

They belonged, so the Colonel explained to me afterwards, to a sort of militia drafted from the local population of the Badakhshan valleys and Wakhan into the regiments permanently echeloned as frontier guards along the Russian border on the Oxus. Apart from the officers, the proportion of true Pathans among them was slight. Yet I could well believe from all I saw and heard, that, properly led and provided for, these sturdy Iranian hillmen might give a good account of themselves. Did not Marco Polo speak of the people of 'Badashan' as 'valiant in war' and of the men of 'Vokhan' as gallant soldiers?" (*Ruins of Desert Cathay*, I., p. 66.)

XXXII., pp. 170 *seq.*

In Chap. III., pp. 64-66, of his *Serindia*, Sir Aurel Stein has the following on Marco Polo's account of Wakhan:—

"After Wu-k'ung's narrative of his journey the Chinese sources of information about the Pāmīrs and the adjoining regions run dry for nearly a thousand years. But that the routes leading across them from Wakhān retained their importance also in Muhammedan times is attested by the greatest mediæval travellers, Marco Polo. I have already, in *Ancient Khotan* [pp. 41 *seq.*], discussed the portion of his itinerary which deals with the journey across the Pāmīrs to 'the kingdom of Cascar' or Kāshgar, and it only remains here to note briefly what he tells us of the route by which he approached them from Badakhshan: 'In leaving Badashan you ride twelve days between east and north-east, ascending a river that runs through land belonging to a brother of the Prince of Badashan, and containing a good many towns and villages and scattered habitations. The people are Mahommetans, and valiant in war. At the end of those twelve days you come to a province of no great size, extending indeed no more than three days' journey in any direction, and this is called VOKHAN. The people worship Mahommet, and they have a peculiar language. They are gallant soldiers, and they have a chief whom they call NONE, which is as much as to say *Count*, and they are liegemen to the Prince of Badashan.' [Polo, I., pp. 170-171.]

"Sir Henry Yule was certainly right in assuming that 'the river along which Marco travels from Badakhshan is no doubt the upper stream of the Oxus, locally known as the Panja. . . . It is true that the river is reached from Badakhshan Proper by ascending another river (the Vardoj) and crossing the Pass of Ishkāshm,