to cross the pass that day, but time was against us. They sang and danced at intervals, amusingly enough, but I should have preferred that they spent their energy on finishing their job. The song was always the same, about two girls of whom the elder had died on the wedding-day, and the younger had been substituted for her by her parents. As husband and wife do not see each other till it is too late to regret the marriage, the device was easy to accomplish. The song was a lament of the bride's mother, describing how the garden was bare and the flower plucked—because, as someone cynically remarked, the old woman would have to look after the goats and vegetables herself. The ballad was not indigenous but came from Ghizr, now in the Gilgit Agency, from where, I fancy, many of the singers' ancestors had originally come. For a dirge the song was cheerful.

The village of Uthul was pleasant, with lawns and trees; and as usual the entire population squatted round, as happened wherever we went in Chitral. It made no difference if we stayed a day or a week, the male population sat in solemn silence and watched us.

They were friendly and interested and did no harm, and were quite welcome. This was the time in the husbandman's year when he should be busy all day long, and so he is in Kashmir and other parts. But here the men sat and stared, and the women were concealed indoors. I thought of the dirty fields, the miserable cultivation, the general neglect. The orchards and crops had shown us what nature could do in spite of the indifferent owners. I fear that the Chitrali is too lazy to weed, too lazy to plant vegetables or trees, often too lazy even to talk. The women might well do some of the lighter field work which their men folk avoid.

We had no trouble in crossing the Zani-an (12,789 ft.), a very easy pass. We left as dawn was faintly visible, and masses of cloud lay thickly on the eastern peaks. From the pass itself we had a fine but brief view of Terich Mir, and, I think, Istorro Nal, but the clouds came on so swiftly that identification was difficult. The coolies again danced and sang, but it was the same song, now grown rather stale. So steep were the sides of Atrak Gol that, looking down, we could see nothing of the fields and houses that we knew were below us. We hastened, and it was only when we were near the river that we saw a long green ribbon of luxuriant cultivation. What is more, we actually saw some women weeding and learned on arrival that an effort was made to keep the fields clean.

The people were mixed; the majority originally came from Yasin or Ghizr, a few from Badakhshan, and they differed slightly from other Chitralis as the seclusion of this valley had helped to establish the type.

We camped at Shagram—or Black Village, a very common name—the highest permanent settlement in the valley, with well-grown poplars and willows and even some apricot-trees. And there it rained and rained. The inhabitants were pessimists; discouragingly so. They said that the rain always came when the sahib did. The moment a sahib entered the valley, the rain came down as soon as his tent went up. Indeed, they produced many disconcerting cases of such coincidences. Bad weather, too, meant bad crops, and so the sahibs (and not the fairies) were to blame for that. The remote cause was the fairies, jealous of visitors, but primarily it was the sahibs who were to blame, for if the sahibs did not come, the fairies would not be angry.

We had now been in the Mulikho district for two or three days, having entered it near Kosht. The word means 'the lower country'. It is an extensive division of the state, though not a very important one. These administrative divisions seemed to be ignored in actual practice, as with a highly centralised government, the local governor, tied to a telephone all day and all night, has neither authority nor scope.

After two days of very dreary weather it cleared up—or looked like it—and Daulat very wisely insisted on a start. My intention was to ascend the Udren Gol that runs north and south into the main valley above Shagram, and then continues up the latter valley to the Terich area. We had with us the local hunter and guide, a man with blue eyes, rosy face and fair beard. He had a fine open countenance, was cheerful and

well built; but he was a liar, untrustworthy, and with a heart like mud.

We left the village with relief after our enforced delay, without the cook and orderly, who remained to take care of the spare kit. We went under high conglomerate cliffs, and passed one of the artificial duck ponds with the wicker trap at the head, into which the birds are gently driven. The trap consisted of osier withes bent in a circle over the water. We turned up the Udren valley, and soon came to a pleasant camping-ground. It was not far enough for me, but our guide swore by all his gods that there was no other one farther up. I can never understand why men tell lies which must be proved to be such. For so it happened; we ascended the valley the next day and found a charming camp with grass, wood and water, less than two miles farther up. Two miles is a great deal sometimes—perhaps the guide and coolies thought so—but it would have been a boon to us to have camped there.

As we were walking up the valley, we were astonished to see a strange man approaching us. The Chitrali who was walking in front of us bolted at once, convinced that the stranger was a jinn—and a very seedy one at that—but the apparition was only a tired messenger who had missed our camp, though how he had managed to do so in a narrow valley I could not understand.

We went a long way up the Udren, and were rewarded with a splendid view, especially of a side of Istoru Nal that few, if any, had seen before. The shoulder of the mountain, which from one aspect looks

so easy, now appeared steep and dangerous. The whole flank was one white glittering precipice.

The Udren valley provided much good grass of the wiry kind that is so precious, for it is highly nutritious. But the pastures were neglected, and the people declared that they never grazed their flocks there. We saw stretches of land once irrigated and harvested but now cluttered with debris. We were told that in old days the folk were well-to-do, with many animals and heavy crops, but now they had fallen on evil times, and their flocks and harvest had decreased. I fancy that when these people first came to the valley—they were comparatively recent immigrants—they were keen and energetic, but had fallen victims of Chitrali languor, for I know of no land where *dolce far niente* is so true a motto as it is of Chitral.

Formerly—as in so many of the valleys of these parts—there was a route from Badakhshan, and in those days there was plenty of traffic down the Udren. The end came when the glaciers advanced and destroyed everything, for the ice and moraine made movement almost impossible.

Our ascent had been almost wholly over the glacier, or else crawling between it and the sides of the valley. This glacier in its youth and vigour must have been a beautiful spectacle, but it was now seedy, shabby, and decayed. It was plastered with a thick moraine, its snout was black and unseemly, dead ice littered its course, and the whole ice-river was in retreat. This condition applies to almost all the major glaciers of western Chitral. Having done great damage, they

seem content with this distinction and are now retiring, leaving havoc behind.

There was an evil-smelling umbelliferous plant growing luxuriantly in the valley, used for fodder in the winter. Its smell causes a headache. Our Ananias picked out a thick stalk, ate it with relish, and handed some to Daulat, who spat it out with curses and disgust, declaring it to be ten times more bitter than quinine.

Having examined the Udren, we retraced our steps and went up the head of the main valley, which was filled with glaciers, some alive and some dead. The chief glacier, the Upper Terich, started full of life but could not keep up the pace, and ended in a hideous black snout. Before reaching it we passed a place usually known as Sheikh Niar or Niak, an agreeable spot with abundant wood. When I asked about the Sheikh, I was told that he was wholly fictitious; the real name was Shighnani. Years ago before the glaciers blocked the ways over the passes to the west, there was a popular route down this valley from Central Asia, just as there was down the Udren. One fine day a horde of bandits from Shighnan, a district to the north of Badakhshan, came down to raid Mulikho but were defeated at this spot—hence the name.

Our coolies were not a great success. After three or four hours of a gentle crawl which a baby could easily improve on, they sank exhausted on the ground and declared they could do no more. Our progress, impeded as we were with these weaklings, was slow. Let me say at once that the men were shamming. They very sensibly argued that it was unremunerative to

complete in a day what could easily be extended to three. Ca' canny is by no means an exclusively Western artifice.

Our guide abused the coolies to us, and then, turning to his countrymen, fervently advised them to do the least they could. This pastime was highly appreciated as the height of cleverness—running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. To give the hillman his due, he makes a success of a piece of roguery that usually trips up other men.

Suddenly, after three fine days, the clouds gathered, the mists descended, and we had to halt for two nights in falling snow and damp clinging fog. However, the weather cleared again, and I was able to examine the valley.

We went straight up, over the Terich glacier, and there, rising above us from our right, was the whole resplendent face of Istoró Nal. It seemed to spring like a giant from the side of the valley, and it was only by going to the middle of the glacier that we could enjoy the view.

The scenery in the Upper Terich valley was of the highest order. Even that coy and evasive peak, Terich Mir itself, was seen, though it lurked bashfully at the head of a side-valley. From below it, a glacier poured out a cataract of foaming ice. Close by, a dome-shaped mountain rose. From other side-valleys glaciers contributed their quota to the main ice-stream, and at the far head, to the west, beyond Istoró Nal and Terich Mir, golden in the last rays of sunset, was a circle of peaks, glaciers, snow-fields, and massifs, the very glory

of the Hindu Kush. There can be few places in the world where such magnificent scenery can be so easily approached and enjoyed.

We now returned to our base camp, and we did so a great deal more quickly than we had come, for the coolies were as anxious to regain their homes as old horses their stables. They had parted from their male relatives with a clatter of resounding kisses—their women had decorously said farewell in private—and when they returned from their ten days' exile, they were welcomed with affectionate fervour. We parted from them on the worst possible terms. We had only paid them twice their due, and deep disappointment and strong language left a sour flavour in the atmosphere when we finally departed from Shagram.

Our path lay down the whole length of the Atrak (Ataq) valley, which is parallel to the main Chitral valley, divided by the long ridge which we had previously crossed. But the valleys run in opposite directions—the Atrak (Ataq) to the north-east, the Chitral south-west. The confusing part is that the river of the Atrak valley is called, contrary to the usual custom, the Terich river, and at the end of the Atrak valley it joins the Turikho, turns south and unites with the Mastuj or Chitral river.

It was a blazing hot day in early July as we began our march down the valley, which danced with rapture in the sunlight, and the reflections leapt before us. I am no admirer of Chitrali cultivation, but the glowing light hid all its defects, and rich and hospitable seemed the countryside. There were tall poplars and groves of the

smaller wild ones, the harvest was gently turning colour, and red and white roses and common flowers sprinkled the roadside with a dozen hues. The river plunged and roared beneath us, and above the fields and orchards the steep shale slopes rose swiftly to the glaciers. Our destination was the Rosh Gol, up which I hoped to go: and it was a short stage. A kindly Maulai elder came to see me, and gave me a bunch of sweet-william. So I crossed the Terich river on a bridge of hurdles, laid on two poles, sadly handicapped by this nosegay.

The village we stayed in was called Lasht. The word means a plain or a flat place and, owing to the exasperating economy of the hillman, whose vision and imagination are limited to his valley, there are dozens of Lashts in Chitral. Here we encamped under apricot- and apple-trees—alas, the fruit was all unripe—and spent two nights pleasantly enough. The weather was fine and warm, and there was a general and much needed washing of clothes and bodies.

From our camp, at the mouth of the Rosh Gol, we could see a peak at its head, 18,500 ft. high, and I knew from the report of the Survey of India—an invaluable brochure—that there were others and bigger ones. We had several visitors, including two lals. A lal is a well-to-do man of the upper classes, but in practice he is rather a decayed species of landowner. I refer to him and his later on, but his object in life is to do no work at all. We had also with us our devoted attendant, the chirbu, the official whose duty it is, as I have explained, to look after the wants of visitors, and who,

like other Chitrali officials, is usually absent when required. I felt very sorry for this particular one, as he was conscientious and inadequate. He had a peevish and anxious face with a long nose. He wore red boots and a pair of old socks below his bare calves. His eyes were puckered up, and an air of intense misery pervaded him. He was one of those born to obey and Fate had condemned him to command, to pursue coolies, fowls, and mutton; to minister and not to be ministered to. I dared not think what he would have done if there had been more visitors. Even our stay was manifestly ageing him. He had a brother in the same line of business, who was even plainer in features.

We found the way up the Rosh Gol hot but not difficult. We went at first through a bottle-neck under high cliffs, with a fine waterfall 400 ft. high, which was blown out by the wind into the sun, and glowed with every colour like a magic rainbow. We also passed a hole in the ground where the peasants hid their treasures in the good old days of forays before we foolishly came to this unremunerative land.

The flowers were delightful. Plenty of wild blue flax, yellow poppies, large white anemones, several saxifrages, white and purple columbine, and the thick-leaved *Corydalis crassifolia*—that best of vegetables—covered the ground. We passed by old sangars (stone defences) dating from the time when there was a regular route down the valley, before the glaciers destroyed the path over the pass. We also gathered many wild onions. My men assured me that they were delicious and well flavoured, but people who find the strongest

garlic as delicate to the palate as sea-kale are no judges of harsh-flavoured vegetables.

After toiling up the right, we crossed to the left of the valley, and at last reached our destination, Duru, a delightful grove of willow, birch, and juniper, with soft green turf covered with purple orchids and a clear spring bubbling up. This was the highest possible camping-ground with fuel, and it was good enough for us.

From here I visited the head of the valley, and found a peak 23,000 ft. high, with one farther down 24,000 ft. There were other summits round us rising to 19,000, 20,000, and 21,000 ft. Years ago, before the glaciers disturbed the tranquillity of the landscape, there was a route by the Kotgaz Pass into Badakhshan. To-day the pass on the Chitral side is a confused mass of snow and ice, with a green and white glacier belching and frothing down. The pass no doubt can be crossed, but not by the ordinary pedestrian. To cross it has become a mountaineering exploit, and I found no one who had ever achieved it.

Six miles above Duru was a pleasant little camping-ground often known as Kotgaz. It was at the mouth of the Glen of the Snowcock, but of these we saw but one. The rest had long ago been killed and eaten.

We left this lovely scene of snow and ice, glacier and rock, and returned to our camp at Duru. Later in the day, I went up a hill on the left of the Warsing Gol, the side-valley just below our camp down which poured a hideous and turbulent stream of black water. After eight hours in the upper valley, I felt disinclined for

more climbing, especially as the heat was intense, but this time I was indeed rewarded for my trouble.

Two noble prospects lay before us. To the north was the snowy side, so to speak, contrasting with the rock face we had seen that morning, of the 24,000-foot giant. So near, indeed, that they seemed almost within a stone's throw, were the hanging glaciers, cornices and various snow mouldings of this great mountain. Opposite us, across the main valley, were the snows of the Mutrichili nala. It is true that in height these were inferior to the other massif, but all the same there were two peaks of 19,000 ft. and one of 20,000 ft. and these were like towers of a fortress, poised as they were on the crest of a precipitous cirque of snow that united them in a graceful, glittering curve. I returned to camp well contented.

We descended the valley the following day and camped in the same place as before. It was very hot at these lower levels, and I regretted our alpine camp. The coolies, of course, were overjoyed at being home again, and able to do nothing all day. At Lasht was a man with a small garden of badly planted vegetables. We told him that he should sow the seeds in a smaller patch and then transplant them. 'What', he cried, 'take all that trouble? If I can't sow vegetables as easily as I can wheat or barley, why should I bother? They aren't worth it.' His potatoes were sown in the same slovenly fashion, and our remonstrance met with the same reply. 'Mushaqqat shum.'—'Trouble is an evil thing', or 'Terrible trouble.' This is the motto of the Chitrali everywhere in this lovely land. It is the

love song and the swan song and the national anthem of the Chitrali, and it sums up his desires, emotions, yearnings and outlook. But I hope for a change. The country has a young and energetic ruler, and the materials are there if he wishes to rebuild or reform his subjects.

The depressed-looking chirbu came for his tip and then refused to take it. I offered him cash and a good pocket-knife, but he valued his services more than we did. After a sad, profitless altercation, it ended by the knife and the money being thrown into the river, to the discomfiture of the foolish fellow. I think that the lesson was not lost.

We continued to descend the Atrak (Ataq) valley through which the Terich river, now fat and boisterous, thanks to a spell of three warm days, roared in a black flood. The crops were tall and ripe, dirtier and less weeded than ever. One wheat-field was full of oats, so much so that I asked if they had been sown deliberately. I was told that they were self-sown, but I know that Chitralis do sow their wild oats like other people.

As I continued to descend this fertile valley, I came on a number of women grazing their flocks. This is a Chitrali custom and a thoroughly bad one. No woman can attend properly to goats and sheep on a hillside. It is not a woman's job. It is, however, a common enough sight in this country, and it is one of the reasons why the animals are so much fewer than they should be.

Our destination was the neighbouring district of Turikho—the Upper Country, just as Mulikho is the Lower Country. It was not very easy to reach, as

there was no bridge over the Turikho river for some way down the stream. Let me here remark that the lack of bridges in the country approaches a scandal. One of the benefits that British supervision might have bestowed was a sufficiency of good serviceable country cantilever bridges; and it has not done so. As a matter of fact, I failed to discover any benefit that our forty years' protectorate has given to the common people, that is, to the great bulk of the population. Owing to the lack of bridges, we had to reach Turikho—if we were to avoid a long detour—by Lonkuh and the Razdan Pass. So we found ourselves most agreeably encamped at Lonkuh on a beautiful lawn shaded with walnut, apricot, and mulberry trees. The barley was ripe. It should have been cut three days before. The lucerne was in full blossom, which meant that one crop had been lost. All day long the men of Lonkuh sat, in three separate detachments, and stared at our camp. They were comfortable in the shade. They spat vigorously with long eructations and expectorations. The usual little offices that are offered to a traveller were not carried out. It was not their fault. It was just ignorance.

I felt very sorry indeed as I sat and looked at these parties of idlers. Feckless, aimless, uninterested and drowned in laziness, they loafed away the long sunny July day. The fields urgently needed their care, their flocks were neglected and they did not care a doit. What a waste of life, to kill time in such a fatuous way! In Kashmir, Gilgit, and elsewhere the peasants were up before dawn and in bed after dark at this season. We

noticed, too, that the fruit-trees were diseased by a kind of sticky cobweb that glued the leaves together. In the neighbouring countries, as soon as a peasant sees this, he takes a long stick with a prong at the end and removes the cause before the disease has taken hold of the tree. Here the apricots and apples were left to luck and germs.

Lonkuh is at the mouth of the Lon valley, where the chief mines of orpiment (yellow sulphide of arsenic) are situated. It is said that but little ore is now won, either because the mine is exhausted or through fraud. I wondered if the unhealthy appearance of some of the inhabitants was due to working in the mines. On the other hand, my men declared that the water was very bad—it was certainly brackish—and did not digest the food. I noticed too that there were a good number of goitres. So perhaps the general lassitude of the people was caused by circumstances they could not control, and bad water and orpiment can hardly be healthy when taken internally.

CHAPTER VIII

'If you and I are both well born [Zundre], who will hold our horses when we meet?'—*Chitrali Proverb*

FROM Lonkuh, as I have said, our nearest way to Turikho was over the Razdan Pass (10,500 ft.). We left the village, crossed the Longol stream, passed through the next village and toiled straight up the ridge. It was a short, very steep climb to the top. The weather was inauspicious. Clouds were gathering, and by the time we reached the crest of the pass, the whole heavens, in every quarter, were very threatening. Indigo clouds were rolling up on every side. To the north and west it was raining hard, yet the Chitralis laughed loud and long when I made my men take out their waterproofs. 'It is not going to rain: why take the trouble?' they said. The summit of the pass was a pleasant green downland, and we stepped swiftly down the other side. But in ten minutes the storm struck us; in another ten we were almost drenched. Every little watercourse poured down a thick flood of earth, shale and water. We slithered and slipped, but as it is easier to fall downhill than up, we made progress and finally, wet through and very cross, we reached our first village in Turikho.

Here Daulat, by some miracle of fortune, had secured a house. There is no difficulty in finding a house in Chitral, yet a clean one is as rare as a pineapple and a clean one he had found. It was a welcome refuge. Later, the weather cleared and we could pitch our tents, but I remained in the upper room, which was open on

one side. The ceiling was ornamented with sprigs of oleaster and wild rose, now withered, and in front of me was an enormous, shady and evil-smelling walnut-tree. I am sure that I was a nuisance, as a small hut, used as a dairy, was just below me and the old lady was, considering her years, extremely bashful. This same old lady amused us by saying that when she saw us coming she thought that it was a wedding party. She had long hair, a brown wrapper, and a quick shuffle, and she glided rapidly away from me if I moved near her. That was true modesty. I noticed that her daughter-in-law, an extremely handsome woman with long black ringlets, aquiline features, and a fair complexion—she might have stepped out of the frame of an early Victorian portrait—was less skittish and coy, but happily equally modest.

Three miles away across the river at Shagram was the house of the second son of the late Mehtar, Mozaffar-ul-mulk, but the only communication between us was a rope bridge. I received a note to say that the Shahzada could not manage to cross by such a bridge, to which I replied that I would try. I hate all such bridges. No man likes to emulate a tightrope dancer over a roaring, swirling river, and I determined if the bridge were bad—and rope bridges vary in quality as much as whisky—to sit on one side and shout compliments to the Shahzada on the other.

A rope bridge consists of three ropes. It is a simple, economical, and insecure contraption. The performer walks on the lower or centre rope, and clutches convulsively the two ropes on either side. The ropes are

made of twisted willow withes or whatever material—birch or even juniper—may be available. The bridge is suspended from one bank to the other in a circle, so there is always an ascent or descent, sometimes very considerable, according to the direction in which one goes.

We found the bridge adequate but not good. There was a sad absence of the short minor ropes which secure the hand ropes to the main centre rope. The sun poured down, and as I crossed I sweated with heat and funk.

I found the Shahzada on the other side with his retinue, and we rode pleasantly to his house, which was a well-built attractive residence round a courtyard. The veranda was carved and decorated with ibex horns. My host was most kind and gave me an excellent lunch, and I forgot the disagreeable crossing to reach so desirable an end.

We then had a demonstration of the local dance, peculiar to Turikho. The men stand in a line, sing, prance, bend their heads and shoulders well down, but do not move backwards or forwards, remaining planted in the same place. The dance is supposed to be a wedding dance.

After several pleasant hours, I said good-bye to the kind Shahzada and once more crawled slowly and gingerly over the bridge.

The weather was still overcast, but we left next day for the Ziwar Gol, which joined the Turikho river a little above our camp. It is a fairly long valley flowing from the west, and I was anxious to see the scenery,

which was said to be very fine. The same valley holds some hot springs which are much frequented. A bridge had to be replaced, but that was easy enough.

On our way up the valley we came to a juniper-tree growing by the path. Whenever visitors to the hot springs come to this tree, they cut a small piece of stuff from their clothes—garments in Chitral lend themselves to such a scission—and tie it to the tree. They also lay a small offering of apricots or bread (brat, a thick cake) at the foot of the tree. The object of these attentions is to appease the fairies, as Kol-i-mukhi, one of the daughters of the fairy queen of Terich Mir, lives in the Ziwar Gol. Having performed these rites, the people proceed, assured of the kindly countenance of the fairies. Failure to fulfil these observances means that the visitors stumble and fall on the path, to their injury. It is very unwise to risk giving offence to the fairies.

What struck me here was something more material, the size of the rhubarb. The leaves were the largest that I had ever seen, but the stalks were useless. My Kashmiri follower tried them but threw them away in disgust.

We could not reach the hot springs as our way to the head of the valley lay on the opposite or right side, and the springs were situated near where the left side of the valley became impassable. My host at Shagram had built a bungalow there. We were just opposite, but the boiling black torrent between us was quite unfordable. Instead we plunged into a great white foaming stream that came cascading down the hillside. We camped that



IN ZIWAR GOL

night under a great wall of red rock that rose to a rugged pinnacle, known as Noghor Zom or the Fortress Mount, a common enough name in Chitrali. Our camp was pleasant, with clear water and abundant grass and juniper.

We had with us a small sour-faced child of twelve, whose duty it was to carry a pot of milk. When we reached camp, this boy was sent off by the coolies to fetch snow to cool their drinking water, and I saw him trudging glumly back, with a great hump on his shoulders. In the morning he had vanished, to my regret, as I wanted to give an anna to this little misanthrope on condition that he smiled.

The following day we reached our destination at the head of the valley, after an easy march along the side of the river for nine miles. But our poor Chitrali coolies crawled along, and with difficulty averaged a mile an hour. The loads were by no means heavy. My heart bled for these men, but what could I do? After all, if a hillman cannot carry an average load on an average path, what can he do? Everything was an excuse for a halt. They would remove the worn-out and evil-smelling bits of skin in which their feet were wrapped—the remnants of the tachin or national footgear of the country—and then tie them on again, thus prolonging the journey interminably. Poor things, I suppose that it was not their fault that they had no endurance of any kind. I wondered what they did in an emergency. Nothing, I suppose.

Our camp was a delightful place, amid brakes of willow, clear springs and abundant grass. Indeed, the

whole of the Ziwar abounded in pasture, trees, and possible ground for barley or beans. But it interested its owners as much as the Sahara. It was too much trouble.

There was a drawback to life at Gram—the word only means ‘village’—and that was the flies: not the ordinary tiresome domestic variety, though these flourished abundantly, but the two blood-sucking kinds. There was the small grey one which always has the bad taste to bite the top of one’s nose; and next and far worse, the fat, really bloodthirsty green-eyed brute which in parts of Central Asia attacks horses and donkeys with such fury and voracity that the poor brutes die from loss of blood. I wondered what these flies lived on. There was not an animal of any kind to be seen until we arrived, and it was not surprising that they attacked us with energy and persistence, ravenous after a long fast. Fortunately, just as ghosts vanish at cock-crow, so these intrepid insects disappeared the moment the sun set, and we had rest.

At Gram we were close to a series of great glaciers which were the arteries supplying water to the Ziwar stream. The Hosko or ‘straight glacier’ was the chief but by no means the most beautiful. Its neighbours were smaller but far more worth seeing, with lovely peaks springing out of their frozen waves. These summits were in the very heart of the Hindu Kush. That mountain range was here seen at its best; from the Terich Mir massif on the north right down to this point it displayed its noblest peaks and glaciers and spread all its treasures before the eyes of man.

It was difficult to realise that only six miles away was Afghanistan, and that the Oxus and Russian Turkestan were but fifteen miles distant. But between us was the Hindu Kush, as formidable and impassable a barrier as ever formed the frontier between two states.

Generations ago this valley was part of a main route to Badakhshan. The remains of two long irrigation channels, the site of a water-mill now smothered—strange fate—in glacial moraine, the ruins of a fair-sized hamlet and fields of grass that once grew barley, were all eloquent of a prosperous past. Lucerne, planted generations ago, still grew wild, though it had not been cultivated for years. The path that once guided many caravans and travellers over the border was still visible but untrod. All this desolation was due to the activity of nature which had poured out three devastating rivers of ice. Although the route had been abandoned, there was no excuse for abandoning the site of Gram. The climate had not changed, the place had been little damaged, and only laziness had caused its present desolation. There was one hut still in fair repair for the use of shikaris.

We had been told by everyone that there was good shooting in this remote and unfrequented valley, but the information was false. We saw one small ibex, and I heard a single snowcock whistle mournfully, although Daulat declared that he had seen five. Indeed, he took a great deal of trouble over these birds, but had no luck, for shooting is a difficult pastime when there is nothing to shoot. As we had seen the fresh marks of

a shikari's dog, our hopes were never high, yet there should have been many animals in this nala. The season and the ground were admirable, but as poaching is, with polo, one of the only real occupations of the people, and as they had good modern rifles too, the fate of the local ibex was sealed. The blood lust of the Asiatic, when he has a rifle, cannot be understood by any European. This lust the Chitrali possesses in heaped-up measure, and all classes, from the ruling classes downwards, fail to see the folly of exterminating the splendid natural fauna of the country. Extermination goes on unchecked, and in ten years there will be more ibex and markhor in the London Zoo than in Chitral. It is greatly to be deplored that we have done nothing to stop this slaughter.

From Gram our destination was the neighbouring valley of Uzhnu, which is parallel with the east of the Ziwar. Instead of going down the latter and up the former, we determined to cross the watershed between the two. At Gram we were about 10,500 ft. up, and a climb of 4,000 feet would take us to the dividing crest. It took us two days to cross the pass, which was an extremely easy one. We found that the daily task of our local Chitralis was limited to four hours, and at the end of that time they could—or would—do no more. The first night we spent below the pass, which was called the Ishkokht, after scratching sleeping-places for ourselves in the shale. The weather and view were alike perfect. This halt beneath the crest on the Ziwar side was quite unnecessary, but the coolies declared quite untruly that they could do no more. An

unnecessary halt at a height of 14,000 feet is much to be deprecated in a fickle climate and with no wood.

We crossed the pass next day and descended into the Chikar valley. The view from the crest was very beautiful. On the west side was a conical peak 23,000 feet high, to the right of which the snow ridge seemed to rise to the same height, whilst to the left or north of the glacier we also saw Noghor Zom. The Chikar glacier itself was a mass of ice, clean and sparkling. The Sar-i-rich, the Matterhorn of this part of Chitral, and 20,424 feet high, was very near. To the north was the Shahgol, or Black Valley Ridge, a curious feature, with a long reddish summit like the crest of a cock, and all its lower slopes black rock.

We came tumbling down quickly enough on to the glacier, and that afternoon camped at the head of the Uzhnu, under trees, with a fine spring of water and soft shale to sleep on. So steep was the hillside that I had to be careful not to fall into the kitchen, where Muhib, the most ravenous cook that ever boiled an egg or roasted a tough fowl, might be seen at any time of the day or night steadily munching.

The Uzhnu stream flows from the great Kotgaz glacier, ten miles long, and passes through a deep and narrow defile. The next day I crossed by a snow bridge, worked up the left bank of the river, and climbed to a considerable height. I had with me an old man with a goatee beard who had come to meet me, and who knew all about everything—in other words about nothing. He asserted that he would take us to a place where the whole glacier was visible, an offer it would have been

folly to refuse in a valley all cliffs, abysses, and unfordable rivers. After climbing to a great height, we found that a hill (as I had suspected) cut off all view of the glacier. We had to descend, not in the best of tempers, and finally arrived opposite a dismal place called Wakhikan Gumbat, or the tomb of the man from Wakhan, who had crossed the Kotgaz Pass—now closed—into Chitral and had succumbed to the exertion. His tomb, too, had now disappeared. We here looked down on a very unpromising sight—a deep canyon in which flowed a stream from our right and another from the Kotgaz beyond. The stream in front of us we could not cross. I had only Chitralis with me and they sat down and wept by the waters, observing plaintively, ‘So fast, so fast!’ My Chitrali orderly dabbled his stick in the edge of the stream like an embarrassed and inefficient wizard. There was nothing to do except to return peevishly to camp. So back we toiled along the slopes of a hill covered with cream-coloured spiraea.

I decided to abandon the Kotgaz. I knew that I had seen the finest of the peaks in the adjacent tributary valley of Chikar as well as in the Ziwar Gol. Clouds were gathering, a fresh spell of bad weather threatened, and the coolies had eaten all their rations—though that did not matter as further supplies could easily be had. The poor fellows were also suffering the agonies of nostalgia. They had been six days away from home, with six days’ continuous work. They were far from being bad fellows. We could manage them easily enough, we liked them and they liked us. They laughed and joked, but as no Chitrali can

work seriously, so they could not. So we packed up, and went down the Uzhnu valley. The path, though downhill, was not easy. Sometimes we minced gingerly along the steep clay slopes, hard as iron yet as treacherous as quicksand; at other times we scrambled along the boulders by the river.

The valley was well wooded. We passed groves of poplar and of birch, and thickets of tamarisk, with the ground blue with gentians.¹ Many waterfalls sprayed merrily down the sides of the valley. We went beneath a brownish-red gorge from which a torrent poured from the foot of Sar-i-rich, visible from everywhere, though by no means as high as its neighbours. At Shagram it looked well, and though in reality miles away was like a sentry over a house, so near it seemed.

As we came down the Uzhnu valley very early on a mid-July morning, I looked up and saw, facing me, the great massif of the Awi mountain, away to the east, beyond the Yarkhun valley, in Upper Chitral. The early heavens were dappled with fleecy cloud, against which rose the southern shoulder of the peak, and its snows caught the first rays of dawn. The mountain stood alone. Beneath the summit was a band of mist, as though the coverlet of night had been flung aside; at its foot were the gentle rounded downs of Uzhnu, and above them two black hills in sorry contrast.

At last we reached the junction of the Uzhnu and the Rich, the stream of the principal valley of Turikho. The two combined form the river of that name. We

¹ *Gentiana Moorcroftiana*.

crossed the Rich by a cantilever bridge, and camped on soft turf under apricot- and apple-trees. Here we paid off our coolies, who joyfully fled to their homes after the grand tour of the neighbouring valleys, and settled down for a couple of days' rest. A sheep was bought, clothes washed, string-beds borrowed and prepared for use by pouring boiling water into all the cracks. How their inhabitants must have hated us, although the treatment was not as efficient as we could have wished.

This narrative has not, as yet, done justice to our postman. He was Amir Gul, a Hunza man who had been stranded in Chitral bazaar, and picked up by Daulat. Once he owned a pack horse, and did a little caravanning, but the horse died and Amir Gul now lived by his wits, which were very lively. His wardrobe consisted of a very old umbrella and a ragged wadded Turki coat. He was small, rather ugly, and as active as a flea. He would make the journey to Chitral with great speed, and would return, weighed down with his load of letters and papers, besides odd purchases in the bazaar, at any hour of the day or night. He arrived at the head of the Rosh Gol at 10.30 one night, and the path is at no time an easy one.

He was a successful 'coffee houser'. He mixed with all and sundry, called at any convenient house, whether he knew the occupants or not, and was at home with everyone. I found him absolutely trustworthy. When he was away, his old umbrella and older coat remained with us as a mute, prosaic, but eloquent reminder of their owner. Our Kashmiri nicknamed

him Sissu, the name given, apparently, in Kashmir to persons of his gregarious habits, and his own name was soon forgotten.

One of our minor troubles was the kindness of our acquaintances in sending us presents. At some remote glacier, a sweating messenger would arrive with a letter held aloft, like an oriflamme, in a cleft stick, and with a basket. In the basket would be a handful of decayed fruit, apricots, squashed mulberries, or cherries. The intention was admirable, the fulfilment lamentable. On such occasions the recipient of the gift has no means of telling whether the basket started on the journey full or empty. But he does, alas! know that when received the contents are so slender as to make the journey somewhat absurd. The bringer of these good things has to be fed and tipped, and dismissed courteously, and a terrible nuisance it all is.

We now ascended the Rich valley, which was the principal cultivated area of Turikho. We went along barren slopes above the stream. Earlier in the year, when the snow had melted and the ground was damp, these hillsides had been covered with rhubarb, most of which had now become coarse and dry. The men cooked some but flung it away in disgust. I noticed, however, that two or three boys were collecting the leaves for fodder for the sheep and goats during the winter, and storing the bundles on the roof. One house was stacked high with the leaves. This is the usual practice in Chitral wherever there is rhubarb. We were on the right of the valley, and the opposite side was well cultivated, but the path was poor. I noticed quantities

of large white mallows, and one small glen was white with them.

The scenery improved and at last we reached Murich, the capital of the valley. We crossed to the left side. Here, in the old days, the Khan of Rich lived, and was a very important personage, for he ruled the valley and used to keep off the invaders from Badakhshan. The last Khan was Begi Jan, son of a famous father, Roshan Ali Khan, who thrice drove back the Badakhshi soldiers. I was received by Faridun, a grandson of the great warrior, an old man with a long white beard. He was as fair as any western European, and told me that he belonged to the same clan—he did not say family—as the great Tamerlane. I found him a man of charming manners and much courtesy.

We sat on beds covered with quilts in front of a table on which was a blue velveteen cloth embroidered with solid red and green circles in a border of yellow, all done in Turkestan. At each corner of the table was a nosegay of poppies and cornflowers. Alas, my host knew no language except Chitrali, and my own knowledge of that tongue was indifferent, and certainly not meant for polite conversation. It is remarkable how few Chitralis, even well-to-do men, can speak any language other than their own. A smattering of Turki, Persian, Punjabi, or Pushto, as the case may be, is usually a prized and oft-displayed accomplishment amongst most persons in north-west India, but the Chitrali is content to sit mumchance.

The old man wanted me to stay the night, and his beautiful orchard (although there was no fruit), and

bright turf tempted me. Daulat refused to allow me, and he was quite right. He said that we must do a full march, and he drove us all out of that garden as ruthlessly as the angel did our first parents. He also cynically remarked that we could not afford to stay.

I felt sorry for Faridun. His father was a man of substance and authority, and preserved the valley from the foe, but the son was just a landed proprietor—as everyone else is in Chitral, or should be, if he is anyone—and Faridun was not even a very well-to-do one. Virtue seldom has its reward, least of all in the East.

So I said good-bye to my host, who seemed old and feeble. He begged me to excuse him for neither meeting me nor accompanying me, but he was too old. He nodded gently and went to sleep when I photographed him.

We pattered up the Turikho valley. We passed the Yong stream, a dazzling cascade from a brown canyon. Just beyond was another stream like it. Indeed, I found this a very favoured valley. From the range of hills between the Rich and the main Chitral valley a copious supply of water was forthcoming, so no wonder the country on both sides of the river looked fat and prosperous. There was only one crop a year, as the altitude was 8,000 feet and over. Waving, shining corn, fields of peas and beans, orchards, and rattling water-mills beguiled our way agreeably. But when we looked back, it was a painful surprise to see nothing but bare hills frowning in the haze, for we were slowly but steadily ascending, and the lower, cultivated lands were hidden. Amongst the products of Turikho

is a special cloth called kaberi, which is made from the wool of lambs six months old. The supply is naturally small, so it is only great men who enjoy this luxury.

At the head of the Rich valley the ways parted. Our track led up the Shah Jinali valley. 'Jinali' means a polo ground and 'shah' means 'black', and has nothing to do with a crowned head. The polo ground was not used as such now, but it was a good name for a fine level piece of ground, forming part of a beautiful upland. To the north was the Kach stream, unfordable but happily no obstacle as we were on the far side of the valley. There was a fine massif of rock here, striking to behold because the whole of it could be seen, as it rose from grey shingle where the two valleys united.

I had intended to spend a few days up the Kach valley, but one glance showed that it was not worth it. Facing us, as we passed its mouth, was the chief summit of the neighbourhood, a peak about 21,000 feet high. The rest of the scenery would not have repaid us for our trouble and time. The dominant peak was in front of us, and its nearer neighbours were, I am ashamed to say, rather beneath our notice.

So we did not delay, but continued up the Shah Jinali valley. This was, in truth, a beautiful valley, well wooded and covered with grass, flowers waist high, and clear torrents. There were a few cattle and horses belonging to the Mehtar, but otherwise, for all the use these rich pastures were to the people, they might have been in the Sahara. One would imagine that such rich grazing-grounds would have aroused the cupidity of the Chitrali who, for all his languor, is

greedy enough. If ever there was an inducement to increase one's herds and flocks, it was surely in the prairies of the Shah Jinali.

There was, in the lower part of the country, one of those curious natural bridges made by large rocks falling into the stream. Beneath these rocks the river flowed, having carved a passage for itself under the stones. We crossed, however, to the other side by a snow-bridge which was a much more convenient method. On that side close above us was a single juniper-tree, with little heaps of stone by it. Every person going up the valley takes three stones in his hand, and throws them one by one on the ground, saying, in the order given, one line of the following as he casts each stone:

Suuram Gol	Golden let the valley be;
Suuram Shawan	Golden too the goblin be;
Gol Nigardar	Guardian of the vale for me.

A shawan, as explained farther on, is a lesser being than a fairy, but none the less very benevolent.

This pious practice combined economy with efficiency, as whoever performed this simple rite never suffered from any harm during his stay in the Shah Jinali valley.

Our coolies were no more manly than other Chitralis, and I noticed two men, who had only to carry a kettle and a small basket between them, crawl under a rock, overcome by the heat and exhausted by their loads. They would not budge. These wastrels sadly tried our tempers. It is this softness of the Chitrali that is so disastrous, for he yields to the worries of life without

any self-control. A little thirst or hunger, some rough water in a stream, the heat or cold, at once destroy his endurance. Even our Chitrali orderly would crawl under a bush to get out of the sun, or fling himself in a limp unprepossessing heap on the ground. To us it never even occurred to sit down. It was a constant puzzle to see able-bodied men overcome by the slightest discomfort.

Am I hard on the Chitrali? Well, I only describe him as I found him, and I know more than most travellers of the different peoples of the Himalaya. But if anyone can make a man of him it is the present Mehtar.

We stopped below the Shah Jinali Pass (13,975 ft.), on the Turikho side. Our camping-ground was covered with wild onions whose aroma made me long for a beef-steak. In front was the straight line of the valley, snowcapped, with a clear stream flowing by, and the gentle, almost imperceptible crest of the watershed between the subordinate valley of Turikho and the main valley of Upper Chitral, the Yarkhun. The coolies slept in the sun and forgot to snore, so that the rustle of the stream was the only sound we heard.

The head of the Shah Jinali valley offered but sorry scenery in comparison with that which we had already seen and there was no inducement to stay. The real nucleus, the ganglion or core of the Hindu Kush, was the great peaks that we had already visited. So, although the scenery here was charming, once more we were spoiled by that which we had already seen.

We spent rather a cold night below the pass, and

at 2 a.m. a small stream poured into the tent occupied by Muhib and Subhana. Just as we left camp, a heated messenger from the old Khan arrived asking us to explain how the clock, which I had given him, worked. The next day we crossed the Shah Jinali Pass, and bade farewell to Turikho.

CHAPTER IX

'Bribery breaks stone.'—*Hunza Proverb*

THE Shah Jinali Pass was over so gentle a watershed that we hardly recognised the actual crest (14,100 ft.). We soon, however, began to descend steeply, and everywhere we saw wild onions and yellow ranunculus, an incongruous mixture. We descended still farther, and the relieving coolies, rather to the disgust of the old ones, were awaiting us. There too was Mirza Mohamed Aziz Beg—the man must have his name and style properly commemorated—our acquaintance and cicerone of two years ago, come to greet us. He wore a gold kullah (skull cap) with a turban of gold and Venetian red, and a very smart light overcoat. Below this modish upper costume he deteriorated sadly to an old pair of breeches, canvas shoes and local socks. Too much, however, must not be expected in these remote regions. With him was the nephew of the local hakim, or administrator, a pleasant youth, fashionably but warmly clad in a suit of thick purple cloth. The Mirza—soi-disant—and ourselves met like long-lost brethren, and took farewell of the retiring party with equal emphasis. The old headman of Rich was delighted with a red and purple muffler, and a small present in cash. His retainers gathered round him winding the muffler round and round, like Tweedledum in *Alice through the Looking-glass*, and the result was strikingly ornamental.

We had a very tiresome descent to the main valley,

to the Mastuj or, as it is here called, the Yarkhun river. The name Yarkhun is said to mean 'the friend's murder'. It is much more likely to be derived from 'Yarkand', the Turki for 'the village on the bank or cliff', as there are several examples of Turki nomenclature in upper Chitral.

The valley below the pass deteriorated into a gorge, and it was only on reaching the Siru stream that matters improved. Here we passed opposite and below a huge cliff that rose sheer and imposing. Down the face of it was a streak of white, made by some ephemeral water-course during its brief flow, which looked like nothing so much as the droppings of the roc or some such fabulous bird.

The weather was very hot, and although the path was downhill all the way our new coolies were no better than those they had relieved. Daulat warned me that they were only the children of hens, and I realised the truth of his remarks when, after three miles of descent, the men wanted to halt for the day. Of course, a great deal of all this was a try-on.

The tutelary fairy in this region was Chatti, and she had a daughter Chamatti, but nothing apparently was ever done to propitiate these ladies, except that when a shikari went out to shoot, he would throw away a small piece of bread as an offering to Chatti.

Our track followed that taken by Mohamed Shah, King of Badakhshan, when he invaded Chitral. These raids from their robust neighbours were a constant affliction to the Chitralis, who used to take protective measures too late. The invaders were usually driven

out in the end, but the damage had already been done. On this occasion the Badakhshi army returned from their foray laden with captives and loot long before the outraged Chitralis could muster enough men to retaliate.

At last we turned out of the Koksun, the side nala down which we had been wandering, and as we left it, I saw below me a great red cliff with a stream, and I wondered if I was not in some part of South Devon. Beyond, destroying the illusion, was the blackish-grey Yarkhun river. The Pamir-like appearance of the valley was very marked as I looked up it, and although a Pamir is primarily down-like in feature, the defiles and canyons did not spoil the resemblance, for such disagreeable fissures are as frequent in the true Pamir as anywhere else.

The Upper Yarkhun is normally a broad, easily graded valley. Before me were scattered houses and a tangle of fields and lawns, a green smiling country but with very few trees. This last fact I attributed to the influence of the Wakhi who, true nomad, has long done without trees, as he needs must in his wanderings over the higher pasture. He likes, however, when he has a house, to plant one solitary tree at his door for shade during summer, and such seemed to be the practice here. The trees grew well, but fuel was rather scarce. The fields were some of the dirtiest and most neglected that we had seen in Chitral, and that is saying a great deal. We were approaching the rambling settlement of Shost, and a boggy stretch of ground, shadeless and shelterless, was indicated as our camping-ground.

'Here', observed the leading local imbecile, 'all sahibs camp.' 'More fools they', said Daulat, and we trundled on.

We had, however, difficulty in finding a suitable site for our tents, as shade was very scarce. At last I pitched my tent in a small orchard adorned with two dead apricot-trees and an unhappy mulberry. Over the door of the house was a willow which yielded ample shade, and at the end of the enclosure was the prayer-room of the Maulais furnished only with a lamp on a wooden stand, and a shelf on which reposed, in honour, the firman of the Aga Khan. The jummat-khanas in lieu of mosques are a development of recent years, and although intended to simplify the tenets and observances of the Maulais have merely resulted in incurring the derision and contempt of neighbouring sects of Moslems, to whom the profession of Islam without a mosque is unthinkable.

As the only bridge crossing the Yarkhun river was some miles farther up, at Lasht, we had to ascend the right bank for six miles, and then go down the main track on the left side of the valley, a tiresome detour that wasted a day.

At this time of the year the river was a truly impressive sight. The river-bed was very wide and open, inclining gently upwards, a slight but perceptible rise, and the whole width of the valley was a great plain of shingle, grey and devoid of vegetation. Down the middle of this poured the black foaming river. As the water struck the rocks and boulders, the spray tossed high in the sunlight. The Yarkhun came tearing

down like a sea, filling the valley with its bustle and roar. This vision of leaping water, springing up in jets like geysers, was an ample reward for our detour. A cool, sour-smelling breeze rose from this turbulent flood.

We crossed by the bridge where the river was narrow and easily spanned, and perhaps the most wonderful sight was that great volume of savage water confined in the gorge.

We were now exactly where we had been two years before, in 1933. We passed the house at Madod where we had camped, but the kind old woman who had then befriended us was dead, and her grave was shown to us. There was everywhere a profusion of the commoner flowers, cranesbill, clover, purple orchids, roses, chicory and so forth.

Our journey was now easy on a comparatively broad road, and with pack animals carrying our kit instead of coolies we were able to make very fair progress.

We passed a juniper-tree by the road, with offerings similar to those made in the Shah Jinali valley. Here, however, the ritual was even simpler. A small piece of juniper was plucked, waved three times round the head, and the invocation said once, 'Suuram Shawan—Let all the goblins be golden.' 'Golden' means 'favourable, happy, flourishing', but it is hardly fair to call the shawan a goblin, as he (or she) is really something more respectable, though not comparable to a fairy. The twig was then placed on the rock, with a stone to keep it in position. The ceremony was over, and the worshipper went away happy, knowing that

there was no more potent spell against headache than the rite he had just performed.

We halted at Wassum in the same garden as on our previous journey, which belonged to a *lal* (notable) who was now extremely unwell. He lay on his bed, and his friends, full of sympathy and folly, surrounded him. Six grains of 'grey powder' did wonders. 'Tell the *lal* not to behave like a lying-in woman. Bid him arise and walk about.' A plaintive message came from the stricken noble. 'What am I to eat?' 'Nothing', was the answer, and consternation ensued. No matter how ill he may be, the Chitrali wants to eat, and most other natives are like him in that respect. Certainly this man had never heard two such pieces of advice before, but he was very frightened and obeyed them. In the morning he was a different man, and appeared almost cured.

After passing Wassum we saw a juniper-tree, at the mouth of the Dunish valley, and in the valley itself dwelt the fairy Mariam. She was honoured in the same economical fashion, with twigs and stones, but this particular fairy evoked very little enthusiasm.

It was a dull wet morning as we left Wassum, but it was only a short march to Miragram. I was not at all pleased to see the rope bridge in position opposite Bang. We had been told by everyone that this bridge was down, and this lie caused us a great waste of time, money, and temper. The same sort of thing happened coming down from the Shah Jinali Pass. 'Look at that bridge', said the Mirza, pointing to the debris of some boughs and stones. 'It was standing last night,

but has been washed away by the stream.' This was all false, but the Mirza wished to enjoy the credit of having repaired a bridge, and to have a good pretext for its absence when required.

I think that it is this inveterate habit of lying which makes dealings with the Chitrali so wearisome to the traveller. The gratuitous and foolish lie, the unnecessary and futile lie, is ingrained in the people; and perhaps that is why the Chitrali is such a conversational bore. His talk is either a whine or a fable. The world in general, and Asia in particular, abounds in liars. We had often met the hearty, jolly liar in our travels, who is always amusing and good company, but in Chitral we found from highest to lowest the mean and scurvy lie, told frequently out of the mere love of lying. Let anyone who thinks me harsh towards the Chitrali essay a journey in his country. He will find that truth there is always at the bottom of a well. I fancy that after he has been lied to from morning to night, he will agree with my views regarding the Ananias and Sapphiras of the country.

We noticed, whilst in the Yarkhun area, that in all the fields there was a stick, usually of willow, placed in the middle of the crops. This stick was slit; a stone was inserted in the cleft, and the stick bound with withes or string to keep the stone from falling out.

This is the damdirodar. A mullah takes a stone, breathes a blessing on it, and hands it to his client in return for a fee. By setting up this holy stone the crops are made safe, as they are immune from the evil eye which might fall on the land and damage it terribly.

I found the belief in the evil eye was very prevalent in Chitral. It is, of course, a belief that is universal, but perhaps more than usually feared in a land steeped in superstition and with but a veneer of orthodox Mohammedanism to counteract it.

The weather was gloomy and threatening as we marched down the Yarkhun valley, and storms of rain were frequent. By the time, however, we reached the local capital, Mastuj, the sun was bright and the tamarisk trees in flower looked as brilliant as rhododendrons.

At Chuinj, a few miles from Mastuj, where I had parted from the same courteous friend two years before, I was met by Captain Shahzada Nasr-ul-mulk, Governor of the Mastuj district, eldest son and heir of the late Mehtar and now happily reigning. With him was one of his younger brothers—I have already mentioned that the late Mehtar had as many as sixteen sons—Khushwaqt-ul-mulk, who had just obtained his commission in the army and was off to join his regiment. We went to the house of the hakim of Yarkhun, who was a tall, lithe man, of prepossessing appearance, with a neat Vandyke beard, a good seat on a horse, and agreeable manners. We all sat under the apricot-trees on beds covered with bright chintz quilts. We had tea and edible oddments. There was also the famous dish of Chitral, goats' entrails cleaned out and filled with pure mutton fat, and eaten as we do a sausage. It was doubtless a very nourishing dish but also extremely bilious, and I recoiled from it. To me it suggested a thick tallow candle. I shall mention this odious

luxury in the chapter dealing with our first visit to the Yarkhun valley.

Here the old buzurg (prophet) Shah Zaman, friend of angels and of men, came again to see us. He was as lively and as visionary as he had been two years before. He told us about the angels who came and whispered to him, and showed some signs of irritation when I asked him if he ever saw the fairies. His answer implied that his messengers were of a higher rank in the heavenly choir.

A man came up who was 'fairy-ridden', a Pari-khan. Every Friday the fairies would come and talk to him, and they talked so much that he could do no work. Nasrul-mulk told the man to come to Mastuj, and he promised that he would do so, but he never turned up. It was extremely pleasant in the hakim's garden, and after a good deal of swilling and stuffing we moved on. My host, who is always hospitality itself, saw that my retainers were fed, and Daulat was careful to assure me that the Shahzada's arrangements were good—by far the best in Chitral.

It is by no means always easy to be hospitable in the East to the servants of one's guests. There is ever a slip betwixt the cup and the lip, and unless the master makes sure, the servants never receive anything. It is agony to the servants of the host to see those of the guest being fed, and I found this to be the case everywhere in the Hindu Kush, whether in Gilgit or in Chitral. The followers of the well-to-do regard every crumb that falls from the rich man's table as their right, and they grudge the minutest fraction to any outsider.

The sahib, of course, gives tips; and besides, he might protest. His servants, however, are helpless, and it is only a good host and a firm master that can stop this meanness. Generally speaking, the host does not wish to. He desires the thanks and the merit for feeding the stranger's men, and is at the same time much relieved when his own hungry hangers-on defeat his hospitable intentions.

From Mastuj we descended the main valley. The river, better known as the Yarkhun, was now called the Mastuj, but it changes its name again on reaching the capital. Our first halt was at Sanoghar, a village often described as the most beautiful in Chitral, which it is certainly not. Like all human habitations in the country it is in the nature of an oasis, arising out of the glacier water which is diverted on to the barren soil. Cultivation is dependent on irrigation. Here at Sanoghar was rather a dirty, squat glacier flowing from a small nala and all round were grey, thirsty slopes. Just opposite, on the right side of the river, was a splendid plain, potentially fertile, but doomed, owing to lack of water, to perennial uselessness.

We stayed two nights at Sanoghar, as Captain FitzMaurice arrived from Kohat, and Nasr-ul-mulk pressed me to stay. It was extremely agreeable, and was also the last cool place in which we stayed for some time. Apricots were abundant and much appreciated. I was particularly glad, as it enabled my Hunza men to have a good gorge. In their country, far more than in Chitral, the apricot is a staple food, and for one or two months every year there is nothing to eat except the

dried fruit of the previous year. The men of Hunza revel, too—as well they may—in the fresh fruit, and so they had many a bellyful at Sanoghar which did them the world of good.

We were entertained in true Chitrali fashion, and had polo in the evening on a marvellous ground that was very uneven as well as being cut up by two water channels. Polo in Chitral always finishes up with dancing by the defeated team, though on this occasion their understudies performed. It was soothing to see the boys waving their hands and treading a monotonous but gentle measure after the mad confusion of the game; their gestures were in contrast to the wild banging on the drums. Nowadays the polo balls come from India, and the casualties are few. In olden times the balls were often made of the roots of apricot-trees, and a smack on the head with one meant a cracked skull and death.

As the dancing went on it grew more and more vigorous, skips and jumps replacing the lighter, sedater movements. The plaudits of the onlookers, stimulated by some of the elders, encouraged the boys to dance with increasing energy. Then evening fell and put an end to all.

At Sanoghar is buried Siyawush, the founder of one of the chief and most respected clans of the state. His descendants hold, after the members of the royal clan, the first rank in the country, and are known as the Zundre tribe of Mastuj and Sanoghar.

But it is clear that Siyawush is unappreciated by those who owe him all, for they declare that he was not



THE MEHTAR

a real Zundre, as when his father married the mother of Siyawush she was already with child by a Badakhshi chief. These revilers of their ancestor fail to realise that if their parent was not a true Zundre, their own claims too must be tainted, and that the tables are turned on them. They prefer to calumniate their forefather even if it be detrimental to themselves.

This doubtless explains the neglect of Siyawush's tomb. I saw three mud walls, collapsed into a great hole in the ground, out of which bits of wood protruded. This was the grave of Siyawush. Shahzada Nasr-ul-mulk, the present Mehtar, had often brought the scandalous state of the tomb to the notice of his descendants. The sorry, disgraceful tomb was close to the polo ground. Near by there sat in a row three red-bearded old men, sedate and grave, elders of the Zundre clan and as respectable as prime ministers; and as I looked at them I saw beyond them, gaping in the air, the tomb of the founder of their family.

The spectators at the polo match were numerous, and I wondered whence they came, especially as now it was the harvest season. But our arrival had driven all thoughts of husbandry out of their heads, and the entire population spent their time watching the polo instead of garnering their crops. In the old days, before the British arrived in the country, all the women would turn up and throng the polo ground. But now there were so many strangers about, from the Punjab and elsewhere, that the modesty of the women would not allow them to take the risk. So the females lurked in the background, seeing but unseen.

We met a most amusing rascal of a Pathan mullah full of scathing remarks about his Chitrali congregation. He vowed that they were too lazy for anything. Playing the zither absorbed all the energies of both men and women, the latter vying with the former as to how much time they could waste over it.

As to the lals, he said that they just sat and did nothing. They were too proud to work, and very often possessed only one decent garment, which they used when they went abroad. He derided the people with great gusto. He pointed to the hillside, covered with brushwood, and said that the villagers were too lazy to collect it, and then to the fields that they were too lazy to plough. He declared that the people had not enough food or fuel because they would not take the trouble to provide it, and I am bound to say that he was very largely in the right.

After we left Sanoghar we went steadily down into the heart of the main lower valley. The charm of the villages in Upper Chitral was largely due to their nearness to the Hindu Raj, which is the name of the mountains on the left or eastern side of the valley. Snow peaks above, glaciers below, and villages nestling at their feet, furnished an attractive scene, and the village of Miragram appeared extremely beautiful with a spur of the great Buni Zom rising behind it.

The landscape was now varied by outcrops of red sandstone. Buni, the largest village in Chitral, was a smiling place with fine chenar-trees, extensive cultivation and abundant water. Although it was nine o'clock in the morning when we arrived, everyone was

asleep, and we found only two men in the fields. We next passed the red village of Charun, where the soil was red sandstone, the water red ink, and went on for the night to very much the same sort of hamlet, Kuragh, a couple of miles below. Here the Mastuj and Turikho rivers met, and celebrated their union by a dismal expanse of grey stone and muddy water, from which rose swarms of hissing mosquitoes, sadly marring a pleasant camp on green turf with rills of water below and apricot-trees above.

Looking up, towards the valley down which we had just come, we saw a comely diaper on the valley's slopes. Red, brown and green fields, grey spurs and brown slopes made an unusual pattern beneath neutral-tinted ranges and snow-clad heights.

Reshun, the next village, was pleasant to approach, with a high red cliff rising from the fields, and flanking it a terrace on which shining green apricot-trees were silhouetted against a rosy background. Below, the dark river churned and roared, and beyond rose towering a mighty pinnacle of rock. A few traces of snow lingered on its summits, and a long ribbon of ripening corn and green lucerne flowed like a patchwork stream down its flanks.

We met many wayfarers. There were a number of Chitral Scouts, hurrying home after their month's training, with odd but precious purchases from the dismal Chitral bazaar. Many of the men had bundles of resinous pine-wood to burn as candles during the winter months, just as the men of Ojhor had told us.

The scenery was often grand as the valley closed in

and the river was compressed between high cliffs. At Maroi we crossed a wonderful cantilever bridge of great length. There was, of course, no railing, for there was no need of one in a land of sure-footed men. The river here was crushed into the narrowest of gorges. Polite lals came to meet us, and we perspired together up to the hot rice-fields, where they withdrew. As I turned a corner, a Bengali babu, for so he seemed, bore down upon me, riding, white-clad, with umbrella up. It turned out that he had a revolver also and, but for his fatal parasol, would have achieved a martial air, instead of looking silly.

We sweated with great vigour and profusion as we plodded along, for in the narrow airless valley, with the heat radiating strongly from the baking walls, the temperature was high. I was not surprised to see cotton growing near Koghozi. Our Chitralis made things worse by drinking from every burn, but my own men showed self-control. At last, drenched and stinking with stale sweat, we reached Koghozi, which is only one stage from Chitral town. I thought it one of the most attractive places I had seen. The shade was profound, black as Erebus, cool as a vault. Thick chenar-trees festooned with vines, broad-leaved fig-trees and capacious apricots grew over turf, whilst a clear cool stream poured down and ran in twinkling rivulets on the sward before the rest-house. If you dipped your head out of this cool umbrageous lair, the glare slapped you in the face, as you saw the heat-stricken slope of shale and rock closing in on all sides of your retreat. So you stopped in the cool, and were grateful. No one

who has not the experience can realise the heat of these shut-in glens. Although Koghozi was 6,000 feet above sea-level, it was a miniature Sahara.

At Koghozi we were met by an affable nonentity in blue pyjamas who brought me a few wizened apricots of the previous year, and was bundled off, with a flea in his ear to get me the fresh ones of the season. These he produced, but he had hoped to fob me off with rubbish and yet receive his tip.

Here I spent an agreeable evening with Captain G. L. S. Vaughan, the Commandant of the Chitral Scouts, who was on his way to Terich. August is a free month for him; his militia are not called up for training as they are supposed to be at work in the fields, though I rather fear that the majority sleep the pleasant hours away.

We left early as the march promised to be a hot one, but a gentle breeze refreshed us. Almost opposite Koghozi, but a little below, was a long suspension bridge made of two planks most precariously placed. This led to the village of Kuzhu on the right bank, whence all the musicians (doms) come. These men are not natives of Chitral, but were originally immigrants from Punyal or Tangir. When I was in Turikho I met a man who had been sent from the former place to teach the people how to beat a drum and blow on a flute.

We passed the mouth of the Lutkuh valley, the upper reaches of which we had traversed in May, and its stream seemed very diminished for so large a valley when compared with the volume of the Mastuj river.

We now continued down the broad valley, sweltering and quivering in the heat, and after crossing the Chu bridge, so called after its original builder, some Kafir in the distant past, we entered the town of Chitral. Never a beauty spot, it was certainly not looking its best. The bazaar was hot, dusty, and fly-blown. A foul trickle of water meandered past the shops, many of which were closed as business seemed to be dull. Nothing was going on, and the whole spot was depressing to behold. The town in fact was deprived of its great ones, as the Mehtar had gone to his summer retreat. We camped under the noble chenars in the garden of the Scouts' mess, and stayed there two nights, to sort over our kit and to wash our clothes and ourselves.

Since we were last in Chitral town, a well-known figure had passed away. This was Yaqub, the head orderly of the assistant Political Agent. He had died of pneumonia. He was the son of a British father and a Chitrali mother, and a great character. Curiously, although during his lifetime he did all he could to encourage his ailing neighbours to go to hospital, he himself when ill not only refused to have any medical attention, British or native, but even to take any medicine. It was said that the mullahs had persuaded him to trust to their charms implicitly. He did so, with fatal consequences. When he knew that he could not recover, he had himself put on a charpoy to be carried to his village, but died near Koghozi. It was a strange ending for a man who not only was half a European, but had spent his life entirely in the service of sahibs,

and had always shown himself to be enlightened and intelligent.

Whilst I was at Chitral the late Mehtar very kindly asked me to stay with him at his summer quarters of Birmogh Lasht, or 'The Walnut Plain', which he himself had started. There was a well-graded fair-weather motor road, but we preferred to walk. It was very hot, and we were soaked with sweat when we arrived at the top. So I was not a little disconcerted to be met by His Highness when I was in no state to meet anybody.

The Mehtar had a beautiful bungalow, which had been designed and built by Hunza workmen specially sent for the purpose. My host was kindness and consideration personified, and I spent two agreeable nights there. The place had been diligently planted with fruit, walnut and other trees, but there was hardly enough water and the growth had consequently been slow.

A great character was Gul Mohamed, the major-domo, an old man with a corrugated, lined face, imperfectly dyed beard, and a white choker round his neck. He wore loose coarse white socks, and a dingy gaberdine held together by a single button. For forty years he had served sahibs, either independently or in His Highness's service, and I am sure that his departure from his present job would be a disaster. He came originally from Astor, and was efficient and attentive. I also met Naib Ghulam, Khan of Asmar, a small state on the Afghan-Chitral border. For some obscure reason, the Government of India had ceded this state to the Amir, with disastrous consequences to its rightful

owner. During the rule of Bacha Saqa he returned to Asmar and ruled his country, but he had to flee on the restoration of the Durrani dynasty. I often wondered what his views were on the British connection with Chitral, which had resulted in his losing his ancestral rights, to become a penniless outcast and pensioner in Chitral.

It was interesting to see the small pits in the hillside above Birmogh Lasht, made to catch falcons. As hawking is the recognised pastime of the nobles of Chitral and the neighbouring countries, the demand for birds was constant. The hawks are trapped by digging a pit in the ground just large enough to conceal a man. A lid or cover is put on the top of the recess with an orifice in it. A partridge (chikor) with its leg tied to a string held by the trapper, is then allowed to flutter on the outside of the hole. The falcon sees the bird and at once pounces; and as it refuses to let go of its prey it is gently and cautiously drawn down by the shikari and secured. It is a most ingenious, simple, and efficient device.

CHAPTER X

'If a man means to divorce his wife, her vegetables are always bitter.'—*Hunza Proverb*

AFTER an agreeable stay in the cool at Birmogh Lasht, I bade farewell to my courteous host and left in a lorry—a terrifying experience—for Urghuch, a village a few miles below Chitral town, and at the foot of the pass that leads to the Rumbur valley. My intention was to revisit the Kalash or Black Kafirs, to see more both of them and of their country, and afterwards to return to India.

As we approached the village, which lay a little off the main road, I saw a mounted man supervising repairs to the road, which had been damaged by the rising waters of the river. He turned out to be the Dewan Begi (Finance Minister), who had been deputed by the Mehtar to attend to my needs. He was very attentive, but it was an embarrassing experience. I felt very much as a rural vicar might if the Chancellor of the Exchequer insisted on acting as his sexton.

The Dewan Begi came to the village and we sat on beds covered with bright-coloured rugs. It was very hot. No fruit was ripe. Just as at Chitral itself we could procure no fruit or vegetables, so in the villages there was equally nothing to be had and we had to content ourselves with the shade of the trees and a little conversation. The local havildar of the 'bodyguard' or retinue of the ruler was something of a humorist. He was certainly an inspiring figure. He wore a cap

like a squashed sponge-cake, and a striped shirt, and carried a tin that once had held shaving-soap and now held snuff. We had to spend the night at the village, which suffered from want of water, though at first sight it was so embowered in vegetation that no one would suspect it.

An old lady much amused us with her remarks apropos the lack of water. 'Here', she said, 'God takes no notice of the poor. He is only the friend of the rich. The Subedar's land is irrigated every three days; the Adamzada's (or noble's) every seven days; whilst we poor folk only have water every twenty-two days. So we have only one crop in the year, and yet we all have to give the same alms.'

It was a short but steep climb to the top of the pass, over the watershed between the two valleys. A good deal of the way was quite practicable for donkeys, but the coolies preferred to carry the loads themselves, although on the previous night they had arranged to bring their animals. One coolie who carried the heaviest load was a splendid fellow; the rest were merely weepers. One stalwart youth, handsome, well made, and of striking appearance, could not carry even a small load, but smoked cigarettes instead and persuaded his fellows to carry his bundle most of the way. Another powerfully built man, whom my men from his appearance called the Kabuli camel, could not manage to carry a pack which a boy of twelve finally took.

At last we reached the Kafir village of Balanguru where we had camped three months or more before. Mohamed Isa came to meet me, a handy, useful man,



YOUNG KALASH AT SPRING FESTIVAL, RUMBUR

and I was glad to see him. It was entirely due to the considerate kindness of Captain Vaughan that he joined me, as he was his shikari and had been away in the north looking for ibex when he was ordered to join me. We found Rumbur rather hot but quite tolerable, and we slept by the side of the stream, which was a clear, green, foaming torrent, a cool spot with no mosquitoes.

I revisited the Kafir shrines, and the change of season gave me a further insight into their customs.

Most of the men were away in the upper pastures with the goats, but the women remained behind owing to the taboo, already mentioned, against milking these animals. The women in the Bashali, or house of segregation, spent the heat of the day under the Dezarlik Bunj, a large holly-oak. To cut any bough of this sacred tree meant grave misfortune. It is beneath this tree that infants who die at birth are buried.

At the Sajjigor there was another large holly-oak, and the two had been consecrated at the same time by the slaughter of a goat by the pshé, that is, an inspired person who is not a priest, and enjoys no hereditary or transferable office, but has been the recipient of the divine afflatus.¹ I was told that originally the Sajjigor—which is the only one in existence—had been in Kafiristan, and when the people had to leave (the details were vague as to why or wherefore) the pshé fired an arrow which was subsequently found in the site of the present sacred enclosure, indicating the most favourable spot.

I noticed outside the houses a pole, to which were

¹ Pshé is the best rendering—not psher or pshur.

fastened bundles of branches. This was the Goshidoi. It is set up in the spring after consecration at the Jyoshi festival, when the goats begin to give their milk properly. The form of consecration is that common to so many Kalash rites. An unwedded boy milks a goat, and sprinkles the boughs to be fastened to the pole, and also sprinkles some on a fire of juniper.

The Goshidoi guards the herd during the warm weather, but to safeguard them during the winter the Saruzan (bunch of juniper), is hung up in the goat-house, after having been blessed at the Chowmas or winter festival. This rite is a different one. Two On-jesta-mozh take six walnuts. One boy breaks the shells and hands the kernels to the other, who throws three on a fire of juniper and three on the bunch of twigs. A little wine and some dried grapes are also thrown.

The cemetery had not changed in the last three months. No new figures had been added. There was a new grave, however, that of a woman. Her charpoy was beside it, as well as a basket to show her sex and occupation during life. A young child died during our second visit, but no rites whatever were performed, and it was buried without religious observances. I was shown a grave marked with two white stones. As a rule the Kafirs do not mark their graves in any way. They set up statues to the illustrious dead, if they are males, but ignore the actual position of the grave. Here, however, was buried a Kalash called Juar Beg. During life he had deeply loved a Chitrali woman, and she had loved him. When he lay dying, he bade his relatives

mark his grave so that his beloved might come and weep beside it, and his wishes had been carried out.

On my way to the cemetery, I met old Lamson, hobbling along with a great ulcer in his leg. I bade him send his son for a bandage and promised that I would treat the wound. He did not, however, bother about doing so. I thought the old man looked far from well, but with an ulcer in the leg covered with a poultice of green cow dung it was not surprising. He declared, however, that he was very much better.

Subhana was unwell and we were delayed at Balanguru in consequence. He recovered, however, perhaps because the practical Daulat told him that he was being left behind in charge of a Kafir. Orientals are very prone to give way to illness, and to abandon themselves to despair; it is a great mistake to let them do so.

Our immediate destination was the magic lake in the Bahuk valley, and afterwards we meant to go over the hills to Bumboret. As we ascended the Rumbur valley for a few miles, I thought how delightful it looked with its clear river cascading down, its profuse cultivation, and its prosperous air.

On the way I was taken to a house to see some heavenly writing on a stone. There, in front of the byre, was a flat slab of natural rock on which was a wide circle, and the marks $\oplus P$. Years ago the owner was at home when he heard the sounds of hammering on the rock. He was far too frightened to go out but in the morning he found the marks as shown and also the hammer. He took the latter to the Sajjigor and

buried it. He consulted a pshé and told him that he wanted no help in the house but only outside. The pshé—called dehar by the Red Kafirs—told the man that he was a fool to bury the hammer. He should have kept it for killing his goats, and above all he should have at once sacrificed two goats in honour of the angel, for it was no fairy who had behaved thus. In spite of his folly, the man grew very wealthy. The wide circle was the dimension of his tub of milk and curd. His luck out shooting was astonishing. Now the only signs remaining of the heavenly visitant are those on the rock.

We soon left the main valley and turned almost due south up the Bahuk valley. Just below its mouth, on the left of the main valley, which is very narrow and easily defended at this point, there were two caves in the face of a perpendicular cliff. In old days during the summer months the Kafirs used to take refuge here, the women in one cave, the men in the other, while other men patrolled the valley. Raids by the Red Kafirs, who used to come by the Gangalwat or Chimarsan valleys from Pransu, five marches away,¹ were the curse of the country.

Many stories are told of this Kafir stronghold at Pransu. Near it is a large hole in which a dragon lives and is fed every week with a horse, bullock, or other large animal. If the dragon be not fed, he belches masses of smoke out of his lair. There is also a great

¹ The place is called Vetr by the Black Kafirs; Veran by the Chitralis; and Perun by the Pathans, whilst the route is known as the Vetberich.

cave called Mahandelhan, decorated with frescoes of angels all round the wall. No one except a pshé or dehar may enter in, and he only does so after washing well, and then but once a week. In this cavern a great bamboo of iron grows, and if anyone tries to pull it out or to cut off a piece, he falls ill and often dies. This even happened to the soldiers of the Amir of Afghanistan. The pshé, when he enters, places an offering of juniper boughs and ghi on the top of this wonderful bamboo. I do not know whether, now that the blessings of Islam have been so abundantly poured out on this spot, owing to the active intervention of the Afghans, these marvels still continue. The world is a dull place, and I trust that they do.

The actual entrance to the Bahuk valley was very narrow with precipitous cliffs on both sides. On the left was a conical cliff known as the fort, used for defence and observation in former times—not so very distant—on which there were still a few huts.

Almost opposite, on the right at the mouth of the valley, was the Sarsuchāiken, (the Height of Purification). On the summit of this precipice a ceremony takes place twice a year, in November or December, and again in April or May when the hill is clear of snow. A red-haired milch-goat, twelve chupattis, one load of juniper, one of holly-oak, one of pine, and seven loads of deodar are taken to the top. Five On-jestamozh go with as many extra men as are needed to carry the burdens. A fire is kindled of all the wood taken up, the goat is milked, and the milk is thrown on the fire. The youths cry out, 'Suchai such—Let the

pure be pure', or 'Purity to the pure',¹ which means 'Let the sky be clear', or 'Make clear the sky.' It is an invocation or prayer to the fairies. The twelve chupattis are then taken and a piece is broken off each, and cast into the fire. The rest of the bread is eaten. The whole of the Bahuk valley is the abode of the fairies, and unless their prejudices are respected bad weather always follows. Anything dirty or impure brings rain which causes a flood, and that does much damage to the people of Rumbur, destroying bridges, crops, and the like. I noticed that the inhabitants had great fear of rain, and I suppose that sudden storms must do a great deal of damage.

Some gujars (itinerant shepherds) had just preceded us into the Bahuk, and it was only because they had at once sacrificed two goats that bad weather was averted. Kafir or Moslem, everyone in Chitral evinces a proper respect for the fairies.

In former times no woman was allowed beyond certain cultivation and houses on the left side of the valley. Now, however, young girls who are virgins are allowed in, but no others.

This 'Height of Purification' and the Shingmo near the village of Balanguru are the two places in the valley where the ceremonies to propitiate the fairies take place.

As we went up the glen it grew at first rather less rugged as the forests of pine and deodar swept down. Then it again narrowed, and we climbed up to a shepherd's hut near which we passed the night. There was

¹ It is the same word as in Sutra, or Sati.



THE SHINGMO

a good deal of peevishness, as a stupid Chitrali had persuaded us not to camp at the site chosen by Mohamed Isa but at this other place which was not nearly so good and much higher up, and we were all hot and weary after a very long day. However, we slept well and there were no mosquitoes, but nothing could drive away the flies which surged round us, a restless, persistent, and loathsome brood.

The next day I started with the Kalash for the Bahuk-o-chat, the Fairy Lake. It was a long stiff climb of three hours. We soon left the trees behind as we toiled up the valley, passing several herdsmen's huts, until we came at last to an old grass-covered moraine. It was level, a charming spot for a camp. There were two primulas in bloom (*rosea* and *dentata*), quantities of diminutive blue gentians, and other flowers. The marmots crowed shrilly as we came along and with very good cause, for the Kalash consider their flesh a dainty and savoury dish; and of valuable medicinal properties too, though what these were I never discovered.

We continued to climb to what appeared to be the head of the valley but turned out to be merely a barrier of moraine and debris which had fallen in from both sides of the valley, damming up the water and so forming a lake, a very common formation in mountainous countries. Behind this barrier was the fairy lake, a grey-green sheet of water about half a square mile in area, surrounded by a magnificent rampart of precipices which culminated in Doderi-biyu, a fine pinnacle about 16,500 feet high, which was the castle of the fairies. To

the left (south) of this peak, just appearing over its shoulder, was Zinor Pit (17,000 ft.).

We had a youth with us called Masti Beg, a relative of Mohamed Isa, and as he was unmarried, he was a suitable lad to take to the lake. Most people, when they first behold the mere, fall insensible for a considerable time, but we were spared this mishap.

The fairies were now all on the high peak behind the lake, but later in the year they descend. If a herdsman were to remain till November in the huts by our camp, they would call on him to depart.

When I asked why no one lived on the grassy maidan below the lake, an enticing spot on which there was a stone hovel, I was told that formerly shepherds had lived there, but the fairies were wrathful at the near presence of these polluting folk, and had forced them to go, driving them away with snowstorms and heavy rain.

We found it almost as tedious to return from the lake as it was to reach it, but managed to regain our camp by a rather easier track. After the desolate highlands of Upper Chitral, there was an agreeable novelty in wandering through forests of cedar and pine.

We were none the worse for our visit to the magic lake, and left early the next day for the Bumboret valley. This meant crossing the watershed of the Bahuk, descending into the Acholgah, then up out of that valley and over its watershed into the Bumboret, and finally down again. The actual distance as the crow flies was negligible, but the path was devious.

We started off along the hillside on which was

pitched our camp, thousands of feet above the floor of the valley. We scrambled over rocks and under trees, but the path soon improved and we came to an open grassy crest which proved to be the top of the watershed. From here the view over the Kafir valleys was very extensive, and the dense forests and deep precipitous valleys were remarkable; one wondered how these rocky cliffs had been clothed with such a thick covering of enormous deodars and other conifers.

We could also see the places where Asp-i-duldul, the famous steed of Ali, son-in-law of the prophet, had placed his feet. Crest after crest, pass after pass, miles apart, were shown us as the hoof-marks of this Brobdingnagian horse, and words failed to express our astonishment at such a marvellous performance.

We now descended into the smiling forest-choked Acholgah valley. At first the undergrowth was so dense that progress was difficult, but we were going downhill, so we forced our way finally down to the small summer village at the bottom, skirting cliffs and great deodars on our way. The Acholgah valley is not continuously inhabited, but is cultivated and the houses occupied during the spring sowing and the harvest. It is a fine, neglected valley, but then there are so many of its kind in lazy Chitral.

In former days Acholgah had been the property of the men of Rumbur. One year their neighbours in Bumboret sent three or four hundred goats to graze on the pastures below the magic lake. They had, of course, no right whatever to do so. It was an offence as wicked as moving your neighbour's boundary stone.

Several times the men of Rumbur told the interlopers to go, but they refused.

Amongst the intruders was a particularly fine up-standing lad, whom the Rumbur folk discreetly killed with an arrow. Another they slew with a sword. The feud between the two valleys became acute, and was at last settled by the Kalash by the surrender of Acholgah to the trespassers of Bumboret who, if the tale be true, had no right whatever to any compensation, and had merely received what they deserved.

At Acholgah I saw for the first time the shrine of Jatzh, goddess of the crops, corresponding to Kushumai of the Red Kafirs. It was a simple affair. There was a bundle of juniper and holly-oak, and below a hearth or fire-place. When the corn is sown, a fire of holly-oak and juniper is made, and when the first ears are ripe an On-jesta-mozh takes some ground wheat or barley made of the first-fruits, lights a fire and throws some of the flour into it, and some on the boughs above.

At one time, at this particular shrine, there used to be a pole to mark the place, but a Chitrali of high rank came along, no less than a brother of Lal Zaman Khan, one of the ruling family. In the fanatical fashion of the upper classes in Chitral who are outwardly orthodox however their deeds may bewray them, he was furious at such a sign of idolatry, and ordered the pole to be flung into the river. The story is that he was not rewarded for this display of intolerant zeal. Shortly afterwards he had a paralytic stroke and although he sacrificed three goats to the outraged numen of Kushumai, he gained nothing thereby, and shortly afterwards

died. It is regrettable that the same fate has not overtaken other religious bigots in Chitral.

At the village we changed our coolies and started for the crest of the pass that would take us to Bumboret. The path led through glorious forest. The summit was an open grassy saddle with huge old cedars, and I can imagine no better site for a bungalow than a little beyond this spot. When we turned and looked back, we saw the heights and valleys we had just left, arranged in tiers before us. Behind us were the heights of Terich Mir: in front, to the south, the radiant fields of Bumboret.

We made poor progress going down, as the Kalash are no better as coolies than are the Chitralis. But at last we reached the fat lands and the villages, and I could well understand why the Kalash love and praise their valley.

I spent a most interesting time in seeing the places of worship, but I found that they compared very unfavourably with those in Rumbur. This is because Rumbur is not so fertile nor so accessible, and outsiders have not been attracted to the valley; whereas here, in a mixed population with an undue sprinkling of fanatical and evilly disposed mullahs, the Kalash are shy or timid in the full observance of their rites. Further, the presence of the Red Kafirs, who have all embraced Islam—except three persons—has always exerted a subduing effect on the Kalash. The influence of Chitrali immigrants and proselytising mullahs would discourage anyone of an alien creed from the full practice of his faith. I regard these efforts to convert the

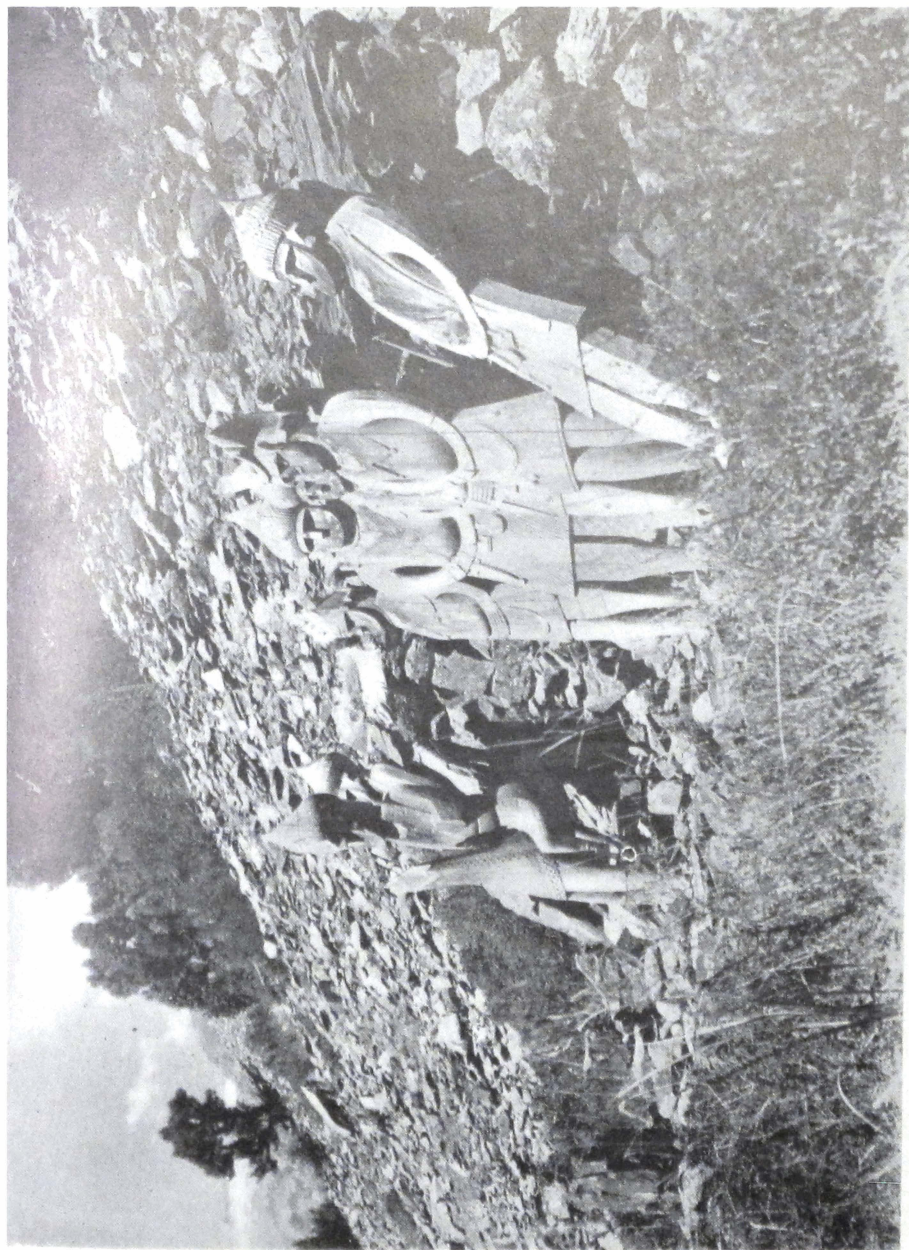
Black Kafirs as regrettable, and an unpardonable piece of religious persecution. The Afghans forced the Red Kafirs to embrace Islam, and I am much afraid that the same sort of thing is being done to the Black Kafirs in Chitral, thanks to the mullahs.

I again went up the valley to Brumbutul to see the three remaining Red Kafirs whom I had visited in the spring. I managed to see old Baghashai, but the two women were ill. They really must have been ill, as not even the promise of a good tip could tempt them from their homes.

As we passed the row of Kafir images which I have before described, Mohamed Isa pointed out to me what I had not before noticed, that two of the images represented women. This was remarkable, emphasising the difference between the Red and the Black Kafirs. No Kalash would ever think of setting up a statue to a woman, but these two figures were feminine enough, with their breasts and girdles and women's hanging ornaments, all clearly defining their sex. I noticed how very realistic one of the men's figures was, with knife, flint, and steel; another had a buckler on his right arm and a shield in front.

I then went to have a final look at the cemetery, that strange medley of box-coffins which had impressed and surprised me when I first saw it in the spring. Now the confusion was perhaps a little worse.

The valley looked lovely, and the view up it to the Ustui Pass (16,500 ft.), now that the snow had almost entirely melted and the mellow lines of late summer had been drawn on the uncovered hills, was very



KATI EFFIGIES AT BRUMBUTUL

satisfying. It is near this pass that the famous figure of a man stands. The story is that this man climbed to a high peak and was so struck by the wide all-embracing view that he declared that he would stay there, as from that spot he could see the whole world. His temerity offended the Almighty, and he was turned into stone. From afar he appears a real man, with his gun on his shoulder, but he is a mere freak of the rocks.

Baghashai, the old Kafir, was very pleased to see us, with recollections of past tips and hopes of more in the immediate future. The entire population turned out, and a more unsavoury crew it would be hard to find. They were now all good Moslems, with a mullah and a brand new mosque. No doubt there had been a radical change of heart, but externally they were dirty pagans. I am sure that this village must be the dirtiest in Chitral, and that is no feeble superlative. I have seldom seen a less attractive crowd, and the strong August sun spared none of their defects. These savages all posed by the big wooden stage, the Charsu (dancing-floor), and I photographed them.

The Bashgali—for so these Kafirs are called after their home in the valley of Bashgal in Kafiristan—are said to be noisome brutes, and whether they be Kafir or Moslem I can well believe it. In course of time, they will become indistinguishable from the Chitrali, but who will gain by that process of assimilation I dare not say.

On the way we again stopped at Karakal, a village a little above our camp. It was occupied by Kalash, and I went to inspect the Jestakan, which I found in a very

neglected state. It was, however, going to be repaired. Even the Jestak was missing. All four pillars of the building had the heads of sheep—or of rams—carved in wood and projecting, and they were still adorned with the withered leaves of the laburnum (*Sophora mollis*) placed there during the spring festival, thrust between the pillars and the back of the neck. There was also a small drum, shaped like an hour-glass. On the walls were rough drawings of goats and other animals which are made during the winter festival of the Chowmas.

At the village of Kandarisar I found the graveyard differed greatly from that at Rumbur. The graves were not dug, but the dead were placed in boxes exactly like those in the cemetery of the Red Kafirs. Two or three heavy stones kept the lids on, and prevented the desecration of the dead by animals.

We were also shown the marks of an angel or deity called Balamahin. On a stone was a red mark of a nondescript kind which was that of the hoof of the god's horse; and also a long mark on the grey stone which was the rider's footprint. I noticed that close by these marks were the remains of a juniper fire. The story is that years ago, during the month of December, the time of his cult, when he is honoured by all, the god came to Kandarisar to bless the fields and assure a bounteous harvest for his votaries. Unfortunately, the people heard him moving about at night, thought that he was a robber, and set the dogs on him. The god complained to the pshé, who told the people that they had been cursed instead of blessed. They were indeed, as the story goes on to say that they all died.

There was a pshé in Bumboret and several times I tried to see him, but I was always being put off, being told that he was only half inspired and not genuine. My impression was that it was too much trouble to send for him.

Balamahin is worshipped during the Chowmas festival, and is a deity of some importance. Everyone kills two or three goats in his honour, the victims being slain either in the house or else in some auspicious or suitable place. A fire of juniper is always lit and some of the blood is thrown on it. There were two Bashali (places for the segregation of women) in the Bumboret valley. In the upper valley at Kandarisar, the Bashali was only used by women during their periods of menstruation, but at Dirun, lower down, it was used for confinements also.

Both in Kandarisar, which is an old and important village, and in the lower valley, there were a number of Kalash who had been converted to Islam. These in former times had been the domestic slaves of the Kalash and occupied a very menial position. When these slaves died, they were, even if males, buried without dance or music, and without any ceremony. Even during their lifetime they enjoyed no Kafir rites. 'Neither drum nor dance' was the expression used. Their status was a good deal improved by their conversion to Islam, but I believe that they still had to work for the Kafirs. I shall again mention these people when I describe Birir.

I returned also to the side-valley of Batrik, down which we had entered the Bumboret on our way from

Acholgah. There I found a Mahandeo Dur, a dark sequestered place, at the side of the hill. Over the primitive square stone shrine, in the front of which was a square orifice where the blood of the victims was cast, were four projecting horse heads carved in stone. A fine chenar-tree faced and overhung the shrine. In the Batrik valley was said to be the site of the capital of the old Kalash kings, and Rajah Wai, said to be the last of them, had lived there. A large area, embracing several fields, was shown as the site of his palace or fort, and several of the houses still standing looked very old. At one time a great deal of the land here belonged to the people of the Rumbur, but they left on account of the constant quarrels they had with their slaves, which seems to be an odd reason for abandoning the land.

We crossed the glen and went to its left side, above the hamlet where, under a high granite cliff, were two of the primitive shrines dedicated to Jatzh or Kushumai, which I have already mentioned. At the foot of the rock we found the usual small hearth built up against it with a little juniper, and a collection of charred boughs and ashes. Further on was a greenish mark about two feet long and perhaps six inches wide on the face of the cliff, made by the rain and looking like some sulphur deposit. This was a true sign of the goddess of the fields and fixed the site. Below it was a large fire-place or hearth, and above a bundle of holly-oak and juniper, now much withered. It was significant of the influence of the Red Kafirs that the goddess was always called by her Bashgali name of Kushumai.



MAHANDEO DUR AT BATRIK

The Jestakan of Batrik was a most interesting building, manifestly of great age. It was open and roofless, weeds were growing in it, but it was still in use and the old Kafir headman intended to repair it. It had four central carved pillars. The Jestak was covered with laburnum, juniper and holly-oaks, and beside it were two of the drums used at the Jyoshi. The walls were adorned with rough drawings in black of ibex and markhor, and of juniper-trees, and the pillars were festooned with withered laburnum.

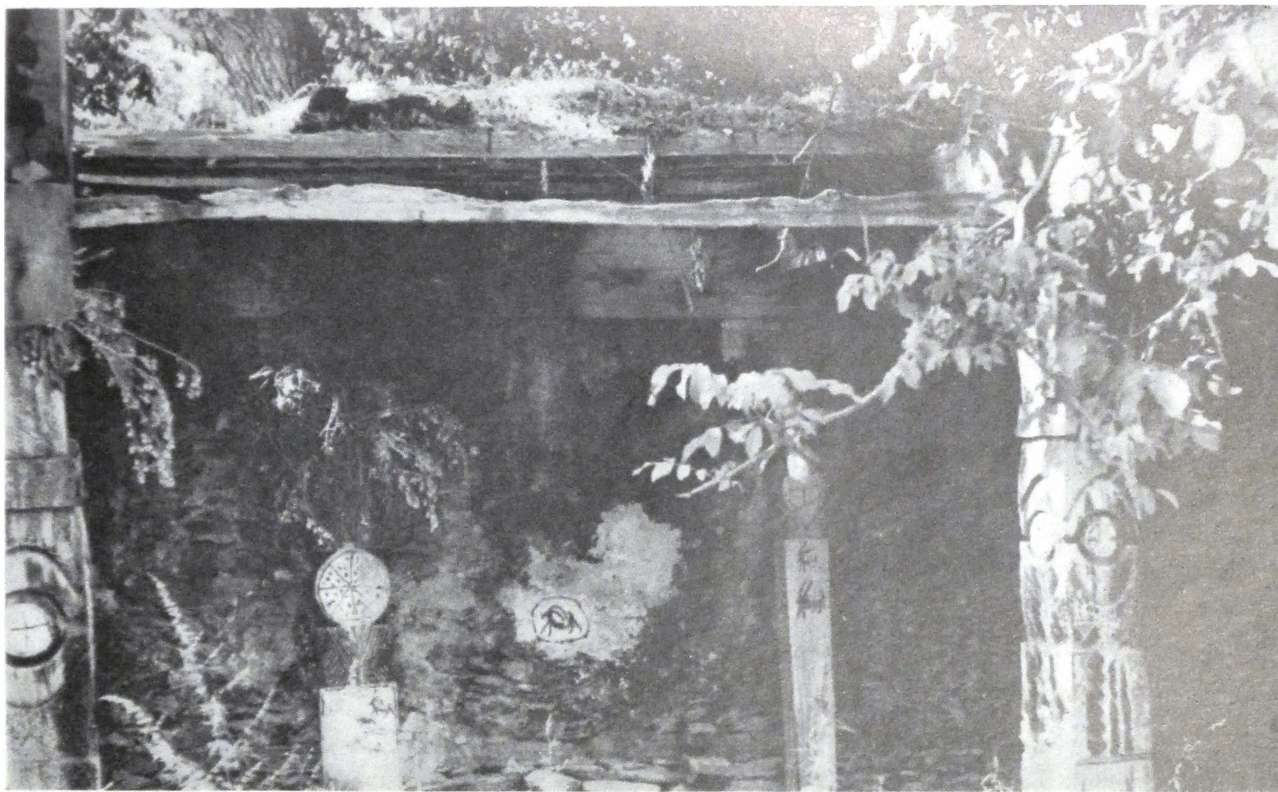
There was a legend that years ago the great beams of wood could not be carried from the forest even by a hundred men. The pshé came to the king and said that it was revealed to him that the blood of a man was needed. This is a very prevalent superstition all over the East whenever a new building is erected. It is, for instance, widely believed that British engineers always put the body of a newly killed native in the railway bridges made in India. This was the only time that I ever heard of human sacrifices amongst the Black Kafirs. Every man of the clan declared that he would willingly offer himself as a victim. It so fell out that a goat-herd was killed in the mountain by one of these beams falling on him and that satisfied the goddess. The beams, no longer recalcitrant and immovable, were carried without any difficulty, and the Jestakan was built. This particular Jestakan, open though it was, proved most impressive, and seemed the true temple of a deity.

On my way to camp I passed a small child, stark naked, playing with its mother's cone-shaped basket.

Close by, prone and inert, the woman slept, a black mass relieved only by the head-dress of white cowrie shells.

Bumboret was certainly agreeable. Thanks to the lavish irrigation the nights were cool enough for us to require two blankets, and what was truly miraculous, there was not a mosquito to be seen or heard. Our camp was on a grassy lawn, under the shade of apricot and mulberry trees. The mulberries fell with a plop all day and all night. Maize six foot high surrounded us on all sides, and the clear clean stream murmured gently all the time. I quite agreed with the Kalash who say that the Creator made Bumboret valley for himself, but out of his great bounty bestowed it on them.

The Rumbur valley was not the original home of the Kafirs. Formerly it was in the possession of the Dangariks, who came from the east, during their period of ascendancy and power. When they grew feeble, and fell into decline, they were driven out by Kafirs from Bumboret.



JESTAKAN AT BATRIK

CHAPTER XI

‘A daughter is sometimes better than her mother.’

Hunza Proverb

WE left Kandarisar, the village near our camp and the original settlement of the Kalash in these valleys, for the adjoining Kafir valley of Birir. We crossed the river, and went by easy stages up a steep ravine to the top of the watershed, whence we looked down on the very narrow but fertile glen of Birir. So close beneath us did Birir seem that Daulat went on ahead to choose a camping-ground and make arrangements, but we found that it took us two hours to reach Biyu, the place where we encamped. It was a surprising track down, as we suddenly left the wooded slopes and plunged into a stony and narrow defile, with high sides. We found the descent tortuous and waterless. In Chitral water is important, as in the hot season a Chitrali likes to drink at every stream. At last we reached the end of the Shang Kui gorge and came to cultivation.

On the way I passed the local Mahandeo Dur, which was smaller and less impressive than those in the two previous valleys. It had two wooden horses' heads which reminded me of the hobby-horses children play with, projecting above the small altar, which was of the conventional type with the black recess or orifice into which the sacrificial blood or milk is thrown. A huge chenar-tree overhung the shrine, and a black rock rose straight up behind. It was a gloomy, almost sinister site.

We turned up the valley for some distance, crossed the stream which, never large, was now but a pleasant brook, and settled down at Biyu, which is the highest village in the Birir vale. Our tents were pitched on a fine grassy lawn, shaded by splendid walnut-trees. The Birir valley possessed many orchards but, except for a few green spongy apples of no flavour whatever, there was no fruit to be had. The apricots were all over, and the famous grapes were, unfortunately, not yet ripe; a sad disaster!

The Birir people came originally from Manjam to the west, from what was Kafiristan, or at any rate they said so. And although they were Black Kafirs we found that they differed somewhat in their observances from the other Kalash, having other deities, or other names for the members of the Kafir pantheon, although some, e.g. Mahandeo, were the same.

The headman of Biyu was a fine, stalwart old man who told us that his age was a hundred less twenty. He certainly was not nearly eighty years old, and I should say, judging from his general appearance, that he was about sixty-five. In this country no one ever knows his own age, and old peasants often get much annoyed if their profession of a considerable age is not believed.

His name was Pattileshi and he was the brother of Latkam, now no more. The latter was a famous man in his time. He had been orderly to Major (later Colonel) Gurdon, one of the first Political Agents in Chitral, and still the best remembered of all. When alive Latkam always rode, so it was fitting that outside

his village he should be commemorated by his wooden image set up, life-size, with the deceased mounted. On his left was a small arch or gateway made of wood on which were two small effigies. These were his servants, and one of them was represented as playing on a pipe. I found Pattileshi very active and diligent, and he took great pleasure in showing me the sights of the valley.

As Birir is famous for its grapes, and as the Kalash are no believers in teetotalism, the first thing that I was shown the next day was the chief wine vat of the valley. This was a large flat board nine feet long by five feet wide. It was tapered at one end to enable the must to flow into a receptacle built in the ground. There were grooves or slots along the edges of the board in which planks were set, thus turning the whole into a very fair-sized box, which held a great quantity of grapes.

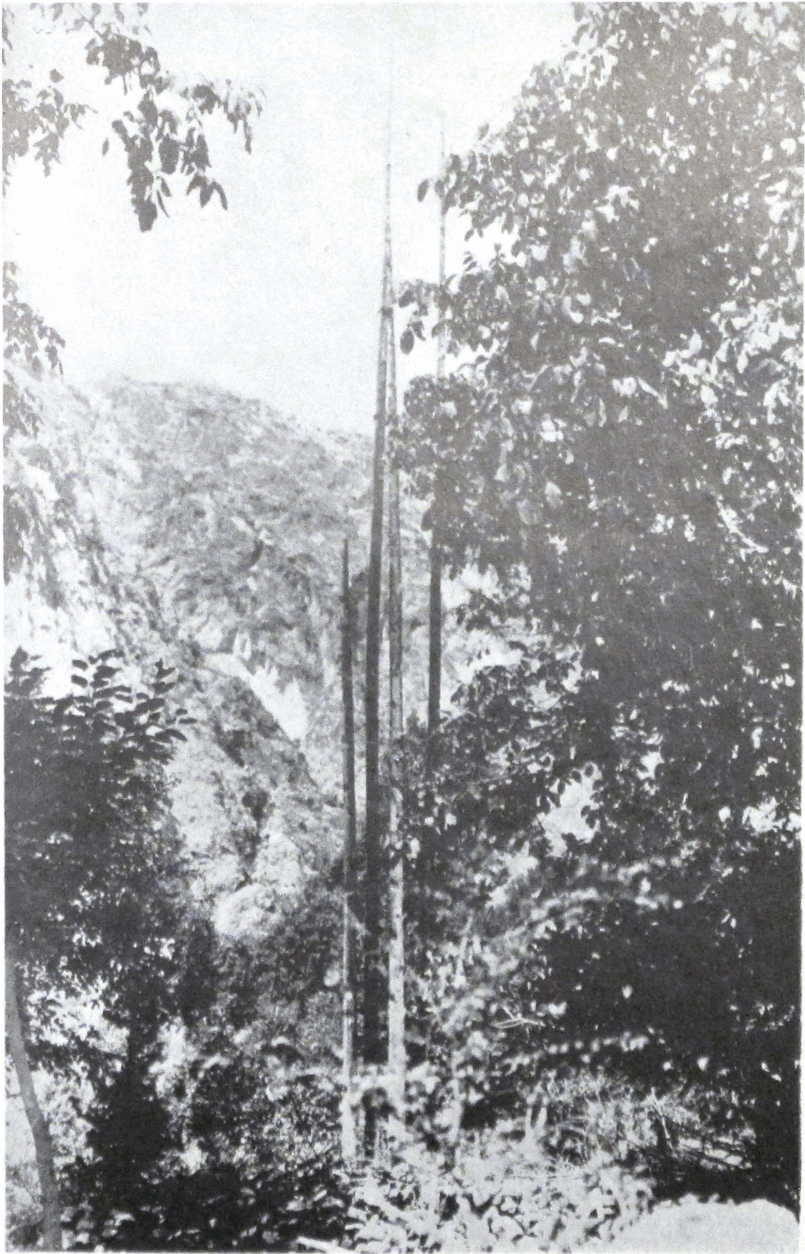
Wine-making is an important matter in Birir, and certain preliminaries are always observed. A goat is sacrificed and the blood is sprinkled on the grapes already piled high in the press. Then one or two On-jesta-mozh jump on the grapes and press out the juice with their feet, in precisely the same way, the world over, that man has forced the secret from the belly of the grape and has trodden the winepress since the days of Noah.

The vat, pit, or receptacle, was large enough to hold a man, and before the vintage began it was smeared with goat's fat to prevent any leakage taking place. When all the grapes had been pressed, the liquid was left for a month to ferment. Before anyone drank it, some was taken to the shrine and offered in sacrifice. No woman

is allowed at any time near the scene of operations. This place and all connected with it are 'on jesta' or undefiled.

Nevertheless the women drink the wine as well as the men, and some of them are famous toppers. And why not? The lives of the Kafirs are harsh and toilsome, and their lot is to receive many kicks and no ha'pence. The wine is never bottled, and it is a tribute at once to the honesty and primitiveness of the people that they go and take whatever wine they want, but never more than their share. Further, the wine, lying in its vat free to all, is never stolen.

Not far from the place of the wine-making was the shrine of Prabal, known as the Prabal-un-grunner, which I thought one of the most singular objects that I had seen in all the Kafir country. There were four poles set upright in a square about a foot to eighteen inches apart, and on the left a further three poles. On the larger set of poles was some withered holly-oak. The heights of the poles varied from 20 up to 40 feet. The poles were roughly notched at intervals. One set was for the people of Biyu, our village; and the four-masted one for those of Gurul, which was a considerable village lower down. At the time of the winter festival of Chowmas these poles are festooned from top to bottom with holly-oak, and the notches I had seen were to enable the boys to climb up and fix it. The people of the two villages then form up in separate parties, and all make a rush to their own set of poles, carrying lighted boughs of juniper in their hands. They then set fire to the holly-oak, which explains the



THE PRABAL-UN-GRUNNER

charred appearance of the poles. It is considered very lucky to be the first to reach the place. No woman is on any account allowed near. During the rest of the year certain ceremonies take place here. At the time of the vintage, before the grapes are ripe or plucked, a fire of saruz (juniper) is made, and a bunch of grapes is tied to the poles. When fermentation is complete and the wine is ready for use, a similar fire is made, and the wine is thrown on the poles as well as in the fire. Till that is done, no one may drink the new liquor.

The two sets of poles were in a carefully walled enclosure in which a low jungle of holly-oaks was growing. This enclosure was sacred, and no one except the On-jesta-mozh may enter the area, under penalty of a fine of three or four well-grown goats, as a sacrifice to avert the wrath of the god. In the centre of this enclosure, hidden from sight by laburnum bushes and holly-oak, was the shrine of Praba (or Prabal), a great, powerful, and most dangerous god. Old Pattileshi would not go near the place, and a great deal of fuss was made as to how I could see the shrine. We dived about, squinting through the bushes, trying to get some sort of view. Everyone was rather frightened. Finally I jumped on the wall—no one objected as my blood was on my own head—and by tearing away a few branches I had a good, but not a close, view. I very much wanted to approach nearer, but the agitation of my companions made me desist.

The shrine was of the conventional type, with two 'hobby horses' above a square altar which was three feet long and two feet high, but it was built on the

ground and not, as is generally the case, raised above on a rock.

The interesting point about all these Kafir shrines lies in the absence of any indications of the deity to whom they have been dedicated. They are all alike, whether Praba's, Mahandeo's or any other's. I was assured that two men who had dared, though unclean, to enter the precincts of the sacred grove, had at once vanished, and had never been heard of since.

Near Praba's shrine was that of Rahistam Praba, a much less important deity, and the protector of the harvest. When it is time to sow the crops, a small kid is sacrificed. A little flour and wine is thrown, half on the sacred juniper fire and half on the shrine, and the blood from the kid is then flung on the grain which is to be sown. If any villager ventures to sow before this ceremony has been performed he is responsible for the fate of his village's crops. If they are bad, he is held blameworthy, and the headman takes care that this rule is observed.

My next expedition in Birir was down the valley to see the Verin Dur, the Shrine or Place of the god Verin. It was a long way, and it was very hot as the sun was strong. Besides, the valley is rather confined, and not very high above sea-level. As we went down the smiling valley we passed Grom where there were the remains of a fort. Next we came to the graves of the Baira or domestic slaves of the Kafirs, to whom reference has already been made. Here I learned more about them, and the story is worth recording.

Apparently when the valleys of Birir and Bumboret,

but not Rumbur, were first occupied by the Kafirs, a few depressed and degenerate inhabitants were found already in them—perhaps the remains of the Dangarik settlers. The Kalash, then in the heyday of their vigour, bought and enslaved the children of these people, and for generations they have been their slaves: not, of course, bought and sold, but in the relation of a serf to his lord. ‘We regard them as no better than scavengers’, I was told. These people, fifteen to twenty families in all in the two valleys, have become Mohammedans or ‘Sheikhs’ whilst their masters remain Kafirs. The reason was, as I have said, the refusal of the Kalash to admit the Baira to any of their ceremonies, either as participants or as beneficiaries. Let me repeat again: ‘In life or death neither dance nor drum.’ The Kalash would not eat with them and indeed treated them like dogs, so it is not surprising that the people, undoubtedly with a certain degree of encouragement from outside, have become Mohammedans. When I looked at their graves I saw two varieties. The first and older were the graves of the Baira when they had not become Sheikhs, and they looked more like a heap of old broken packing-cases than the sepulchres of human beings. Close by were the neat, built-up and highly orthodox graves of the converted serfs. It certainly was a contrast, and I was convinced that the new Moslems felt that they had scored over their masters. Pattileshi said that thirty of these people still worked for him. I expect some did, but the number seemed a large one, though, being the headman of the valley, he was well-to-do and full of authority.

We next came to the Bashali, and I found that the rules for segregation were stricter here than in the other valleys. In Birir a woman has to remain apart for three months after her confinement, as against a month in Rumbur and fifteen days in Bumboret, but for other purposes the rules were the same. The Bashali here was very gloomy and depressing and rather small, but I suppose that it was big enough.

We continued our very hot walk, dripping all over. We crossed to the right of the stream, passing opposite Gurul, and turned up the Grabet, a side-valley, very attractive with its beautiful unspoiled forests at its head, and with plenty of cultivation. There was very little water in the valley, in spite of its extent, and the water for the fields had been brought from the main stream from some distance and at a great height, a work of considerable ingenuity and labour.

To reach the shrine of Verin, I had to climb, as the site was on a projecting spur on the left of the Grabet valley, and it was on the way up that I noticed with surprise the irrigation channel nearly at the top of the ridge; old Pattileshi skipped up in front of me, in spite of his age being 'one hundred less twenty years'. He was large and active, but was clad only in a pair of cotton pyjamas with a surplus of unwashed cloth flung over his shoulder like a plaid. He was as hairy as Esau. On reaching the top of the ridge, he refused to go nearer the shrine. He said that he had lost his wife twelve months ago, and no one in his state could approach close to the shrine till two years from the death had elapsed. A similar prohibition prevailed in



VILLAGE GATEWAY IN BIRIR VALLEY

Rumbur, but there the restriction was for twelve months only—another instance of the stringency of the taboos in Birir.

We now found ourselves standing on the top of a spur, so narrow that there was only just room to walk. The arid, steep sides were stony, with a good deal of holly-oak. As we went along the ridge, we came first of all to a small hearth where a fire had recently been kindled and a goat sacrificed to Verin to avert rain. This place was about a hundred yards from the actual shrine and considerably below it.

I was begged not to proceed any farther. It was not a case of my unclean presence, rather the reverse. There was no fanatical feeling either. It was, however, impressed on me very earnestly that Verin was a powerful, dangerous, and tyrannical deity, and it was advisable not to offend him. But I was rash enough to go on. The shrine was of the stereotyped pattern, with two projecting horses' heads and an aperture in the face of the stone altar built up below them to receive wine and blood: on the left of the shrine a pole projected on which the bodies of the animals sacrificed were hung to enable them to be skinned easily.

Once again, this shrine, dedicated to one of the most powerful deities, bore no mark to show in whose honour it was erected. So far as I could see, the only shrine that bore any sign of identification was the Jestakan. It was impossible to discover any clue to the others. Verin or Werin was always known as Shura Verin, or the Warrior Verin. In Rumbur, his place is taken by Sajjigor, who is, however, a different deity. Second to

him is Praba or Prabal, god of the poles and of the fire race. It is to the shrines of Verin and Sajjigor that men are taken to swear a solemn oath, and woe betide them if they commit perjury. In Bumboret, where neither of these shrines exists, a man will swear at the local Mahandeo Dur. If, however, it is a matter of really great importance, he will leave his valley to take his oath at one of the holier shrines. Mahandeo is described as the Wazir or Minister both of Sajjigor and of Verin.

Two men, one belonging to Birir and the other to Bumboret, had a dispute about land. The story is that the Birir man was in the right but both went to swear or forswear themselves before the shrine of Verin. The Bumboret man perjured himself, and he had not gone five miles from the shrine when his eyes began to protrude, and he died shortly after. Here is evidently a case of a bad conscience producing exophthalmic goitre!

Except during the two great festivals, or else for some special purpose, for instance, to take a solemn oath, no one ever dreams of approaching the shrine of Verin. Everyone considers it a place of peril and power, and not to be profaned. There was none of the pious familiarity that was shown at the shrine of Sajjigor. No women, of course, are in any circumstances allowed in the vicinity of either shrine. There was no doubt that of all the gods in the Kalash pantheon, Verin was regarded with most fear.

We now left the hill of this ominous and primitive deity, and its grove of stunted holly-oak, and went to

visit Gurul, the hamlet on the left of the stream, opposite which we had already passed. We went near the graveyard with its seven or eight dismantled figures, and the actual graves some eighty yards below—a depressing area, with its grove of stark, dead trees. Gurul was a pleasant village but very congested, as the houses were all crammed together on the side of a small hill or ridge. There were projecting flat platforms in front of each, for squatting on, narrow dirty streets, and eaves, beams, and rafters all jammed together and pressing into each other. I noticed an unusual number of *pasti*, as the small square isolated buildings are called, which look rather like over-large pigeon-cotes. These buildings fulfil two purposes. Articles, grain or whatever else, may be stored in them, secure from the all-pervading smoke of the living-room; and secondly, and what is probably even more important, no one knows what stock of food or gear a householder has. Everybody, rich or poor, keeps all his goods in these godowns, and consequently the visible and external contents of the dwelling-house itself are no guide to its owner's wealth.

There were two *Jestakans* at Gurul. One was very old and impressive, with black carved pillars, and a wide platform projecting over the steep sudden hillside. It was in much need of repair, and had no *jestak*. The newer one, which thanks to the thick dense cobwebs of soot looked equally old, was festooned with *bisha* (wild laburnum). It was decorated in the usual way with horns as well as with withered boughs, but had no further attractions. Outside the door, on the right as

one faced it, was a slab for oblations, but all I saw on it was a quantity of dirty unground corn which someone had put there for convenience. We toiled back to camp. It was uphill all the way, and we sweated great gout, the perspiration streaming into our eyes and making them smart. We passed more of the Baira graves, and reached camp in the cool velvety dusk.

CHAPTER XII

'Do not dig a pit. If you do, you will fall into it.'

Hunza Proverb

WE left Birir the next morning, and as I went down I much admired the glen. It was often narrow and rocky. Frowning cliffs rose to a great height with fringes of trees silhouetted on their crests like grotesque plumes of feathers. The stream was clear but, considering the size of the valley, small. The cultivation was profuse but careless, and over all was an impression of rest and contentment.

I noticed that near the 'china' crops small smudge fires were burning to keep off the mosquitoes, which eat this grain when it is young, and do much damage.

Near Gurul our Kalash met his sister and a most affectionate, deliberate, and prolonged kissing took place. The two had not met for a long while. She was practical, too, in her feelings, and gave her brother a round cake of bread, nearly two inches thick, agreeably flavoured with savoury herbs and mixed with walnut kernels.

Above Gurul we saw fourteen wooden effigies in a row, all propped up against the hillside, and all from the opposite side of the valley looking very realistic and grimly corpse-like. Here, too, I was struck by the Kalash habit of smearing crimson dye round their eyes to subdue the glare.

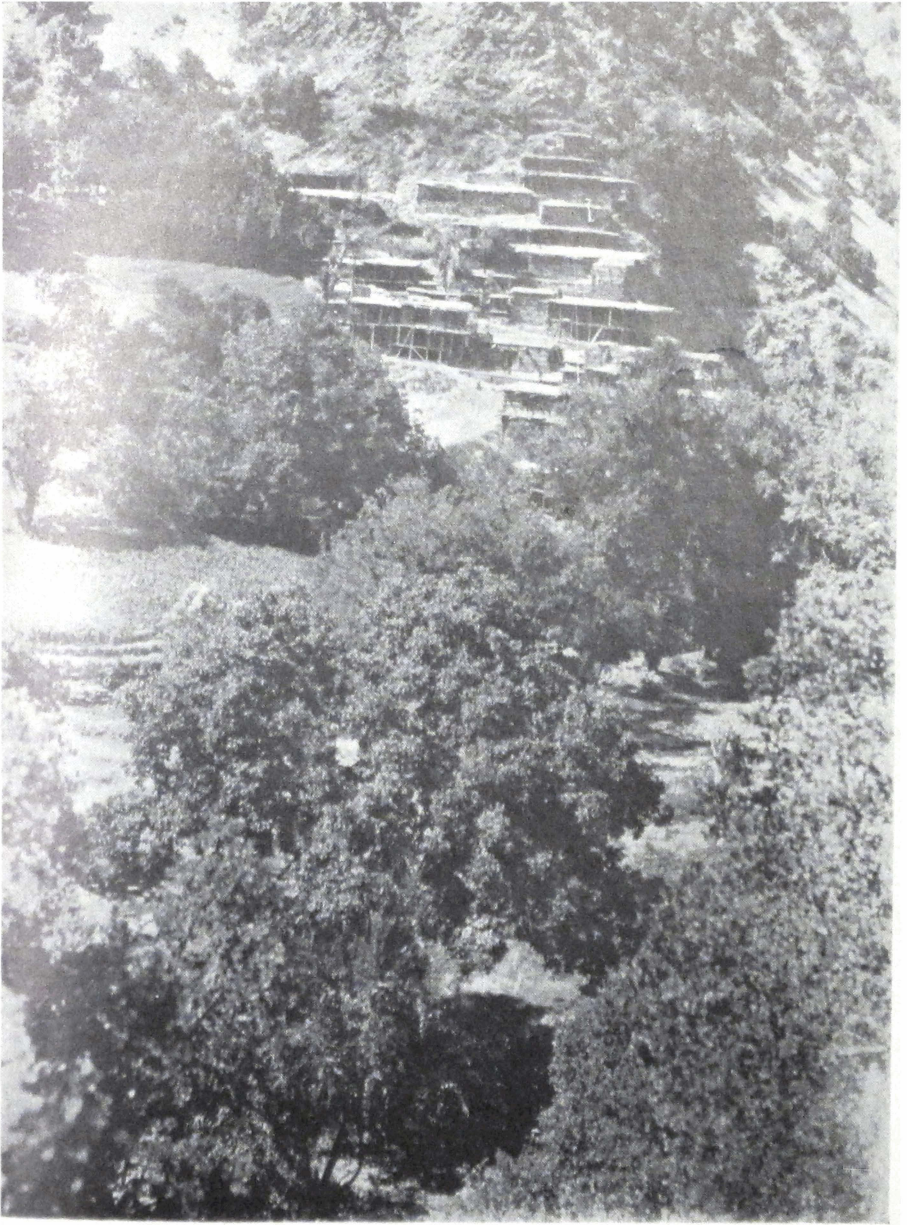
I was disappointed once again, and for the last time, in not seeing a pshé (the dehar of the Kati), but the one

usually at Gurul had gone to the upland pastures to tend his flocks. He was not esteemed to be a first-class seer, but in want of a better would have been worthy of inspection.

As we went down the valley we heard a good deal of Bangulai, now deceased. He was a rich man and a celibate, even a misogynist. He foretold that after his death he would become a powerful angel and his celestial name would be Grimon. He was a great favourite of the fairies, and very often when he was tending his abundant herds and flocks, the kindly sprites would convey him and his animals to some remote and delectable pasture. During his lifetime, if a woman ventured to look at him, she was punished by a severe belly-ache, a pain in her eyes, or acute ear-ache; so he was seldom troubled by the wanton glances of the other sex.

At last this pious, wealthy, but distinctly disconcerting neighbour disappeared: he vanished without leaving a trace. According to his instructions a shrine was set up to him, consecrated with a saruz (juniper) fire and goat's milk. This shrine is on the left of the Birir valley, half-way between the lowest village and the mouth of the glen. It is not much of a sight. Indeed, it took me some time to identify it, for it is only marked by a white piece of natural rock (one of many) with a few stones added. But, despite its insignificance, it is even yet powerful, with the aura of the late misogynist brooding over it.

When women pass by, they doff their headgear, avert their faces and hold their bonnets between their heads



KALASH VILLAGE OF GURUL

and the Grimon Dur or house of Grimon. They are well advised in doing so, as failing such precautions, aches and pains would be their lot. There is yet another taboo traceable to Grimon. If between Nozh Deyu, the last hamlet in Birir, and the mouth of the valley, any man mate with a woman, and so defile the area, death will probably overtake them. For it is the preserve of the late Grimon, né Bangulai, a privileged area and not to be polluted. It is just as well that saints are rare amongst the Black Kafirs if such are their idiosyncrasies.

On our right, as we descended, was the Pishpo valley, a beautiful artery of the Birir with forests and grassy pastures, but with no water, and so of no value for cultivation. At last we reached Gahirat and rejoined the main Chitral valley. It was very hot, and Gahirat broiling in the sun, with a poor water supply and the great mud barrack of a fort, looked singularly uninviting. We had sent a man on to prepare some donkeys, but neither they nor coolies were forthcoming, so the Kalash had to carry our kit three miles farther on to Kesu. This was as much as they could manage, so we had to spend the night there.

On the right bank of the Chitral river as we went down was Shidi, a place with some cultivation due to a remarkable spring. It once happened that seven pshé (seers) were travelling along, and reached the place exhausted by the heat. One of them from Noghor dreamed that there was water there if they could but manage to get it by breaking the rock with their heads. All except he who had had the dream dashed their

heads with great violence and consequent harm against the rock. It is even said that they collapsed insensible and perished. When his six companions were lying on the ground, the pshé from Noghhor scratched beneath the rock, found the spring, and occupied the land, receiving too a great access of fame for discovering a perennial spring in an unlikely place and doing away with a number of his rivals.

Kesu was a large village with an inadequate water-supply. We stayed in a dark shady orchard, and were regaled with small sour grapes, all skin and stones, and figs like rather large black currants, very insipid and full of seeds. We had by now tasted all the fruits that grow in Chitral, from the peaches and apricots of the Mehtar to the grapes of Kesu. We had found all varieties most disappointing, devoid of flavour, coarse, and in fact not worth eating, but considering that no Chitrali takes any trouble over his fruit this is inevitable.

I was sitting in my tent at Kesu when there was suddenly a crash and a bump, and what looked like a small black bear came hurtling out of the tree. Unfortunately, it was nothing so unimportant but was the headman of the village, a very decent, willing fellow, who had gone to gather grapes. He was young and active, and how he came to grief I cannot think. There was a great hullabaloo and I administered various remedies. In the middle of the excitement an old woman crept up, collected all the headman's grapes, and took them furtively away. The man was put on a charpoy. He had not been hurt, no bones were broken,

and he was suffering more from shock than anything else. The entire village flocked to his side, and he enjoyed much temporary sympathy. When we left in the morning, he was much better.

We spent only a night at Drosh, and I had to give up my idea of visiting the Shishi Kuh, the long valley which joins the Chitral river three miles above it. It is an interesting place, as it has a number of Tajik or Iranian immigrants, who have been settled there for many years and who still speak Persian amongst themselves. They are capable iron workers, and have a reputation for making guns. The Shishi Kuh must indeed be one of the most polyglot places in a country where many languages are spoken, as in this one small valley Persian, Chitrali, Pushto, Punjabi, Kalash, and Bashgali are all spoken, and it is in miniature what Chitral is as a whole. Madaklasht in the Shishi Kuh is used as a summer camp for the battalion at Drosh.

It was quite pleasant there, and not so hot as I expected, but the water supply seemed indifferent. Sissu or Amir Gul, our Hunza postman, and also the havildar left us. Mohamed Isa went back to his valleys, and we continued our journey at an exhaustingly rapid pace, as we had to keep up with the tall mules which carried our gear.

I cannot recommend Lower Chitral for a walking tour in August. The country is mountainous, it is true, but it is not Alpine, and we sought in vain for a trace of snow that might have survived in some remote cranny. The road was good but very dusty, and we set out from Drosh with the broad gloomy river on our right, very

different from the svelte stream of April. We passed several pretty enough places, of which Galatak was the most noticeable. The place was built on a rock projecting into the river, with trees and maize fields at its base and, above, a mosque shaded by chenar-trees. Opposite was the village of Jingeret, and a name like that needs to be recorded.

At Mirkhani we took a short cut, and so missed a hospitable dish of tea which had been prepared for us: we turned away here from the main valley up the Ashret Gol to the Lowarai Pass. We did not go very far, but should have gone farther. Daulat had diarrhoea, and it was extremely hot, so we halted at Ashret, camping amongst the graves under the trees, a cool secluded spot. There were no mosquitoes and, mercifully, very few flies.

The people of Ashret are not Chitralis but Dangariks who speak Palula, a language allied to the Shina spoken at Gilgit and for a long way down the Indus valley. They are probably Shins who came from Chilas, which sounds very definite but is, in reality, very vague. All these settlers are fond of saying they come from Chilas. Everyone has heard of that place, no one has been there, and so the statement cannot be contradicted. There are, moreover, several other colonies of these people in Lower Chitral. We found them civil enough, but all villagers on a frequented route are apt to be more predatory than those in remote places.

Our previous journey over the Lowarai Pass had been under very wintry conditions, and I was unprepared for the remarkable and fascinating beauty of the

scenery. As we walked up on a fine day in late summer, the long forests trailing round us, the smaller glens running up on either side with their trees ascending to the skyline, the abundant water, and the green soft aspect of the whole valley, over which a bluish film rested, all made a great impression on us. The air, too, was light and fresh after the fly-blown dusty valley. On the Dir side we found the landscape equally comforting, and the summit of the pass itself, grassy, flower-sprinkled, and with stray remnants of snow in shaded crevices, was an agreeable climax to a lovely piece of Alpine scenery. The rich blue conifers swarming up the valley sides contrasted in a most marked fashion with the main valley we had left a dozen miles behind, where the harsh, dark foliage on the glaring dry hillsides produced a disagreeable impression of spots and patches. I again looked at the shelter on the top of the pass, and a most miserable place it was. That proper protection on this much frequented and often dangerous route has not been provided is an inexplicable piece of folly.

A feature of the Lowarai Pass, on both sides, but particularly on the Dir side, was the enormous quantity of maize growing everywhere. The whole country was devoted to it, and far up the hillsides we could see the terraced fields waving with their interminable harvest of tufted, tasselled corn.

We arrived at the fort of Dir at 4 p.m. The genial and kindly havildar had been replaced by a fat lout. We found the garrison of the fort stretched on charpoys, placed in rows outside the fort, and attended by the

courtesans of the town. I was asked by the fat havildar if the same houris might come that night to amuse the war-worn garrison and reluctantly consented. But after an hour of a noise that banished all sleep, I persuaded the ladies and the warriors to remove to a remoter place. They kindly did so, and from afar, I heard the unwelcome sound of music and howling. Apparently the hardy soldiers of Dir disport by night and sleep by day.

From here onward we went in a lorry to Peshawar. The journey was uneventful, but the weather grew hotter and hotter as we approached the plains. There is a Kotal or pass between Dir and Malakand, and I remember looking back over an immense sea of waving rice-fields, the delicate emerald of which contrasted with the naked hills behind. From Chakdara we drove under an avenue of weeping willows to the Malakand, and reached Peshawar and the house of the Revenue Commissioner in the late afternoon, the same house from which we had set out in April. Here after three frantic days of packing we all parted, and posted off to our respective homes. The three Hunza men with Daulat at their head returned to their own country by the way they had just come, by Chitral and the Shandur Pass. Subhana the Kashmiri came with me as far as Rawal Pindi, and then went on to his home near Bandapur, where he would devour much rice to compensate for his long deprivation. I proceeded reluctantly to Bombay and Britain.

CHAPTER XIII

'A mean man will die of meanness.'

Gilgit Proverb

I HAVE several times in the course of this narrative referred to the shortcomings of the Chitrali, and I have done so in very uncomplimentary terms. I have, however, written of him as I found him. It must also be borne in mind that his reputation in the bazaars of northern India, those centres of cynical, shrewd, and dispassionate criticism, is not an enviable one.

Before, however, discussing the character of the people, it is as well to say who the Chitrali is. The population of Chitral falls racially into three very definite groups. There are first of all the original dwellers in the valleys; the aborigines, in fact. Although there is some controversy about it, I am quite certain that the people in both Upper and Lower Chitral were once of one stock. The difference between them now is that the Black Kafirs or Kalash in a few valleys have preserved their religion and language, the rest of them have become Mohammedans. Thus all Chitralis of the peasant and lower classes are of one stock. Naturally the numerous immigrants are not included.

It is contended that there were two different races, the Kho and the Kalash, and that the former came down from their homes in Upper Chitral and pushed out the Kalash, who at one time ruled as far north as Kari, some miles above the town of Chitral. There are two objections to this theory. One is that no one knows who the

Kho are, whence they came, or how two sets of aborigines lived in one valley. The second is that the lower classes in Upper and Lower Chitral are obviously of the same stock. A Black Kafir differs in no apparent wise from his Moslem neighbours. The place names in Upper and Lower Chitral are also of Kafir origin. I think that unquestionably the whole of Chitral was once inhabited by one people, and those were the Kalash.

The upper valleys of the country have always been more exposed and more susceptible to outside influence than the southern or lower ones, where on both sides there were hostile tribesmen of a primitive kind. On the west of the southern part of Chitral there were the Red Kafirs, predatory, warlike, and thoroughly bad neighbours; on the east the equally unfriendly peoples of the Lower Indus and the savages, Pathan or otherwise, on the border. When this environment is compared with Badakhshan, Wakhan, Ghizr, and other comparatively settled districts, it is obvious that more favourable influences affected the north of the country, which thus came into touch with the Moslem world.

An objection may be made that there must have been two races, seeing that the Kalash now speak a different language from other Chitralis. But it seems probable that the Kafirs preserved their language and religion owing to their isolation. Their fellows in the north who were converted were also profoundly affected by the succeeding influx of outsiders. Language, creed, customs, habits of mind, independence, were all swept

away. The northern Kho, from being free and independent pagans, became the pawns, and finally the slaves, of the newcomers. It was a heavy price to pay for the accident of their situation.

An added support to the language theory may be found in the case of the converted Kafirs of the Shishi Kuh valley. These people, thanks to their seclusion, still speak their own tongue. Their fellows at Drosh, who were converted two or three generations ago, speak Chitrali. The effect of being apart from the main stream of traffic, a few miles up a side-valley, is far-reaching in a stay-at-home community.

The second group of the Chitralis consists of the upper classes who settled in Chitral, either gradually as refugee immigrants or as followers or scions of the ruling house. At first these superior aliens were adventitious and sporadic squatters, but they made themselves at home, subduing, dispossessing, and oppressing the existing primitive stock.

It is these two groups of people who form the Chitrali race to-day. They are one in speech, custom and, through absorption and assimilation, in race also; and when a Chitrali is mentioned he is one of these two groups. The Kho have, in a sense, absorbed the intruder at the cost to themselves of their old dominating status. A fragment of the aborigines, the Kalash, have preserved their identity.

Finally, there is now in Chitral a third group consisting of the very mixed races that have settled in the country. Of these a few, but only a few, show signs of being absorbed into the Chitrali community. In

this category are the Persian-speaking Tajiks (Iranians) of Madaklasht in the Shishi Kuh valley; the Dangariks of Ashret, Beori, and a few other villages who speak Palula; the strange people of the Upper Lutkuh who talk Yidgha, the Kati or Red Kafirs who speak Bashgali; and the nomad Wakhis in the north. There are also colonies of Pathans, Gujars, Yasinis and Ghizr folk, men from Narsat and also from Kohistan, all of whom lead their own lives, preserve their own customs to a large extent, and persevere even, like the Tajiks, after generations of residence in the country, in the use of their own languages. There are also some human oddments—refugees, traders, and the like—who are too few to form a separate community, yet are apart from the main body of the population.

The majority of this strange mixture of races live in the south of the country, below Chitral town, where it is often rare to find a real Chitrali agriculturalist. Lower Chitral, in fact, seems to be given over to the alien, and perhaps it is just as well.

The Chitrali himself has necessarily been affected by this mixture of races and babel of tongues, and he is often himself something of a mongrel. Absorption is slow, and often even non-existent—it depends on the community—but for generations strangers have come and settled in the country, and the Chitrali is as composite as his mother tongue. As accretions of alien blood are absorbed into his system, he becomes more and more of mixed race. Unfortunately, this process does not benefit him in any way. I know not why it is so. The Chitrali is quite entitled to claim what he

cannot prove, the deterioration of a noble and virile race in consequence of a melancholy but unavoidable infiltration from outside. There can be few places where so many numerous and diverse communities have lived together in so narrow a compass.

All this was, of course, inevitable, thanks to the geographical situation of the country. Chitral as a place of refuge was so accessible that it was bound to become an *Alsatia*, or an asylum, for those on its confines, and it is perhaps remarkable that so many of these undesirable elements have not penetrated quite so far as might have been expected. Presumably, though able to intermarry with the Chitralis, they were too weak to oust them; so that when a Chitrali is mentioned, a member of a race is meant which is now definitely composite and which through force of circumstances, the chief being proximity, is still receiving further, and very diverse, additions from outside. The Chitrali and his language are both mongrels.

The Chitrali is divided socially into two divisions which are widely divergent, the Adamzada or upper class, and the Faqir Miskin or lower class. This division may be described further as a class which does no work, and another which does extremely little. In between these two populous groups is an amorphous middle class, the Yuft. Perhaps these may be defined as those who, not powerful enough to be Adamzadas, are yet slowly rising into their ranks or else are sinking into those of the Faqir Miskin. The former, parvenus or climbers—for successful men are so called the world over—are occasionally classified

as Arbabzadas, but this term is artificial and but little used.

The Adamzadas themselves fall again into two categories. There are first of all the real blue-blooded Adamzadas, the men who strictly speaking are alone entitled to regard themselves as the *grande*s of Chitral, for it is only the descendants of the founder of the ruling house, Sangin Ali I, who are genuine holders of this rank.

There is then a second class of Adamzada, a species of *petite noblesse*, who have the dignity and most of the privileges of the first class. These owe their position to their race, which has been often allied with the dynasty. There is perhaps a third kind of Adamzada who may be linked to the second. It consists of those nobles who owe their position to good luck or to good management, or to some fortuitous cause unconnected with birth or breeding. The present Ataliq of Chitral, Sarfaraz Shah, is one of these parvenus, and as all Chitralis are either feudal or snobbish, such *arrivistes* are cordially detested.

But despite minor differences all Adamzadas have one privilege, or perhaps misfortune, in common: they do no work. They are the useless drones in a dirty hive. They are a curse to themselves and to the community, and although the many evils and miseries in Chitral to-day may be attributed to certain persons and causes, the underlying and radical source of the lamentable state of the country is the existence of the Adamzadas. It is not only that they form a lazy, idle, parasitic class. They are that, but besides they are

human dummies, presenting a malign example. Nominally, their role in life is to follow their ruler to battle and to die in his service. In practice they are a vast and grotesque mob of paltry intriguers.

There are, of course, poor Adamzadas as well as rich, joined by the bond of work-shy inanition. The basic principle of their existence is that the Faqir Miskin do the work of the upper classes. It is they who plough and sow, and reap and hoe, whilst their masters loaf. It is a mistake to regard the Adamzada as a country gentleman living on his estate, which he develops, and taking care of his people in a feudal fashion. In the Gilgit Agency, the Gushpur is the counterpart of the Adamzada in social status, but economically he differs, for he has to work. He need not, if he is well-to-do, but I have seen many of the poorer ones ploughing their land with their own hands. Now a Chitrali Adamzada would be eternally disgraced if he were to do this. Honest toil is fatal to his dignity.

I have discussed the Adamzadas with some force and at some length, because Chitral compares disadvantageously with other countries of a similar type, and its inhabitants with their neighbours, and the fault must lie in a defect in the social organisation. Unless, or until, the Adamzadas are eradicated it is not easy to attempt improvement. My retainers suggested throwing the lals—the title given to the wealthier ones—into the river, but such noyades are not necessary. All that is required is to make them work.

Let me repeat that the Adamzadas are not a leisured

class who by example, encouragement, or influence, play a useful role in the community. They are, on the contrary, retrograde and destructive, impeding any slight progress that Chitral might be capable of. Since the British occupation, too, they have become more useless and predatory.

The Adamzada class all pay ushur (the tithe of all crops) to the State, but the nobles of the first rank, the descendants of Sangin Ali, are exempt from ashimat (compulsory feeding of the Mehtar and his family), a privilege enjoyed by the Atambege and the Zundre, who are in the second category. No Adamzada pays qalang (grazing dues), a levy in kind consisting of a fixed number of goats and a fixed weight of ghi (butter).

The Adamzadas are fond of deriding the Yuft by calling them Faqir Miskin. There is, in point of fact, little difference between the two. The Yuft may be called independent peasants who work for themselves, and for the State when called upon, and not for an Adamzada. The Faqir Miskin are much the same but they are often the retainers of the Adamzada, and have to devote their lives to working for their master, and are thereby free of any service to the State.

The origin of the Yuft is probably to be found in small clans or respectable families of five to ten homes, which may have aspired to enter the Adamzada class, but were too weak numerically, and have, after a struggle, succumbed to their own lack of influence. They are, in fact, the decayed gentry of Chitral, the small county families fallen on evil days. They are rapidly

ceasing to be county or gentry and are becoming merely decayed.

Those who do not belong to the Adamzada class and are not villeins or bondsmen have to pay ushur, ashimat, and qalang, as well as to do begar (forced labour), the corvée in fact. This last obligation is a controversial matter. Originally begar was an honourable service, mild in its incidence, a feudal duty in no way derogatory. It is still so to some extent, but there is too much of it. The primitive conditions of Chitral demand that the village duties should be performed by the villagers—the making and upkeep of paths, the provision of bridges, the repair of mosques and irrigation channels, are all legitimate village services. There is, however, a tendency to demand too much from the peasant, who is often summoned from his village, and kept away for weeks at a time, doing work which was never dreamt of in former times. All this engenders a feeling of exasperation, often peculiarly acute on account of the Chitrali being bone-lazy. Much of what is so euphemistically called progress in Chitral is done by the forced labour of the people. This is right and proper in moderation. The people of Chitral have, however, far less right to complain than many others. If they were not doing begar, they would be in their houses, asleep or intriguing. But the whole system tends in practice to be rather overdone.

Ashimat (the feeding of the ruler, his sons, and their wives when travelling), is not a heavy tax nominally, though theory and practice are as far apart in Chitral as they are anywhere. In these days of frequent travel,

however, the incidence is apt to fall more heavily on some villages than on others. The actual amount to be provided is fixed, and the persons who enjoy it are also defined. Each house takes its turn, and as long as the customary rule is observed, there is no real hardship. The sad part is that the rule is broken.

Except for the Kalash (Black Kafirs) in the south—the Red Kafirs having unfortunately been converted—the people of Chitral are Mohammedans. The majority belong to the Sunni sect of Islam, but the followers of the Aga Khan, the Maulai or Ismaili sect, are very numerous. They are called Rafizi (heretics) which is a gratuitous insult. These Moslems are found in northern and Upper Chitral, in the Lutkuh, and sporadically in many parts of the country. They have been persecuted in the past and I have already expressed my belief that they are still the object of unjust discrimination on account of their religion. This is peculiarly regrettable, as amongst the good points of the Chitrali an entire lack of religious prejudice or fanaticism is noteworthy. The attitude of the authorities in the State may introduce communal feeling, which will be artificial as well as dangerous. The mullahs of Chitral have a widespread, increasing and evil influence.

What then is the character of the Chitrali? I have remarked on his amazing laziness, and this is his chief defect. This laziness is due to a curious and conflicting contradiction of love of comfort and hatred of work. It might be expected that a desire for well-being would urge him to work to satisfy his desires, but all his

cravings are offset by this singular lethargy. Wherever one goes in Chitral, one sees this: in the Adamzada who prefers death to toil; in the peasant whose dirty house, dirty fields, and dirty habits are eloquent of his sloth; and in the highest ranks who loaf their lives away in devastating idleness. It is this that strikes the most casual observer in the country, and it is this that places the Chitrali far below his neighbours.

It is perhaps natural that the Chitrali is seen at his best in repose, either looking on at polo or lying asleep on a bed, his chief occupation. As to an Adamzada, he would appear to perfection in a bath chair. In appearance the average Chitrali is not good-looking, and suffers in comparison with the men of Punyal, Hunza, and even Chilas. I was surprised to find how plain most of the people were. Some of the young men and boys are handsome, but the proportion of good looks to bad is small, and this is an additional argument for the prevalence of the original Kalash race in the Chitrali of to-day, for good looks are not common among the Kalash. As a bachelor I had naturally no means of discovering what the women were like.

There are certainly some excuses for the Chitrali. As I have pointed out, he receives no leading and no encouragement from the ruling or upper classes, who prey on him and besides set a bad example. The peasant is a helot. No one cares for him, let him live or die so long as he contributes his quota to the State which has never done anything to benefit him, and I suppose never will. It is regrettable that forty years of British occupation have done nothing or next to

nothing to ameliorate the lot of the great bulk of the population. A great opportunity has been deliberately missed. The land tenure is bad and this reacts on the peasant. There is no incentive to plant orchards, extend the arable, or improve the crops when another may enjoy the fruits of the worker's toil. Thus a great deal of hardship and preventable poverty is engendered by this faulty system of tenure. Every Chitrali is an occupancy tenant only. Legally, if unjustly, he can be told to clear out at any moment. Why this was not changed when the British occupied the country in 1895 is a mystery.

The whole population in consequence lives on the margin. I do not believe for one moment that this higger-mugger, improvident mode of life worries or vexes the Chitrali. He is used to no other; he conceives nothing different. But some improvement is possible, and this universal improvidence, lack of reserves, and inclination to do the minimum in everything are detrimental to all. Circumstances and natural indolence have produced the Chitrali of to-day.

On the lower hills, the Chitrali is quick, lithe and active. He is not clever in picking a track where none exists, and higher up, on snow and ice, he is disappointing, and apt to behave like a baby and a bore, forever complaining and whining. Perhaps his love of lying is produced by his laziness; any lie to save trouble. All men are liars, says Holy Writ, and the Chitrali deserves pride of place in that sorry category. In intrigue all from top to bottom are past masters. What he is like as a fighting man no one can say, for no one

knows. He has never been tried in modern warfare, even of the diluted frontier type. The operations in the third Afghan War, so far as Chitral was concerned, were derisory and no test of the martial spirit of the people. The forays, skirmishes, and wars of former times were usually not carried out by the Chitralis themselves, especially those that resulted in the occupation of the Gilgit valley.

Chitral abounds in darbands, darwazas, and other Persian expressions for strong positions, but we seldom hear of any attack being met in time. During the Great War, the Chitrali was given no chance of proving himself, a piece of bad luck that he shared with his neighbours, thanks to the bewildering myopia of the local officials.

Service in the army or police would go far to diminish these failings, but a month's training in the local militia, which is the only opportunity he ever has, is inadequate. To drape the flaccid Chitrali with a little manliness a prolonged effort is needed. We have come to his country, we have upset to some extent his social and economic equilibrium, and in common fairness we should do something for the silly, stupid, and perhaps tiresome peasant of Chitral. We have made silk purses before out of far less promising material.

CHAPTER XIV

'If a stingy man's house is burnt down, there is no charcoal.'

Hunza Proverb

THE Chitrali house is constructed on much the same principle throughout the country, and differs but little from those in the adjacent valleys to the east. This must necessarily be so, seeing that the conditions of life and climate and the materials available are very much the same. A criticism might be made that the houses in Lower Chitral, where excellent wood is available, might be better. To this the rejoinder is that it is easier to build with mud, stone and small timber than to manipulate huge timber when tools are scanty or inadequate.

The living-room is the *khātān*, and is common to all houses. There is often a chest of wood, called *tawen*, sometimes even two or three, kept there for flour. Generally, the flour is kept in stone receptacles. On the right and left of the hearth as one enters and faces it, on a platform, called *nakh*, slightly raised—perhaps six inches—there are recesses or cubicles, used for sleeping in, with their opening unscreened.

The women usually sit apart on one side of the fire and facing it, generally on the left, and the men on the other side. There is no restriction or taboo on the movements of the women, as there is in the Kafir houses. Behind the hearth is an oblong raised platform, running the whole length of the room, twelve inches above the floor, and so six inches higher than the *nakh*.

This raised place is called the tek. On it are kept the pots, pans, and domestic gear, as well as the flour bins, whether of wood or stone. There is thus the nakh, six inches above the hearth on the right and left of it, and at the back of the hearth again is a second raised platform, the tek, six inches higher still.

On the right of this, though not invariably, in the top right-hand corner of the room as you enter, is the shi, or pen for calves, kids, and small domestic animals that want care. In Lower Chitral this addition is often absent, and the beasts are kept apart from the living-room. But the shi is an old Chitral custom, convenient if unhygienic (a defect that does not matter where hygiene is always at a discount), and a sensible one for protecting the animals, especially in the north where the cold in winter is severe, and some sort of warm place for the newly born lambs or kids is necessary.

Opposite the hearth is the wood-pile. An orifice in the roof is at once the window and the chimney, and is made by building up the beams of the roof cross-wise to form an octagon. This develops into a low bulge or bump when the roof is seen from the outside, which guides anyone who wishes to look into the house—e.g. some official out for loot—or else to shoot the inmates, though serious crime is rare.

As the hearth is immediately below this hole, the lighting and ventilation are bad. The smoke obscures the one and contaminates the other, and it is just as well that the Chitrali has no literary tendencies whereby to pass the long winters. Sleeping, eating and gossiping

are his amusements, and these can be done as well in poor light as in good.

The hearth is known as the peru. In front of it is the peru-no-lasht, a small flat space where the children and the women who attend to the fire squat. The guest of honour sits on the right of the hearth, and on a level slightly above it, just below the tek. This seat of honour is the ben.

The gonj (store) is usually at the entrance to the living-room, on the right, but the site depends on the ground, size, and other considerations. There is always a gonj for milk, a primitive dairy. This is a small hut outside the house and by itself. Very often there will be several of these gonj side by side and even actually adjoining, like small rooms in one house. I have often looked into these odd little huts and the arrangement is good. The milk and curd are kept clean, free from smoke, and even free from flies, and best of all in the eyes of their owners, free from the marauding and self-invited guest.

Outside the house, apart from the living-room, but unfortunately near enough to asphyxiate with its overpowering stench any unaccustomed visitor, is the purp (byre). Any domestic animals are kept there. It is an uncovered place. If covered with a roof it is called a shal. In the north of the country there is a door from the shal to the purp, owing to the severer winters. It is sometimes said that the Pathan lives with his cattle, but that the Chitrali does not. This is not always true, and I have visited houses where man and beast were congregated peacefully and conveniently together.

There is occasionally a guest room, suitably remote so that the occupant does not see too much of his host's family.

A makhon, a species of nondescript passage, corridor or veranda, is found leading to the house, and there is a small courtyard or daleno near it. In hot weather the inmates sleep here, but no cooking is ever done in it.

The customs of the Chitralis differ but little from those of their neighbours to the east. Amongst these that of Chir Mozh or 'Milk Marrow' is extremely common amongst the upper classes, amongst whom no woman ever nurses or even recognises her own offspring, which is taken away at birth and given to another family to bring up. That family is not related by blood as a rule, but on that family depends the future welfare of the child, who knows no parents other than his foster-parents, who lavish great affection on the child. Indeed the foster-parents continually show great devotion and abnegation to this cuckoo in their nest, and their own children suffer. I have known cases where the foster-fathers have spent all their substance on some useless brat of the aristocratic class, and in return have received no recompense, no gratitude and no protection. It is true that the foster-family of an Adamzada do enjoy certain privileges, and although still forced to pay ushur, begar (except perhaps for his own overlord) is excused. The fostering system consequently increases indirectly the burthens of others, who cannot escape.

It is not unusual for a child to be passed round a whole village or tribe, enjoying the milk of several dozen

different mothers, which must be very injurious to the infant. The object of this communal wet-nursing is to increase the milk-relations of the child. The bond of foster-relationship is very strong, so fifty foster-mothers, foster-fathers, and foster-brothers form a strong nucleus of protection when the child so nurtured grows up. In present times it is doubtful if any real good is attained. Foster-parents nowadays receive all the kicks and none of the ha'pence, whereas in former days they enjoyed a highly privileged position, and were persons of importance and authority.

This system of fostering children has little to commend it. In a country devoted to intrigue and chicanery these artificial ties further aggravate matters. The custom was always undesirable, and often vicious, but in olden days possessed some dubious advantages when the foster-child was able to advance the interests of his foster-parents. It is now as unnecessary as it is unnatural, and Government should put a stop to it.¹

Nearly all the misery, strife, and murder in Chitral are due to these artificial bonds of kinship. It is said that once a Political Officer in the Gilgit Agency made an attempt to end the custom but his successors did not follow his policy, for it was no easy matter.

Ishpen is a Chitrali custom. It is really a form of hospitality, or a dole in the best sense. The Chitrali is not naturally hospitable. The poorer classes cannot afford to be, and the upper classes are mean and forward. The genial, jolly hospitality of the Pathan or

¹ See also *Between the Oxus and the Indus*, pp. 190-91. Martin Hopkinson Ltd.

Turki is unknown in this country where the inhabitant, no matter what his position, always regards himself as the suitable recipient of undeserved generosity. That he has any obligations never enters his head.

Ishpen is food sent by the Mehtar from his own table to guests or to others outside. Anyone who is at a feast and does not receive this attention, recognises at once that he is not popular with the authorities. A similar dole or present of food to the poor—which is rare—or to the Adamzadas a gift of a couple of sheep, comes under the same heading. To a sahib travelling in the country, or to any visitor, a meal, a cup of tea, even fruit or bread, are all ishpen. But alas, hospitality is a rare flower in bleak Chitral.

Although he takes so little trouble to procure it in variety or quantity, the Chitrali is devoted to his food. Both in Chitral and Drosh, the only two 'towns' in the country, it is quite usual to see comparatively well-to-do folk drinking tea or eating food in the bazaar, although their homes are close by. In the Gilgit Agency it is considered a gross breach of local etiquette, and not to be tolerated, if a resident eats or drinks in this way. The waste of money is naturally condemned. The women, in particular, resent this practice. I am afraid that the improvident Chitrali indulges in it whenever he can.

A cheerful, humorous Badakhshi long settled in a Chitrali valley was very critical of the general improvidence. He was a man who had travelled considerably, even as far as Bombay, and was not a disgruntled exile. 'These people', he said airily, 'have nothing but fleas

in their houses. If you combed the whole of this village of thirty houses, you would not find a single eight-anna piece. They are idle and dirty, indifferent to their own comfort, and care for nothing.'

He also said that very often a Chitrali would come to a man who was known to have a fair stack of grain, and would borrow five or ten maunds, declaring with perfect truth that he had no food in his own house. The borrower would thereafter always remain in debt. He would never trouble to grow more corn or procure more land to avoid future indebtedness. He would, however, repay the original loan and then, later on, come clamouring for another.

The grain is kept in holes or pits dug in the ground, and not actually in the house, though it is stored there sometimes in Upper Chitral, where the exception is due to the climate and heavy snow. Very often these receptacles are merely covered with a heap of stones, and are, as at Owir, in the village street, and accessible to all. In a small, secluded community where everybody knows everybody else, and also what they possess, thefts are very rare. As a matter of fact, owing to the increase of strangers in the country, the more confiding means of storage have been discontinued. It used to be the practice to dig a pit in the street and cover your grain with a flat stone. Now the surface of the ground is smoothed down and made to resemble its surroundings exactly, so that there is no external sign of the invisible contents.

The Chitralis are very fond of sport, which is interpreted as the slaying of every animal met. The

consequences are disastrous. Neither age nor sex avails to spare any living thing, and the fauna of the country has almost disappeared. Even small birds are killed, and the mynahs are made into a broth that is a cure for coughs. The small boys prowl about with bows and slings; the very women carry catapults. Crows and magpies are comparatively safe, but in Chitral town the latter are scarce. Apparently the flesh of a magpie is in much demand for hawks and falcons, as it is easily digested. Next to it, for these birds of prey, the rump of a goat—but only the rump—may be given, as it is digestible. Consequently, in a place where all the upper classes are devoted to hawking, the magpie's life is not a happy one.

Crows are luckier, as their meat is indigestible for birds of prey. We once found the body of a dead mare in the Arkari valley. It was lying on the hillside, with two crows pecking at it. The body was almost untouched. There were no vultures, eagles, or other big carrion eaters, as the wild animals—ibex, markhor, and even bear—had been so much reduced that there was nothing for the birds to devour.

We were always on the look-out for game, but in all our wanderings, even up in the distant valleys, we saw very little. It is lamentable that the once abundant fauna of the country should now be so sadly reduced; nothing has been done to check the extermination of the markhor, perhaps the finest sporting beast there is. But the Chitrali is ready to go to the farthest nalas, determined to slaughter anything he sees. The blood lust of the Oriental possessed of a rifle is insatiable.

The Chitrali is fond of dancing, and still more of playing polo, at which he is very good, and a polo match will attract everyone. They are not so fond of flowers as some hillmen, and although they will pluck wild flowers to put in their flat caps, they do not trouble to grow them. It was only in two or three gardens belonging to the upper classes that I saw any flowers cultivated.

At Shoghor in the Mehtar's rest-house was a jungle of vegetables and flowers. The seeds, as was evident, had been sown with care, but later all interest had clearly vanished. Everything was growing higgledy-piggledy; the flowers in such profusion as to be attractive; the vegetables dying of neglect or choked with weeds.

It is a pity that the people care so little for gardens, and do not bother about the few vegetables they condescend to grow; but it is natural enough—when everything else is neglected it would be too much to expect attention to be given to a parcel of vegetables. The fungus of indifference and neglect grows apace in Chitral.

I have often referred to this agricultural laziness. Except in one or two valleys, and even there perfunctorily, the women of the country do not work in the fields, and economically this is a catastrophe. It is typical of the perverse habit of the people that, though the women do not perform the necessary and appropriate work in the fields, they are allowed to pasture the flocks. I have often seen, what one will see in no other Himalayan country, the women and girls of the

villages taking the goats and sheep to the grazing-grounds. This, for a variety of reasons, is man's work.

The marriage customs of Chitral are fairly straightforward. When a marriage is being arranged, two or three elders go on behalf of the bridegroom to the girl's home. The men take nothing with them, but are fed by the father of the prospective bride. He, of course, knows what is on foot. If the union meets with his approval he at once says so, and negotiations then begin. A relative of the bridegroom always accompanies these matrimonial agents whenever possible. The visitors then return home, and if all is satisfactory, gifts are given to the bride's father, one or two bullocks, or even, if means allow, a horse or a Russian-made gun. The boy, with his father, accompanies them to the bride's home, and then, when the bride-price is finally fixed, all give thanks to Allah. The girl's father then announces the date of the wedding. The boy, with some of his male relatives, is entertained at his prospective father-in-law's house.

The bride as her share of the plenishing must provide two wooden dishes, two copper plates, two palos (goat-hair rugs), two quilts, and two of other necessities, according to her means. Sometimes, if the bridegroom be very poor, she brings twelve brats (thick cakes of bread) and also a measure of flour. The relatives of the girl carry this gear.

Should a man wish to be rid of his wife and she agrees—there being no fault on either side—he takes a piece of wood in his hands, breaks it in the presence of four witnesses, and the girl leaves him. If the wife

objects to going, and one of the parties is in the wrong, then the dowry is given back if the husband is to blame, and the bride-price if it is the fault of the girl.

In the Atrak or Ataq valley of the Turikho district these customs are varied. There the bridegroom gives his future father-in-law one gun and three or four bullocks up to twenty, as he can afford. When the girl joins her husband she brings ten goats or sheep for each bullock up to twenty, or even up to thirty, according to her means. In this district more comes from the bride's side than from the bridegroom's.

The above are generally speaking the marriage customs of the Chitrali, but there is now a very regrettable tendency to fix the price of the bride according to her beauty. This arises from the presence of the landless outsiders, Bajaoris, Punjabis, and the like who visit the country and wish to marry. The consequence is that the women are sold, and the more beautiful they are the bigger is the price asked. So beauty, though skin-deep in Chitral as everywhere else, settles the bride-price. It must be remembered that such marriages are less likely to be permanent, as if the 'foreign' husband leaves the country, the wife, especially if childless, may remain behind.

The burial of the dead, if they are Sunni Moslems, is similar to that of Mohammedans in other lands. Formerly the Chitralis of the upper class used to build underground rooms for use as vaults, place the dead therein on charpoys, and leave them. There was in fact no sepulture in the strict sense of the word.

Among the Maulais the last rites are different.

After a death, there is no fire in the house for three days, after which the khalifa (or mullah) comes. The best goat, sheep, or bullock is then brought and the khalifa says a blessing over it, and it is killed. Wheat is then provided, pounded, and put into a pot with the meat. When the mixture has been cooked, the khalifa takes a quantity of cotton, together with oil or ghi. He pays out the cotton to a qazi who makes a number of primitive wicks—the more the better—for the dead. The wicks are then put into a large vessel with the oil—usually from apricot kernels—or ghi and are then lit. The khalifa then plays a zither with great energy. When he has done, he eats three times from the stew. He is then followed by the next of kin, and afterwards by all the assembled company. Prayers, of course, have been suitably recited. These funeral customs are the same amongst all Maulai communities, but in some the length of mourning is different, seven days instead of three.

The harvest customs are of slight interest. When the crops are ready, all the men cut them, collect them and then, after threshing, grind enough corn to last for a whole year. As the mills are all worked by water, and the streams often freeze, this is perhaps advisable. A goat is then killed, or a sheep. A khalifa, if they are Mulais, comes and plays on his zither. Then they all go to each other's houses and eat in honour of some person who has died recently or some while before. This custom prevails in the Gilgit area also.

Curiously enough I did not see a single Chitrali spinning wool with a cone. It is so common in all

mountainous districts to see men with a handful of wool making thread in this way, that one missed the usual sight. It is an easy and soothing pastime for idle hands to do.

We met an old man who years ago had been amongst the men who went to attack Hunza and were grievously defeated. We asked him how such a cowardly creature as the Chitrali could dare to do so. 'Ah', he replied, 'in those days we had pluck and guts. Each one of my four brothers could lift a huge rock, but four men of to-day could not together lift one of these rocks.' A Punyali we met—he had been several years in the country—said: 'The Chitrali is a two and a half days' friend. As long as your snuff-box is full, all the middle class are your friends; as long as your purse is full, all the peasants; and if you happen to wear good clothes, then you are a friend of the nobles.'

CHAPTER XV

'No one gives a wicked man a stone to break his head.'

Hunza Proverb

DESPITE the fanatical zeal of a mob of mullahs, the Chitrali remains plunged in superstition. His belief in fairies is unquenchable, and his fear of them is very real.

There are several kinds of aerial spirits. There is the Shawan, who is the guardian of the valleys. Then there is the Jeshai, an ugly dwarf, who lurks about the house and steals what he can. The Jeshtan Dakek (driving away the Jeshai), was at one time a regular ceremony in early spring when the houses were cleansed and swept, and food was placed for the malicious spirit outside the house. This non-Moslem ceremony, as well as others, is now obsolescent.

There are also Devs, beings rather of the devil type, and akin to the Deo of India. The Kădărăkh is a jinn—dangerous, powerful, and found everywhere. It will be remembered how a Chitrali who came on us rather unexpectedly in a remote valley was mistaken for a Jinn. The Gor is the female counterpart of this evil creature.

But the chief denizens of the mountains and glens, the ones who really matter, are the fairies, the Pari. Mohtaram Shah I, one of the Mehtars of Chitral, actually married the daughter of the fairy king who lives on Terich Mir. She now reigns as the queen, but what happened to her mortal but regal husband I do not know. I fear that he was buried and did not share

the immortality of his wife. Whether his consort is queen, and her father still king, I failed to discover, and I found that there was some uncertainty about the sex of the spirits.

The queen, however, weeps when there is any mourning in Chitral and all the fairies weep with her. The Black Kafirs say that the king's name is Veroti, and he lives on Terich Mir. The queen is Suchi, which means pure, and she lives on the Palar heights, but I think this must be a different personage from the late Mehtar's fairy wife, for Suchi never was his consort. Vetr was the chief fairy of the Red Kafirs. Another name of the queen of Terich Mir, which shows that she should not be identified with the Lady of Palar, is Showan or Shownan. Her daughter is Much Junjuri and lives in the Rosh Gol, whilst another is Kol Mukhi, a resident of the Ziwar Gol in Turikho.

The fairies of Chitral are certainly no negligible factor. It is true that, speaking generally, they are comparatively benevolent, yet they are clearly capricious, often revengeful and even malicious. The Parikhān is the name given to the confidant of the fairies, who inspire or instruct him by possession. It is even said that the fairies enter people's bodies and oust the soul, but where the soul goes no one dare say.

A man of Shuch in Mulikho, called Darugh, was carried off quite recently by the fairies, who kept him for three days. He was warned not to say anything about them. 'We are your friends', they said, in their kindly but unreasonable way, 'and if you talk about us, you will never see us again.' When the man asked how

he could see them if he wished to do so, he was bidden to go to his house, make ishperi and, whilst doing so, say 'Bismillah' ('In the name of God') the whole time. Then there would be no danger at all. Ishperi is a small breadcake with some butter dabbed in the middle of it.

Men who have had personal dealings with the fairies say that they are exactly like men and women, except that they have no joints at the ankle or at the knee, and that their heels are in front and their toes at the rear. They have a horror of dirt, which explains their strained relations with the Chitralis, and they dress in white garments. Black-skinned people are also abhorrent to them, which is another difficulty for their human neighbours. Every Friday they collect at Gahirat between Drosh and Chitral, to say their prayers; and the place of assembly is marked by a large flat stone. Whenever a member of the ruling family dies, ten or twelve days before the date, the fairies all go to Shoghor in the Lutkuh valley, and wail round the fort. Terich Mir is the centre of fairy-land, and the awe and grandeur of that glorious mountain gain not a little from that fact. Robertson¹, when he was amongst the Red Kafirs, records seeing a small square erection in the usual Kafir style, surmounted by what was meant to be a model of Terich Mir. Goats used to be sacrificed before this shrine to the gods and fairies, who were supposed to dwell on the mountain.

I remember that when we were at Izh, in the Lutkuh, a lad was brought to see me. He squinted so badly as to be almost blind. When he was quite young and

¹ *Kafirs of the Hindu Kush*, p. 384.

tending his animals on the mountain, the fairies bewitched him. He came back and could not speak for two months, and his eyes, previously normal, developed this terrible squint. This was almost as bad as the fate of a postman at Gilgit with his chin and mouth all twisted on one side, thanks to a slap that the fairies had given him.

In the Atrak or Ataq Gol there was a man called Ghazi, whose grandfather once went to the upland pasture (ghari) when he was ten years old. The fairies came one day and for no apparent reason whatever took him away, kept him for forty-five years, and then, when his beard was 'half white', brought him back. He remained, however, a friend of theirs. Whenever he went out shooting, the fairies would catch a big ibex and give it to him. Once, however, he went to the grass uplands of Kulan (Kulum) to shoot an ibex. There he suddenly came upon all the fairies milking their ibex into a bowl of glass or crystal. When the ibex, being milked, saw the man, it kicked over and broke the bowl and ran off. The fairies, very unjustly and capriciously, cursed the intruder. 'Never shall you inhabit more than three houses', they said, 'as you have broken our bowl', which meant that his descendants should never occupy more than three houses. Even to this day his descendants only occupy three houses.

Ghazi's father, the son of this unlucky shikari, used to go out shooting, and the fairies were still friendly enough to give him one or two ibex, but not very many. One day he found an ibex, lifted his gun and aimed. To his astonishment, he saw at the end of his

sights, not an ibex but an eagle. He lowered his weapon, only to see an ibex: he raised it to fire again and saw an eagle. Thrice he did this, seeing an ibex and aiming at an eagle. The fourth time he fired, and then when he lowered his matchlock, he saw a man child, ten or twelve years old, and as dead as mutton. The man fled, throwing away his gun and abandoning the corpse, and went to sleep in the ghari or huts in the higher valley. That night the fairies came, beat him severely, seized him by the chin, and twisted his head. He went home and died at once. It is not surprising that the Chitrali is afraid of fairies.

The sister of the same Ghazi when quite a young child and not long before I came, had been taken away from a ghari in the Rosh Gol, where we ourselves camped, and had never been heard of since. When Lieutenant D. N. B. Hunt went, in June 1935, to examine the approaches of Istoru Nal, the fairies fired their guns twelve times quite close to his camp. 'Bonzo' Hunt did not hear the noise, but the coolies did.

In the Atrak Gol the fairy drums are seldom heard, which is rather remarkable. I could continue repeating many tales about fairies, but these must suffice. It is worth remembering that the fear of fairies much complicated the work of the Survey of India in Chitral, and many attempts to climb mountains have been abandoned for the same reason. The Chitrali is in mortal terror of fairies, and will never co-operate with anyone who trespasses on their mountain homes. If climbing is to be done in Chitral, coolies from outside of a less romantic nature should be employed.

The Chitrali has many other superstitions. The cry of an owl on a house, always a bird of ill omen, means, if at night, death to the inmates of the house or to the animals. A monkey too is unlucky, for it is an accursed human being. If a man rides or buys a horse, with a white mark of a size less than a rupee, the owner dies or has much ill luck. An ox with a big tail is very useful for ploughing but one with a small tail is lazy and remains thin. A cow with a long tail gives good milk and remains fat. A bear is as ill-omened as a monkey or an owl.

When a fox is seen at the beginning of a journey, it is regarded as very lucky; so that if a man returns very soon from a journey, he is asked if he has seen a fox, since he has accomplished his trip so expeditiously.

If a cow, goat, or animal fall ill, a mark, either black or white, is made on it, or else a bit of cloth is tied on.

Thursday and Friday are very lucky. The other days are lucky or unlucky, according to individuals. The mullahs, for example, will say that Tuesday is lucky for one man, and not for another.

CHAPTER XVI

'The gourd has a head but no brains.'

Persian Proverb

It was in 1933 that I made my first journey in Chitral, and although in point of time this chapter should come first, it must yield to the longer and more important narrative that precedes it.

We had been travelling in the Gilgit Agency to the east of Chitral, and had been marching through the valleys of Ghizr in the north of that region. With its rocky sides, exposed fields, and treeless settlements we found the countryside rather dreary. Our destination was the Shandur Pass on the watershed between Gilgit and Chitral. We reached the dense willow thickets of Langar and then walked easily up, along a burn bright with roses and fresh vegetation to a long moraine that lay astride the valley.

Beyond this begins the Shandur plateau. It is a wide plain, divided into three parts. First there is a small lake with a polo ground and a rough but serviceable rest-house. Beyond is the crest of the pass, but the watershed is so level that it is no easy matter to judge the exact spot. Next is the real Shandur Lake, a beautiful sheet of water, caught between the folds of the moraine. Close by are a good polo ground and abundant grazing, a rarity in a land where grass is scarce. All over the moraine were little lakelets and boggy patches. The third division of the plateau was beyond the main lake, where the path led over a wide

grassy expanse and another moraine. The height is 12,000 ft., and in early June we found it very cold. The flowers, too, were disappointing. Later in the year the whole region is gay with Alpine blossoms and butterflies, many of the latter being rare.

After crossing the final stretch of level ground the track disappeared suddenly down a narrow gorge which is the drainage of the lake, and has cut its way through a mass of morainic detritus. The descent to the main Laspur valley was steep and dirty.

We had been greeted on the Chitral border by Mir Hakim, the father-in-law of Nasr-ul-mulk, the eldest son of the late Mehtar. I was hardly prepared for the honour, and as I moiled up the track, feeling very well but looking more serviceable than beautiful, a sense of complete worthlessness assailed me as I caught sight of an elegant rider in a fawn-coloured frock-coat with trousers to match, a noble turban flashing and bristling on his head, coming to meet me. Inadequate in appearance, I tried to make my greeting compensate for my outward deficiencies.

It was quite a surprise, for had it not been for a sweating messenger announcing the arrival of this elegance, we should have all been in bed, for we were preparing our camp and our tea when the good news came. However, there it was.

After many greetings, compliments, and chit-chat, we minced side by side over the sward. I protested at the inconvenience caused to this fashionable blade; he met me by saying that it did not matter. Etiquette was observed, and nothing else signified.

So at last we reached the rest-house, and sat down to tea—India's greatest delicacy—with six lumps of sugar in each cup. Whilst this was being served on a Turki carpet, the tents were put up. I then retired, all awash with tea, having swallowed two jorums in as many hours.

That night with his retinue Shahzada Nasr-ul-mulk came, and the next day was spent playing polo, and looking at the lake. Mir Hakim discarded his frock-coat, and started early in the morning to shoot an ibex. As a hunter, the Hakim was famous. For all his years (for he was old by Eastern standards) he was a lithe and active man, insensible to fatigue, a fine shot and a splendid polo-player and rider. After eight hours ceaselessly climbing amongst the snow he returned. He had missed a long shot at an ibex, but he was able to play a good game of polo afterwards.

I never mastered the rules of Chitrali polo. Numbers made no odds, no more did crossing or the other restraints of the westernised game. Players were all and sundry, and their ponies even more so. And I always marvelled at the way in which, after hitting a goal, the victor galloped down the ground, threw the ball high in the air, and carried on as fast as ever. Most of the sticks were locally made. The heads were of mulberry, willow, apricot, or any convenient wood; the shafts were always of wild almond.

One Political Officer, Major C. C. H. Smith, was a great performer and used to play by moonlight on the Shandur. This impressed the Chitralis, for the dangers of this kind of polo were bad enough by daylight.

The next day, we reached the first village in Chitral, Sor Laspur, and found all the villagers lined up on both sides of the polo ground to welcome us. They were clearly very pleased to see the Shahzada, who was governor of their province of Mastuj, the most northern in Chitral. According to custom the people had all brought food from their homes. Theoretically, the food was for their ruler and his attendants; in practice, it was more often for the householder himself, as the headman of the village assumed the responsibility of feeding the guests, usually by a levy. We sat down on string beds beneath the walnut-trees, whilst the villagers squatted on the ground around us. All began to eat. The villagers, rapid eaters at all times and unhampered by the foolish practice of conversation during meals, finished long before we did.

In former times the guests would wipe their fingers on the heads or beards of the elders, an economical plan, but now pieces of cloth are provided. It was very pleasant under the walnut and apricot-trees, with the bright sun screened by fresh leaves, and we left regretfully, to walk down the stony hillsides to the neighbouring village of Harchin, where we spent the night, and saw a good game of polo before going to bed. The whole village turned out to see the fun, and everyone who had a horse played. There was a cunning little Maulai pir (religious leader) who performed wonders, as also did a youth, a great contrast to the holy man, for he wore a loose flowing khaki costume with a sprigged red waistcoat to keep it together.

The upper villages in the Laspur valley were in good case, but the lower ones were starving owing to a total failure of the crops, so that the following day when we halted we were but spectators of the people eating, not sharers—or robbers—of their meagre victuals. In other parts of Chitral there are granaries provided to cater for a famine, but there are none in Laspur where the conditions of land tenure and customary rights are different. The people there had done such good service during the Chitral Expedition in 1895 that they had been excused all taxation for fifty years. As taxation is in kind, principally grain, there was no grain to store and consequently no granaries, so that a cherished privilege became almost a penalty.

The Laspur valley down which we were going is considered the dreariest and least valuable in Chitral, but we preferred it to that of Ghizr on the other side of the pass. There were certainly many bare hillsides and rock precipices, but there were good orchards and the harvest was normally ample.

We passed Chokulwarth, a famous stone 'shoot' where the Chitralis rolled boulders on the British force advancing from Gilgit. Little damage was done. These stone shoots, however, are not to be despised, as a party of cragsmen can do serious harm by rolling down rocks from a height of several thousand feet.

At Mastuj the Laspur valley ends and the river flows into the Yarkhun river, which below this point is known as the Mastuj. Farther down it is called the Chitral, and when it issues from Chitral territory it is the Kunar. The name Yarkhun is said to mean 'The

Friend's Murder', an etymology which I do not accept. It is much more likely to be derived from Yarkand and to mean 'the river of the village on the cliff'. Anything is preferable to such a derivation, with its obviously faked story of two friends who quarrelled and the corpse that fell into the stream.

We crossed a neck of high ground in the angle of the two streams, and came to the fort at Mastuj. It was a blazing day. As we came in sight of this fort, square, unbeautiful, but made attractive and harmonious by its surroundings, we looked down the main valley of Chitral and saw in front of us that noble mountain Terich Mir. The great snows of its head thrust themselves, 25,426 feet high, flashing and radiant above the drab shoulders of the valley, a gorgeous and glorious view. It is hard in Chitral to escape the gaze of Terich Mir, which dominates the whole region, with its fairy queen, its many sprites, and all the wonders of another world. It is this mountain that gives to the Chitral landscape, otherwise rather insipid and even commonplace, an endless freshness and novelty.

Unfortunately, from the fort itself this gallant mountain was not visible. At Mastuj the Shahzada was my very kind host, looking after me most courteously, and I was very comfortable in the guest house which he had built. Mastuj is a nursery of the winds, which there blow from every quarter. In the summer it is pleasant enough. In winter the place is a cold hell, for winds from the icy recesses of Laspur and Yarkhun roar down, howling ceaselessly for months at a time. The place is then largely deserted, and I felt

for the poor postmaster who then has no work, no society, and no recreation, but sits huddled in front of the fire for months on end, pining for his home in the Punjab. What else can the poor fellow do?

In Mastuj was a famous chenar-tree planted by Abdulla Khan Uzbek, King of Bokhara. This tree was cut down during the siege in 1895, but it grew up again, to be cut down a second time in 1918 by the father of the Ataliq, Sarfaraz.

After a short but enjoyable stay at Mastuj we set off to ascend the Yarkhun valley, intending to see the great glaciers and lake at its head. My host accompanied me as far as Chuiyenj, some six miles from Mastuj. There I had the fortune to meet Shah Zaman, an old Maulai and truly a strange one. He was a very pleasant, picturesque, amusing figure, and came and sat down by us. He has been born no less than eight times, and remembered that he was once a cow, once a donkey, and once a poor man. Now he was comparatively well off as he was a friend of the fairies who abound in Chitral, and they would come and till his land for him. He had his own philosophy of life which was reasonable enough, and in a man born so often into this unkind world, of some value to others. To eat good food and to sit in a garden was, so he told us, Paradise. The reverse he declared was Hell. We sat in an orchard, surrounded by beds strewn with local dainties, including that liverish dish, sausages made of pure mutton fat. Seized in the fingers, eaten like some strange sort of banana, they made me ill to contemplate. They were devoured with gusto, masses of

mutton tallow oozing lusciously from the mouths of the guests.

The Aga Khan was kind to old Shah Zaman, who said that his patron would come one day with tents and green banners over the Shandur Pass, and sit on a golden throne. Nor was Shah Zaman alone in this belief. He knew the Maulai lands well, for he had been born amongst his co-religionists at Zebak in Afghanistan, Yasin in the Gilgit Agency, and Reshun in Chitral. So we sat and gobbled, chattered and swilled tea under the fruit-trees in that glowing mellow valley. I was loath to leave and plunge into the glare of the sunlight, but at last I said adieu to my host and the village notables and started for Brep, where we were to camp that night.

We had as guide and companion, but I am not sure as friend, Mirza Mohamed Aziz Beg, an elderly but lively Chitrali who pranced by my side. My habit of always going on foot made me most unpopular with men of this kind. The Mirza wore a Turki hat, a tweed coat that looked very hot and stuffy, and a tight pair of khaki breeches. He was nimble-witted, amusing, cheerful, and quite unreliable—a typical Chitrali.

Brep proved to be a large village which had suffered from floods, and in consequence had lost much good arable. Here I met Shahab-ud-din, one of the sons of the late Mehtar, a pleasant youth who spoke good English. We passed the evening together. His father had wisely sent him for a tour in the north of Chitral that he might know his own country better.

I noticed in Chitral how very few shrines or other evidences of religion there seemed to be. Perhaps it is

because the Chitrali is not by nature religious, and the laws of supply and demand operate there as they do everywhere else. Opposite to Brep, however, where are the ruins of a Chinese fort, was the village of Kojh with a shrine dedicated to a saint so holy that his name had been forgotten. The legend is that the saint was once playing polo when a woman saw him and at once fell in love with him. To make him succumb to her charms, she tried to bewitch him by playing magic airs on a flute. The holy man remained unaffected, but one day he fell into a rage at her pertinacity, and vanished, leaving behind his boots and his horse. His sister came to make a seemly shrine in his honour, and made a kind of tent with pieces of silk. Now, alas, the shrine is but a mud building, and even the flags and standards that once adorned it have vanished.

The Chitralis seemed to us, on the whole, somewhat unlucky in their relations with the unseen world. The miserable hamlet of Deosir once supplied a body of seven hundred fighting men, but its impiety was its undoing. It was the oft-repeated tale. A pious mendicant had come and received no welcome from the arrogant prosperous villagers; so, in the night, the devotee called down the flood, and Deosir was swept away.

The Yarkhun valley is a Maulai area, and it abounds in pirs—religious leaders who are supposed to be both devout and learned, a valuable intermediary between the next world and their followers, who vary in number with the power and prestige of the pir. Daulat Shah grew weary of the talk of the Chitralis, who were ever declaring how the river had destroyed land and houses,

and he asked what the numerous pirs had done in these matters. The Mirza's sense of humour failed him when Daulat mordantly proved that it was thanks to a useless inefficacious breed of pirs that the pious Maulais had suffered so much. A brisk argument beguiled the way.

We certainly found the early stages in the Yarkhun valley very dull. There were the usual small cultivated fans and barren hills; and the reason was that the people were lazy. They complained of being famine-stricken, but we all thought that the fault was their own. A good deal of land was fit for cultivation, but had been neglected for no reason at all. Our chaperon pointed out a large tract which had been his. He had given it to someone else, but the house had fallen down, nothing had been done, and the fields lay untilled. Yet the soil seemed good, the few crops well grown, and water was abundant. At Shost there was a large area of cultivable land, belonging to a pir who had a good house, surrounded by trees, but who never bothered to till his fields. After all, why should he, when his followers supplied all his needs gratis? Opposite Shost was a hot spring, much frequented by snakes. We saw six sloughed skins, and a fine snake glided away as we drew near. The water tasted of sulphur, and was only lukewarm so we did not trouble to bathe. There was a blessed absence of flies in the valley except for a grey brute, rather long and thin, very persistent in its attacks. It always tried to bite the tip of one's nose and seemed dissatisfied with any other part of one's person. On the other hand there were fleas. We had stopped in

two of the rest-houses belonging to the Mehtar, where fleas abounded. Whence they came or what they ate, I do not know. They were nimble, even for fleas, hopping about with great agility. Perhaps the fleas came from the Chitralis whose simple, almost primitive habits encourage the propagation of the flea. They were not bad fleas. Indeed, I have known many worse, but they were too numerous for our peace of mind, so we vacated the rest-houses and camped outside with our minds at ease.

On our way up, I went with Daulat to look at the Madod glaciers and we were well rewarded by the view. Both Daulat and my other follower, Abdulla Beg—who had now to leave us at Brep as he was so unwell—had a cultivated taste for glaciers and could judge their points well.

We went on to Lasht—a word that means ‘plain’—crossing the Yarkhun river by a bridge at a place where the river considerably contracted, rattling and splashing through a narrow gorge. It was here that we prevented a man from crossing the crazy, shaking bridge on horseback, but it was not easy to persuade him to do so on foot. This was the last Chitrali-speaking village, as well as the last where fowls and eggs could be bought.

The valley was now occupied by Wakhis, a race of Iranian origin who speak an archaic form of Persian and who are primarily nomads. It is true that they did sow some crops, but their owners clearly regarded the process as unimportant and rather tiresome: and the dirty state of the crops illustrated their owners’ lack of interest and skill. Many Wakhis, too, were only in

Chitral for the season, as they had wandered over with their flocks from Afghanistan to enjoy the fine pastures of the Yarkhun uplands. They were welcome to them, for no Chitrali ever troubled to come so far.

Beyond Lasht trees and brushwood were plentiful. Poplars, junipers, and willow were frequent and well grown, and our path often led through level, well-wooded stretches. This ample growth attracted the Wakhis over the frontier; they came down and collected fuel for use in their own treeless land. It seemed a one-sided arrangement, as wood was far too valuable to be removed by strangers.

The Mirza complained much of the cold, but really there was little reason. I fancy that we were both tired of each other as well as being mutually disappointed. No doubt there were faults on both sides. He, probably, felt that our purse strings were infrequently loosened: we expected more energy on his part and on our behalf.

The scenery grew remarkable as we reached the head of the Yarkhun valley; on the left side the glaciers from the Hindu Raj forced themselves out of their lateral valleys, crossed the main one, and even tried to struggle up the farther side. Great elevated fans, covered with grey stone and rubbish, and sending down turbid brown streams, were frequently met. The glaciers were often close to the edge of the moraine; they were dingy and unimpressive at their lower levels, but higher up they revealed themselves as broad gleaming rivers of ice pouring down from snowy peaks.

At Vedinkot the Chattiboi (the word in Chitrali

means 'lake forming') or Vedinkot glacier hung over the very brim of the river. It ended in lofty towering cliffs, pure, clear, and white, a precipice of ice. All day long the crash of masses falling into the river was heard, preceded by a rumbling noise. We were all fascinated as we watched the great ice crack and rive, and fall piecemeal into the river, which was full of ice-floes swirling down. It was not too safe to approach the far side of the face of the glacier, as great lumps fell and bounded away.

We camped near by, in a grassy glen full of willow, just below a gorge from which rushed the Yarkhun river. A very frail bridge led across, yet we managed to go over the next day without unloading the animals, a characteristically Chitrali proceeding and an extremely foolish one.

We wound up to the crest of the low Rakang Pass, and from it looked down on the huge Vedinkot glacier, of which the whole expanse was now visible; very magnificent it appeared, glittering in the early gentle dawn. On its right was the entrance to the Darkot Pass with its great peaks.

On descending the Rakang Pass we found ourselves at once in a new world. The track led down over open, smooth grassy downs and easy slopes, exactly like the Pamirs, of which indeed this region was a part. In vain we looked for the round beehive tents of felt, always so welcome a sight in Central Asia. Instead we saw a huge mud hut and a group of men. I found, in fact, two clerks of the Chitral State and a large mob of Wakhis, all unwashed. The frontier was close, and

these men had come over for a few hours to buy tea and to do some trafficking. The clerks' duty was to keep an eye on what went on, and to collect customs duties and grazing dues, as well as to trade on behalf of the State.

I had a chat with them. They complained that dealing with Wakhis was an exhausting pastime. So did we, and the purchase of a sheep wasted our time and exhausted our patience; it was long before they would reduce the price to anything approaching its value. Here there was another bridge across the river, for the span of the rocks through which the river surged below was so narrow that there was no excuse for not building one.

The river plunged into a narrow gorge, throwing up masses of spray and wetting the bridge and any passer-by. Lower down, the river was so narrow that it was possible to step across at the place known as Stone Bridge. We camped at Chilma Robat, close to the well-known Baroghil Pass that leads into Afghanistan. The path rises gently, crosses a wide grassy plain known as the Dasht-i-baroghil in which is a swampy depression, and reaches the watershed. There were beds of wild onion growing lavishly, high and thick like rushes. We also saw dozens of marmots, the first wild beasts we had seen in Chitral on this, our first journey, excepting always lizards. We walked along the frontier for about four miles until we reached a low stony gap in the hills known as Darwaza (the Door) and from here we had a good view of the farthest outpost of the God-given Kingdom of Afghanistan. Near

was Sarhad-i-wakhan, on the Oxus, six or seven miles away. There was a mud fort, conspicuous thanks to two willow-trees—we only saw two more in the whole valley—a huddle of half a dozen mud huts, and some odd patches of cultivation.

Once more we yearned to see the round tents of the Kirghiz. The prospect before us was rather dull and lifeless, and the appearance of the valley uninviting. The lack of fuel in so bleak a region was serious, but no one believed in hot baths, and no doubt they managed to do with what they found.

We continued to move up the Yarkhun valley keeping well to the right side, on the high ground, and passing by many small tarns hidden amongst the recesses of and beneath old moraines. These little lakes were blue, clear, and unexpected, but then lakes are so few anywhere in India that it was surprising to see so many of them.

We had a long trudge to our camp at Shuwasher, which we found to be much farther off than we anticipated, and were cross and tired when we arrived. Our Chitrali pony-men had left us, dissatisfied with the liberal rate of payment for their transport. They had not behaved well, and I was glad to see the last of them, but I had foolishly promised them a sheep before they showed their hands. We still had our original chaperon who by now was a mere superfluity.

As we wandered over the glorious pastures at the head of the Yarkhun we constantly expressed our surprise that the Chitralis did not make use of them, but we were always told that the distance was too great, or

that it was not worth the trouble. It is rarely that unwanted pasture exists anywhere in Asia. We used to discuss amongst ourselves the use that the Kirghiz would make of this fine Pamir with its abundant wiry grass, dear to beast and man. We sighed to think of what we might have found, if conditions were otherwise—the abundant milk, the thick Devonshire cream brought in pails, the curd and the butter, the comfortable tents and the meat of the fat-tailed sheep, eaten reclining on a carpet before a fire. We almost vomited with rage at the idea of what might have been and what was not; our bowels yearned for the Kirghiz; our hearts were frozen towards the Wakhis and Chitralis.

The only resemblance that this region had to Central Asia lay in the large ravaging green-eyed horse-flies which swarmed everywhere and attacked us mercilessly.

The attraction of this part of Chitral was the Ak-kul, or White Lake, which lies on the boundary between Chitral and Ishkoman in the Gilgit Agency. As a matter of fact, this lake, often known as the Karambar Lake, lies wholly outside the limits of Chitral, but the ground rises and falls so gently that, as in the case of the Shandur, the watershed is not easily defined. One thing at least is certain, no lake can lie on both sides of a watershed.

We rode on ponies borrowed from the Wakhis up the broad Pamir, rising very gently, almost imperceptibly. A few of the nomads' animals were grazing. We passed some of the Wakhi dwellings, miserable habitations in every sense. The door is twenty-four to thirty inches high, and the huts are of stone roofed with

turf. The marmots live far more comfortably than do their human neighbours, and as the little beasts stood whistling cheerfully on their burrows as we passed, we wondered if they did not think so.

We passed the summer quarters of Rajah Beg; the leading Wakhi, and I was quite shocked to see his elegant figure come squeezing out of his bothie less easily than a stoker from a manhole. It is true that the Wakhis only spend a few months of the summer in the Baroghil, and most of that time is out of doors. Considering, however, that they return year by year to the same terrible hovels, and that their womenfolk as well as their children have to live under such conditions, it is not to their credit that they tolerate such squalor. As appearances are sometimes deceitful, I entered one of these cabins, and found conditions inside were quite as bad as the outside had led me to expect.

We found the lake a blue sheet of water with barren brown slopes on the west, and a snow mountain on the right or east. It was mid-July, and extremely warm. Myriads of mosquitoes attacked us with great truculence. We could find no fish in the lake, but two ruddy sheldrake floated on it. The flowers were very disappointing. I fancy that we were too late, and the chief vegetation seemed to be beds of wild onion. We rode back to camp, and the Wakhis crawled out of their dens as we passed, and offered us milk, curd, and other produce of their flocks. We had another look into their huts, and saw the round eyes of the children like those of owls in the gloaming.

The Wakhis were pleasant, friendly folk. They

danced and sang in the evening and played on their instruments. They seldom speak the truth, because under the conditions of their lives it does not pay to do so. 'Don't quote me' is as much a Wakhi proverb as a Whitehall one. It is quite easy to comprehend. The Wakhis live in one country, and have relations in others, so they have to be circumspect. As they cannot learn to hold their tongues, they protect themselves by telling lies.

These folk made felt numdahs, but they were of an inferior kind. Their soft leather boots, however, were excellent. No Wakhi can move unshod, and consequently the hardy men of Hunza deride their soft feet. They have a proverb: 'Gwiz aideli samdal ishir—Do not beat a Wakhi, but take away his boots'—to imply his helplessness when thus treated.

Our final excursion in North Chitral was a visit to the Chiantar glacier, the true source of the Yarkhun river. We found it an impressive sheet of ice, some twenty-five miles in length. I should not care to call it beautiful; it was its size rather than its appearance that was so remarkable; as a 'sight' it could not be compared to the Vedinkot glacier. The surface was extremely good and level when we happened to be there, and we walked over it for some miles. Thanks to its slight fall, it was but little crevassed, just enough perhaps to need care in crossing.

We left the Yarkhun valley by the Darkot Pass which leads into the Gilgit Agency. The river where it issued from the snout of the glacier was unfordable, and we had to cross by the glacier itself. Once on the

ice it was easy enough, but to clamber up the sides was troublesome. The huge stones on the lateral moraines made it hard for the yaks, and even more so for the horses. We managed it in the end, but it was an exasperatingly slow business. We camped on the other side at Chigar, under a chilly glacier below the Darkot Pass, on the north or Chitral side, having taken hours to do this short but awkward march. We were joined there by another party of Wakhis who had spent the whole of the previous day vainly trying to ford the river. They were going to Gilgit to shop in the excellent bazaar there. We now said farewell to Chitral and to our transport. Our Chitral Wakhis took us up to the crest of the Darkot Pass, where we were met by their relief from the Gilgit side. There, under lowering skies, chilled to the bone by the wind as it blew off the snow on the vast and desolate glaciers, we paid them off. They were delighted and we parted on the best of terms, and they really had done us well. We saw them driving their grunting yaks with loud cries, and watched them moving like black snowballs down the glacier.

APPENDIX I

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CHITRAL

As in all countries where the art of murder is better understood than that of ruling and of record, the early history of Chitral is obscure. Indeed, I very much doubt whether there is any authentic date earlier than the middle of the sixteenth century, and even that date is more useful as a peg on which to hang the scanty garments of Chitrali history than as a really historical fixture.

The Khan of Kunduz, which is at the junction of the Farun and Surkhab rivers, succeeded in subjugating Chitral to his rule, and was in receipt of tribute from this town in slaves whom he usually dispatched to Bokhara for sale.¹ These slaves were highly prized in the Turkestan market, and until very recently criminal and political offences amongst the Shiahs, Maulais and Kafirs of the country were punished by slavery. Sunnis were apparently not so treated.

The Chitrali slaves used to fetch 500 to 1,000 Mohamed Shahi rupees (equivalent to one rupee three annas British rupees). Whole families were sold in groups. The serais and houses on the Faizabad road (Afghanistan) were full of slave girls procured from Chitral.²

It is not easy to speculate on the date and circumstances of Chinese rule in Chitral. It undoubtedly existed, but details are wholly lacking, and it is highly improbable that it was either continuous, or unbroken, considering the history of such authority in adjacent territories.

Sir Aurel Stein³ refers to the Chinese overlordship

¹ *Geographical Journal*. Old Series. Vol. 36, p. 279.

² See the Mirza's report, 1870. *Geographical Journal* as cited.

³ *Geographical Journal*, vol. 34, pp. 8, 9.

in Chitral under the T'ang dynasty when it extended across the Pamirs and even to the south of the Hindu Kush. Shost is really Shuyist, 'the Chinese reproduction of which is applied by the T'ang annals to the chief place of the territory of Shang-mi or Mastuj in the eighth century A.D.'

Reference is made elsewhere to the Chinese fort at Brep. Chinese remains have been found at Gasht (where some time ago parts of five Chinese hats were found) and there was also a fort at Chitral, where the Chinese administrator used to live.

It is sometimes said that the fort at Brep was used to store the orpiment for which Chitral was famous, and when digging was done there some of the mineral was found. These mines were certainly first worked by the Chinese and many of the population taken away as prisoners to Yarkand. There is a tradition that the Chinese used to levy a tax in kind of glow-worms.

The two main factors in the history of the country are the effects of the rule of the Rais or Rayis dynasty, and that of Kator which supplanted it. It is the struggle between these two that the vague and rather dreary annals of Chitral record. Although the Kator family, who now govern the country, ultimately triumphed, it was not at first very easy for them, as the Rais, sometimes contemptuously spoken of, did not abdicate without a long and bitter struggle. What is more, the bloody history of the Kator clan shows that Chitral gained little by its change of dynasty. A son of the late Mehtar of Chitral said to me, 'The Chitrali is not naturally a murderer. It is only our family that are so.' There is much truth in this sinister remark, though undoubtedly other leading families have shown a great love of assassination. The ordinary Chitrali peasant, however, is not a murderer.

In the seventh century of our era, Arabs under Kuteba fought the Chinese in Turkestan, and a small party under Hamza came to Chitral. In those days a

king of Persian origin, by name Bahman, held the fort of Muzhgol below Drasan. He was slain. He was not a Moslem, and most of the people then were Black Kafirs, but they gradually accepted Islam.

On a rock near Barennis there is a Sanskrit inscription which records that in A.D. 900 the people of Chitral and the surrounding country were Buddhist, and were under Jaipal, fourth King of Kabul. I think that both stories may be reconciled by limiting the extent of the name Chitral, which at one time, and not so very long ago, was confined to the present town, and by extension and chiefly as a matter of convenience, has come to be applied to the whole valley.

A local legend also tells of attacks on Chitral by Jenghiz Khan; considering the huge area over which this fierce conqueror fought it seems a probability, but the mere statement tells us nothing. The effect of the arrival of his army in a remote valley, which was probably plundered and abandoned as a trifling episode in a campaign, can have had little lasting influence.

The conversion of the country, an important matter, was most probably accomplished by the Arabs. There was fighting at Brep—always an important place—where there are still the remains of a Chinese fort. If the Chitralis were Mohammedans when Jenghiz Khan arrived, they must have fared badly at the hands of that fierce Mongol.

In the sixteenth century, the Rais were certainly ruling in Chitral. Whether they were rulers *per se*, or merely governors appointed from outside by the Chinese or by the Mirs of Wakhan or Badakhshan, is uncertain. Most probably they were originally governors, who finally seized complete control of the country and established their house, while not entirely repudiating the suzerainty of their distant overlords.

The present ruling family, the house of Kator, trace their descent to Sultan Hussain, King of Herat, fifth in

descent from the eldest son of Timur Lang (Tamerlane). His kingdom collapsed owing to a rebellion at the time of the arrival in India of the first Mogul Emperor, Babar, who himself was descended from the third son of Timur Lang, and the relationship between the Emperors of Delhi and the Chitral dynasty was not without effect. Faridun Hussain, son of the last King of Herat, died in exile in Badakhshan, where he lived as a fakir, and it was his son, Mirza Ayub, sometimes known as Baba Ayus, who, coming over in company with a number of fakirs (devotees), came to Chitral. He settled in the main valley, at Lon below Kosht, on the right of the Mastuj river. His family lived there as fakirs and he himself set up as a religious leader. His eldest son Mahtaq died young, but his second son was Sangin Ali I. Although he is so called, it is well to remember that he never reigned. He was adopted by the Rais family and he married one of the daughters of the ruler of that dynasty. It is not known for certain whether the Rais belonged to the Shiah or Sunni sect, or who the original Shah Rais was. Most likely the Rais were Shiahs from Badakhshan, and it is worth recording that Murad Khan, late Governor of Ghizr in the Gilgit Agency, whose son is now Governor of Ishkoman, belongs to the Rais family.

Sangin Ali I died in 1570, the first authentic date in Chitral history. He left two sons, Shah Reza and Mohamed Beg. It was Mohtaram Shah I, the son of Mohamed Beg, who became the first Kator ruler of Chitral. The name Kator was that of a former ruler of Chitral. It is not known whether he was a Kafir or a Moslem, but as he was a man of great renown and ruled over the whole of Chitral, his name was tactfully and conveniently applied to the first man who ousted the Rais dynasty. It should be borne in mind that this Rais ruler had no sons, but that there were other heirs much nearer in blood than the Kator. Mohtaram Shah I governed Turikho, Murikho, and Lower Chitral,

whilst his brother Shah Khushwaqt became ruler of Mastuj. It was Mohtaram Shah I who pulled down the dome over the mausoleum of the Rais rulers at Chitral. They were all buried in vaults near the kiln where the bricks for the new mosque were being made in 1935. Mohtaram Shah left one tomb known as the Rayan Gumbat, but it too has since been removed.

It is from Shah Reza (sometimes called Mohamed Reza) that the present Adamzada clan or family of Reza Khel are descended. The founder of this clan was Kizil Beg, son of Shah Reza, and sole survivor, as his uncle, Mohtaram Shah I, killed his father, Shah Reza, and his two other sons. The present Mehtar of Chitral is descended from Mohamed Beg Kator, and the Khushwaqt family from Mohamed Reza alias Shah Reza. They are so called after the Khushwaqt brother of Mohtaram Shah I. From this same brother, the Burish family of Punyal in Gilgit trace their descent. A younger brother, Khush Ahmed, founded the Adamzada tribe of that name. The Rais, however, by no means acquiesced in the loss of power, and the relatives of the former king invaded the country, and defeated the Kator at Galatak, below Drosh. It was after the death of Aurangzeb. At this battle Mohtaram Shah I, together with his brothers Khushwaqt and Khush Ahmed, was slain, and the Kator were in a hazardous position.

Sangin Ali II succeeded his father, Mohtaram Shah, and he went to Delhi to crave help from the Mogul Emperor against the Rais. Bahadur Shah was then ruling, and he gave the Kator money but not the men which he desired. He offered Sangin Ali part of Kashmir instead. From Bahadur Shah's attitude to the refugee, it is thought that the Rais were Shiah, as the Emperor would have been reluctant to aid the Kator in driving out a powerful Sunni ruler.

Sangin Ali II left Delhi and went to Swat, where he

raised a force, crossed over from Kalam by the Laspur Pass and invaded the country. The people of Swat disliked the adventure, and wanted to go home, leaving their leader in the lurch. Fortunately for him snow fell, the passes were closed, and the Swatis could not go back. They made a virtue of necessity, descended on Mastuj by the Laspur valley and occupied Drasan and Chitral town. The Rais fled. Sangin Ali II reigned for twenty years after his restoration.

Aman-ul-mulk, the great Mehtar (died 1892), left a large family but happily, judging from the trouble that they caused, only four were legitimate. It is reported that this Mehtar never killed any of his brothers, and that he trusted his sons. This was a very different policy from that of his father, Shah Afzal II, who was by no means intelligent. He reigned for eighteen years but was always at variance with his sons. He even went so far as to ask help from the notorious Gauhar Aman¹ who had seized Mastuj and who, however, merely insulted him. This so infuriated Shah Afzal II that he told his rebellious sons, who were reconciled to their father and helped him to eject Gauhar Aman and to occupy Mastuj.

Shah Afzal II was the son of a remarkable father, Mohtaram Shah II, who although he reigned nominally for forty-eight years spent at least twenty years in exile at Dir. After he, with his elder brother Shah Nawaz and his younger Sarbuland, had been in exile, he managed to regain possession of the country. Instead of ascending the throne as he might very properly have done he placed the rightful ruler, his elder brother, Shah Nawaz, on the throne, whilst he himself retired to Turikho until the death of his brother gave him a right to declare himself the ruler. Such self-sacrifice must be unique in Chitral. Chitrali history, however, is not as simple as the above summary would lead one to believe. It is not a record of the rulers of the

¹ See *Between the Oxus and the Indus*, p. 258. Martin Hopkinson Ltd.

country being sometimes dethroned, but of a series of struggles for the mastery of the whole country amongst princes who were rulers of fragments of it. Generally speaking, Mastuj has never been a Kator possession, but has been an appanage of the Khushwaqts, a cadet branch of the family. Even to this day the Mehtar of Chitral is supposed to have no control over the province of Mastuj, which was only incorporated in Chitral in 1914 and the administration of which was to remain wholly in the hands of its governor, who is at the present time the Mehtar. The district cannot fairly be called an integral part of the Chitral State. It was when the first Khushwaqt took possession of this northern territory that a descendant of the Rais ruler, Shah Abdul Qadir, persuaded Sultan Mir of Badakhshan, in which state he was then a refugee, to invade Chitral. An attempt was made but the invaders failed to capture Mastuj.

The Kator never acquiesced in the Khushwaqt rule of Mastuj, but they were never strong enough to do more than protest. Mastuj was remote, and the Khushwaqts were a fiercer and more energetic family than their Kator kinsmen; the proof lies in their occupation of Yasin, Ghizr, Punyal, and even at times of Gilgit and parts of the Kashmir dominions.

It would be hard to find a more dismal chronicle of selfishness, deceit, and disorder than that offered by the tale of the intrigues and quarrels of the Kator and Khushwaqt families. When Suleiman Shah Khushwaqt was in power his rule extended to the Indus, and whilst he was engaged in this conquest, Mohtaram Shah II thought the moment favourable to occupy Khushwaqt villages in Mastuj and to build a fort at Awi, near Sanoghar. Suleiman Shah soon heard of his kinsman's treachery. He marched across the mountains to Drasan and cut off the Mehtar from his capital, which Mohtaram Shah reached with great difficulty and after several defeats. His opponent, however, lost Gilgit

and his power rapidly declined. An earthquake destroyed Mastuj. Yet the restless, ambitious Khushwaqt temper could not be repressed. Assisted by an army from Badakhshan under Khokand Beg he invaded Yasin but had to retire, and was murdered in 1840.

In 1840 Gauhar Aman Khushwaqt of Yasin was at Mastuj and a long period of civil war between this fierce savage and the Mehtar, Shah Afzal II, took place.

In 1854 the Maharajah of Kashmir made an alliance with the Mehtar against Gauhar Aman. Mastuj was taken by the Chitralis but soon recovered by the Khushwaqt. Mohtaram Shah III succeeded Shah Afzal II. He only reigned for two years and was known as the cannibal, for he was a cruel man. It is doubtful if his successor Aman-ul-mulk was much better, yet he died a natural death after a long oppressive reign, expiring in open durbar on 9th August 1892, dreaded and detested by all classes. Aman-ul-mulk had been born the son of the ruler of Lower Chitral. When he died his dominions extended from Gilgit to Kafiristan, from the Kunar valley to Asmar, and he exercised authority in Darel, Tangir, and eastern Kafiristan. He was nevertheless the scourge of his people, and the object of the inexhaustible hatred of all classes. Yet he died, as narrated, a natural death—a fate denied to many of his predecessors far better than he in many ways.

It is difficult to understand the legends that have grown up about Aman-ul-mulk, the 'Great Mehtar', who seems now to be regarded, thanks perhaps to the short memories of the human race, as an able, strong-minded, even modern ruler. He was, as a matter of fact, a primitive and nasty savage. He behaved shamefully to Mr W. W. McNair, who visited him in 1883 when on a secret mission from the Government of India. He is supposed to have suggested to Mir Wali the desirability of murdering Mr George Hayward in Yasin; and he certainly received some of the spoils of

that crime. It was he who murdered Dilawar Khan and two sepoys of a native regiment sent by the Government of India to Badakhshan. Whatever friendliness Aman-ul-mulk showed to the British was instigated solely by fear of Afghanistan, for it was when the Amir Abdur Rahman conquered Badakhshan that the Mehtar began to fear for himself, and he endeavoured to placate the Afghans by offering his daughter in marriage to the heir-apparent of the Amir, but the marriage never took place.

The history of Chitral from this time up to the British occupation is chiefly concerned with its relations with Afghanistan. The situation of Chitral, which throughout its length marches with Afghanistan from south to extreme north, makes the country peculiarly exposed to the influence of its stronger neighbour. In former times, when the Afghan Government was weak, and when the Khanates to the north were thriving states, Chitral was little affected. From the time, as I have mentioned, of Abdur Rahman, with his extension of his rule to the borders of Russia and China, and his avowed anxiety to annex Chitral, the position was changed. It was the covetous glance of Afghanistan on Chitral, the advance of Russia to the Pamirs and Hindu Kush, and other developments that were a cause of alarm to the Indian Government. The Mehtar himself had one desire only, to remain independent or, at the worst, to surrender as little authority as he could to the protecting power, whether Russian or British. It fell to Aman-ul-mulk to decide which power should protect him, and he finally decided on the British. It was a wise choice, and advantageous for him. The Mehtar drove a good bargain, and it is not surprising that there were and still are critics who wonder why we should have the burden of safeguarding Chitral, a country in no way, remotely or otherwise, of any value to us.

It is manifest from the history of the negotiations, which ended in the recognition of the suzerainty of the

Government of India, that the whole country, rulers, nobles, and peasants, cordially detested the British and that it was self-interest alone that drove them to ask for our protection.

An episode twenty-five years previously had alarmed Chitral. In 1868 Jahandar Shah, Mir of Badakhshan, had been deposed by Mahmud Shah and had taken refuge in Chitral with Aman-ul-mulk, a piece of hospitality which gave grievous offence to the Amir. Indeed, he ordered Mahmud Shah to invade the country. Mahmud crossed the Baroghil, advanced on Shost but was held up in the Khipun defile by Pahlwan Bahadur, the ruler—also called Mehtar—of Mastuj. It was at the Darband-i-yarkhun, one and a half miles above the Gazen Gol that the invaders were checked. It may be noticed, parenthetically, how a common danger united all the different elements in Chitral. Mahmud Shah heard that a Chitrali force was ascending the Turikho valley and proceeding over the Shah Jinali Pass to cut him off from Badakhshan. He himself was wounded in the skirmish, abandoned his baggage, and fled. This was the Battle of Yarkhun in 1870. In 1878 Aman-ul-mulk made a treaty with the Maharajah of Kashmir acknowledging his suzerainty and, for the time being, at any rate, saved his country from being incorporated in the dominions of the Amir, and his family and himself from death or exile.

In 1882 Mir Aman, the sorry creature then ruling Yasin, surrendered all territory on the Chitral side of the Shandur Pass to the Mehtar; and though Pahlwan Bahadur endeavoured to recover Mastuj he was defeated and finally murdered. Nizam-ul-mulk, eldest son of the Mehtar, was appointed ruler of Yasin.

In 1885 the Lockhart Mission was sent to Chitral by the Government of India. In 1888–9 Colonel A. Durand visited the valley, and in 1892 began the sequence of events that led immediately to the present political status of Chitral. On the death of Aman-ul-mulk,

his son, Afzal-ul-mulk, who murdered his cousin because he merely looked at his wife, seized the throne and at once slew three of his half-brothers, Shah-i-mulk, Bahram, and Wazir-ul-mulk. His father's acknowledged heir, Nizam-ul-mulk was absent at the time in Yasin, and when he heard of his brother's action, he fled to Gilgit. Both brothers petitioned the Government of India, but, before any decision could be decided, other events changed the situation. A brother of the late Mehtar, Sher Afzal, had lived as an exile at the court of Kabul. As soon as he heard of the march of events in Chitral, he proceeded with a small force to that country. He crossed the Dorah Pass, murdered his nephew, Murid Dastgir—a son of Aman-ul-mulk—marched on Chitral, seized the fort on 6th November 1892, and killed his nephew, the newly regnant Mehtar. It is, as a matter of fact, more likely that Afzal-ul-mulk was slain by his own followers, or by relatives of his murdered brothers, as he had begun to torture women, and had already planned other murders. This incident throws a light on the inherent incapacity of the Chitralis and of the Mehtar in particular. Opinion in Chitral was, and still is, that this successful raid was inspired by the Amir of Afghanistan, who had always coveted the country. Incidentally, it shows what the fate of Chitral would have been without the intervention of the British.

Nizam-ul-mulk now took action and entered Chitral with a following in which were Hunza men. The people rallied to him, and Sher Afzal fled to the Afghan Commander-in-Chief at Asmar. Nizam-ul-mulk was a keen sportsman and polo-player—dashing, blithe and debonair, very handsome, but an utter coward, unintelligent, disagreeable, and a debauchee. He was ready, indeed anxious, for any agreement with the British which might strengthen his position and improve his prestige.

During these events, the sinister figure of Umra Khan

of Jandol, a Pathan chief with the worst defects of his race, had attempted to interfere in Chitral affairs, and had invaded the southern confines of the state. There was now a lull. Nizam-ul-mulk was in possession, and at any rate the lawful heir was on the throne.

Early in 1893 the British Mission arrived. It consisted of Major (later Sir George) Robertson I.M.S.; Lieut. (later Sir Francis) Younghusband; and the Hon. (now Brig.-General) C. G. Bruce, with an escort under Lieutenant T. L. R. Gordon.

There seems little doubt now that both the British Mission and the Government were unduly optimistic about conditions in Chitral. With Sher Afzal and the Afghans at Asmar; Umra Khan to the south, still unpunished and the more unreasonable after his success in defeating the ex-Khan of Dir, and a fanatical mullah, Baba Sahib in that place itself, there was really no ground for confidence. The truth was that the Chitrali situation, and particularly the character of the people, had not been properly appreciated. No one knew enough about this hitherto unvisited region.

A further difficulty of the British Mission was found in the unpopularity of the Mehtar, Nizam-ul-mulk, a rather stupid man, whose demeanour compared unfavourably with the superficial charms of his brother, and who was kept on his throne by British bayonets. However, Major Robertson was shortly recalled, as things seemed quiet and, instead of a British Mission, an Assistant Political Agent, Captain F. E. Younghusband, and Lieutenant T. L. R. Gordon as commander of the escort were left. No better choice of officers could have been made but their duties, in event of trouble, would have been difficult to carry out.

In May 1894 Amir-ul-mulk, a brother of the Mehtar, who had been with Umra Khan of Jandol and who alleged that he had escaped, returned to Chitral and was received by the Mehtar. The two brothers went

out hawking at Broz, a village on the left bank of the river below Chitral town. It was 1st January 1895. Nizam-ul-mulk's turban came down and while he was doing it up Amir-ul-mulk told one of his men to shoot him in the back. Amir-ul-mulk had always been looked on as rather a witless creature but he was far from being so, and could at times act with energy. He seized Chitral fort, murdered two of his brother's officials and some supporters, and proclaimed himself Mehtar. The Assistant Political Officer was now Lieutenant B. E. M. Gurdon, but Major Robertson, Political Agent in Gilgit, who was also in charge of Chitral, recognised the gravity of events, and started at once for Chitral. The situation, however, was out of hand and beyond redress. The operations in Chitral have been recorded both officially as well as unofficially, and there is no need for a detailed account here. When Major Robertson reached Chitral on the 1st February 1895 he fully realised how serious the position was. Umra Khan of Jandol, who had not been expelled from Narsat, had occupied Lower Chitral soon after the murder of Nizam-ul-mulk, on the pretence of helping Amir-ul-mulk, and refused to withdraw at the request of the British Agent. The Chitralis strongly objected to Umra Khan, and put up a feeble resistance, but the incapacity of Amir-ul-mulk, the treachery of their influential men, and the customary inefficiency of the people led to the failure of any opposition, and Umra Khan took Drosh.

Suddenly Sher Afzal reappeared. He had been interned by the Amir, and his sudden and second arrival gave colour to the belief that Afghanistan was an interested party, notwithstanding that, in the Durand Agreement signed on 12th November 1893, the Amir had promised not to interfere in Chitral. Unfortunately, what made the situation still more complicated was that Sher Afzal was extremely popular in Chitral, as a candidate for the throne. Sher Afzal and Umra Khan

were both anxious that the British should leave the country and, when the former approached Chitral early in March, the British force in the fort were involved with the rebels. On 14th March the Government of India sent a final warning to Umra Khan, and began to mobilise troops. Two British detachments in Chitral had already met with reverses at Kuragh and Reshun, which revealed the innate treachery of the Chitralis.

Major Robertson had been besieged in the fort at Chitral from the 3rd March 1895. Two columns were sent to his relief. A small one started from Gilgit under Colonel Kelly, on 23rd March, and in spite of the great obstacles of the road—for the season was late winter and transport difficulties severe—reached Chitral on 20th April. The main body, under Major-General Sir R. C. Low, moved by the Malakand, and an advance party reached Chitral on 15th May 1895. Sher Afzal, Amir-ul-mulk and other leaders were deported and the late Mehtar, then a boy, was proclaimed the ruler. Sir George Robertson, the British Agent who was besieged in the fort at Chitral and who had an intimate acquaintance with all the neighbouring countries, has recorded his opinion of the Chitrali:¹ 'There are few more treacherous people in the world than the Chitrali, and they have a wonderful capacity for cold-blooded cruelty. No race is more untruthful. They are revengeful and venal, charmingly picturesque and admirable companions.' And again: 'The early history of Chitral is a crimson-stained record, a monotonous tale of murder and perfidy; the slaying of brother by brother; of son by father, with no gleams of generosity or magnanimity.'

Holdich in his *Indian Borderland* is somewhat cynical in his review of the happenings in Chitral. 'We could not have saved the Chitral imbroglio but we should have kept Umra Khan out by placing a hostile [*sic*] force at the debouchment of the Lowarai Pass to

¹ *Story of a Minor Siege*, 1899.

the Chitral valley. However we adopted the last resource of indecision.' The same writer calls the people 'idle, good-for-nothing and happy-hearted, who have a deadly propensity for wholesale murder and family butchery, combined with many attractive and even lovable qualities. They are not a fighting people.'

The siege of Chitral did not throw any pleasant light on the Chitrali character. Although Amir-ul-mulk knew that his throne and his life depended on his British allies, he was active in caballing against them. When the fort had to be provisioned and the grain stores of Asfandiar, who had joined Sher Afzal, were requisitioned, Amir-ul-mulk privately told his followers to prevent the supplies being surrendered. He also tried to make terms, which included a subsidy from the British but no British to remain in the country. Robertson and his force were to leave and to be caught and massacred five miles from Chitral at the Baitari cliffs.

The intermediary in these negotiations was Mian Rahat Shah. It was this man (not a Chitrali) who advised the British to stay outside the fort as it would 'offend' the Chitralis if that building were occupied. The puerility and treachery of the whole proceedings show up the true Chitrali character as nothing else can.

When all was over, Amir-ul-mulk deposed, and the late Mehtar, Shuja-ul-mulk, recognised, the murderer of Nizam-ul-mulk was actually present at the Durbar and was arrested.

The result of the operations in Chitral was to burden the Government of India with the protection of a state and the support of its ruler. This was, and still is, an expensive commitment. The Government of India is constantly being blamed for its frontier policy, and the critics are usually entirely ignorant of the problems there constantly confronting the Imperial Government. The blue books on Chitral (C. 7864 and C. 8037)

abundantly illustrate the natural reluctance of the Government to undertake operations in Chitral, and no doubt that reluctance caused certain blunders and delays. The circumstances, however, justified the intervention of Government, in so far as it prevented Chitral from being occupied by Russia or Afghanistan.

The critics of Western rule in Asia are many and vocal. If the British had not intervened in Chitral in 1895 and that country had become Afghan territory, it would now cost its suzerain only a few thousand rupees a year, more than offset by the revenues recovered. The Government of India, however, has had to garrison the country and give a generous subsidy to the ruler, and, financially, gains and receives nothing, a state of things which justifies the original reluctance of the British to intervene. This one-sided arrangement is caused by the difference of standards between Western and Eastern methods of administration; the constant but barren criticism to which the Government of India is subject ignores this difference, which is the vital principle and justification of our rule. Personally, in the case of Chitral, I consider that we have done too much, and our expenditure in Chitral may be criticised as a doubtful insurance. Often, it is true, in such cases Government does not go far enough, and it would be far better, and certainly more economical to pension a ruler and administer the country directly. It is the cost of these commitments that is so serious a charge on the Imperial exchequer, and yet it is natural that no Oriental feels grateful for this protection. The Government of India is regarded as possessing inexhaustible treasure, and all its actions as dictated by greed. This is where the stupidity of the East is always so conspicuous. It is difficult to point to any new commitments in Northern India in recent years that have not involved the Imperial Government in serious loss, and amongst these is Chitral. It is well if the rulers and people of that state appreciate the bare truth. If

it had not been for our intervention, the Kator family would have shared the fate of the dynasties of Badakhshan, Asmar and Shighnan: and the Government of India would have been spared great expenditure with no benefit or return. Such is the price of Empire.

APPENDIX II

LIST OF KATOR RULERS

The dates are only approximate

Sangin Ali I: did not reign. (Died 1570).

Mohamed Beg Kator (son of Sangin Ali I).

Mohtaram Shah I (first Kator ruler of Chitral).

Sangin Ali II.

Mohamed Ghulam I: reigned one year.

Mohamed Shafi: reigned thirteen years.

Shah Faramurz: [?]

Shah Afzal I: reigned fifteen years, 1762-77.

Shah Fazil: reigned ten years, 1777-87.

Shah Nawaz Khan: reigned two years, 1787-89.

Mohtaram Shah II: reigned forty-eight years, 1789-
1837.

Shah Afzal II: reigned eighteen years, 1837-55.

Mohtaram Shah III, Adam Khor: reigned two years,
1855-1857.

Aman-ul-mulk: reigned thirty-five years, 1857-92.

Nizam-ul-mulk: reigned three years, 1892-95.

Shuja-ul-mulk: reigned forty-one years, 1895-1936.

Nasr-ul-mulk: still reigning, 1936- .



AFGHANISTAN

WAKHAN

YASIN

LUTKUH

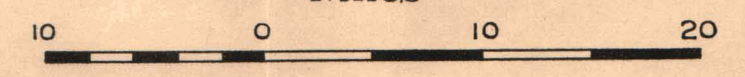
CHITRAL

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