

## SECTION II.—THROUGH YĀSĪN TO THE DARKŌT PASS

Ghizar, now separately administered by a 'Governor' of Khushwaqt descent, lay at a distance from my route. But of the Kho tract I was able to see something on my way from the Sheobat pass to Yāsīn proper. The descent from the former took us on August 23rd over ground clearly marked as the bed of a former glacier and past steep slopes of rock debris to the high grazing ground known as Kuterao-ferao. Next day, a couple of miles lower down, we struck at Mayurai the Batres-gāh valley. Here an area of carefully levelled ground, not less than half a mile square, attested former cultivation at an elevation of over 10,000 feet. The Batres-gāh valley looked comparatively open. A track practicable for laden animals ascends the valley south-eastwards to the Suj-galī pass leading to Nyachūt in Darēl, and this is the route by which Fa-hsien and his Chinese fellow pilgrims probably proceeded to *Ta-li-lo* and the Indus. For our own journey to Yāsīn two marches down the Batres-gāh Nullah to its mouth and then another along the Gilgit river to Gūpis would have offered the easiest route. But in order to save a day I chose the short cut that was reported to lead above Gafar-bōdo to a pass giving direct access to the head of the Gūpis Nullah due north.

Head of  
Batres-gāh  
valley.

The mountains to the south of the Gilgit river have in these parts not yet been adequately surveyed. So it was scarcely surprising that this unexplored pass proved almost impossible for our porters. For fully eight hours we scrambled over huge masses of rock debris and boulders (Fig. 32), the worst I ever encountered in this region, relics of an ancient glacier, before we reached the narrow rock gully forming the pass at an elevation of just under 16,000 feet. The entire absence of glacier mud or other soft soil over all this ground seemed a clear indication of the dryness of the climate on this side of the Indus watershed, far advanced denudation resulting from it. On the steep north slope of the pass *névé*-beds were still found, the last remnant of what must have been, within a relatively recent period, a glacier of some size. Nightfall obliged us to camp amidst old moraines at an elevation well over 15,000 feet.

Pass above  
Gafar-bōdo.

The following day's march led down to Gūpis through a steep and gradually narrowing valley. In its upper portion it was of interest to observe a succession of ancient terminal moraines marking at intervals the points to which the glacier had advanced at different geological periods. Stretches of sloping meadow land used for grazing separated these steep falls of rock debris, the lowest of them being met with some nine miles below our camping-place. Below the junction with the Bāshkar-gāh branch, which descends from the south-west and still holds an active glacier, the valley contracts into an extremely narrow gorge flanked on either side by rocky precipices. These cliffs, which at their base showed in places clear marks of glacier 'grinding', appeared to rise to a height of 3,000 feet or more above the cañon-like bed of the stream. Their name *Upaiyōt*, interpreted to mean in Shiṇā 'higher than birds can fly', suggests some local legend similar to that which accounts for the origin of the ancient name Paropanisus (Avestic *Upairi-çaēna*) borne by the Hindukush main range north of Kābul. A very steep spur jutting out above the main valley near Gūpis and known as Ishkērbal was pointed out as a natural place of refuge resorted to in old times.

Descent to  
Gūpis.

August 24th, spent at the village of Gūpis, was our first day of halt since leaving Kashmīr. We took advantage of it for work of many kinds, in which we were assisted by the presence of the small garrison of Imperial Service troops holding Gūpis Fort. This effectively guards both the mouth of the Yāsīn valley opening on the opposite side of the river and the route that leads to Mastūj and Chitrāl. It was of direct historical interest to find this testimony to the strategic importance of the point under present, as under past, conditions; for, as mentioned above, it is

Halt at  
Gūpis Fort.