

morning of August 9th by a steep track, mostly over slopes of shale and precipitous snow-beds, north-westwards to the Fasat pass, close on 15,000 feet. The head of the Fasat valley beyond showed large beds of apparently perennial snow and still more considerable remains of former glaciation, marked by extensive moraine ridges and a big cirque still holding a lakelet. After a descent of some three miles from the pass, the first scanty grass was reached. Continuing over small grassy plateaux watered by side streams and separated by rocky ridges, we passed the few mud hovels of goatherds known by the name of Fasat, at an elevation of about 11,000 feet. A short distance lower down the first firs and other conifers were met with. They clothed the slopes of the now very narrow valley in steadily increasing numbers until, near the junction of the streams of Fasat and Biāh, some two miles below the point last mentioned, we passed into luxuriant forest such as nothing in accounts of Chilās previously read or heard had led me to expect. Not far below this junction, known as Devong, we came upon the first patch of cultivation, unmistakably new. Grand trees, almost all Deodars or *Pinus excelsa*, continued to clothe the steep rocky sides of the valley right down to the small village of Niat. It is situated at an elevation of over 7,000 feet amidst well-cultivated fields of wheat, oats and maize. Information received from the local headmen, confirmed by the abundance of fruit trees, made it clear that, though cultivation was not here of recent date, yet the permanent occupation of this and the villages lower down had commenced only since the *Pax Britannica* had ensured the safety of scattered settlements in the mountains. There could be no doubt that this boon was greatly appreciated; for all Chilāsīs dread the summer heat of the Indus valley, and, as I soon realized by experience, for very good reason.

Old cultivation terraces at Daloin.

In the early morning of the following day we resumed our march down the Niat valley. Close below Niat the path led for about a mile and a half past continuous fields and hamlets collectively known as Gusher. This village was said to count about a hundred households and is probably one of the largest individual settlements to be found above Chilās proper. It owes its existence to the slightly more open ground at the valley bottom and the abundant facilities for irrigation afforded both by the Niat stream and that of the Shatoche Nullah which descends from a pass towards Būnar. Below their junction the valley contracts again, and there is only room for small patches of cultivation below the steep pine-clad slopes. Towards Thē, a small picturesque village within view of the point of junction with the main valley of Thak which descends from the Bābusar pass and the Kāghān watershed, the sides of the valley rapidly become bare of all trees or other vegetation (Fig. 3). It was on approaching that junction that I noticed at Daloin to the north, above the deep-cut bed of the Niat stream, a succession of old cultivation terraces, which had evidently been abandoned for ages, filling a rocky amphitheatre known as Nakhui. There seemed to exist no tradition about them, beyond a vague notion that their abandonment was due to the drying up of some spring once used for their irrigation. It is far more probable, however, in view of the position, that there formerly existed an irrigation channel, cut along or through the cliffs, from the right bank of the Niat stream higher up. But poor feud-torn Chilās had evidently long since lost the skill needed for the construction of such a 'kul' and even the recollection of it.¹³

March to mouth of Buto-gāh valley.

From near the hamlet of Bāsha, situated near the confluence at an elevation of some 5,500 feet, the scenery underwent a complete and striking change. Proceeding down the well-made Kāghān mule road which we struck here, there was nothing to be seen but absolutely barren

¹³ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 19, for remains of an ancient irrigation work at the mouth of the Kargāh Nullah, above Gilgit proper, proving a former command of stonework such as has been long lost among the population of these

Dard valleys.

The term *kul*, connected with Skr. *kulyā*, is used for all irrigation channels throughout this region just as in Kashmīr.