

by traders between Yāsīn and Wakhān, and its practicability for laden transport was proved by the fact that the Pāmīr Boundary Commission of 1895 followed it both going and returning, though out of the 600 ponies that accompanied them a number were lost. From what I subsequently learned from Wakhī graziers at Showar-shur I conclude that it was probably a recent advance of the glacier pressing against the rock walls near the narrowing mouth of the Kachil valley that had caused this north-eastern route from the Darkōt to become completely closed to traffic for the time being. I was reluctantly obliged, in consequence, to descend by the north-western glacier, with which my visit of 1906 had already acquainted me. Though, owing to the lateness of the season, there was now no risk of avalanches, yet the difficulties encountered in the shape of crevasses, huge moraines, &c. (Fig. 48), were sufficient to render this route, in its present state, quite impracticable for laden animals. Passing my old camping-place above Vedīn-kōt we managed, however, to reach by nightfall the grazing ground of Chikmar-robāt below the Barōghil saddle.

Choice of  
route  
through  
Hunza.

Help of  
Captain  
H. F. D.  
Stirling.

Having thus reached the Yārkhun head-waters, our easiest route to the Chinese border would have led across the Barōghil to Sarhad on the Oxus and thence past the Afghān Pāmīrs by the uppermost Āb-i-Panja. This was the line I had followed in 1906. But apart from the fact that its use would have required the special permission of H.M. the Amīr of Afghānistān, my desire to see new ground was against it. The only alternative was to follow a parallel route by which westernmost Hunza could be gained across the head-waters of the Yārkhun and Karambār rivers and over the high watershed range to the east of the latter. It would certainly be a very difficult route, and I had all the more reason to feel grateful for the effective arrangements made by Captain Stirling in the matter of transport. He himself, as an enthusiastic mountaineer, took pleasure in sharing the toils of those four days of hard climbing and marching. It affords me melancholy satisfaction to record here my grateful remembrance of all the friendly help given me by this zealous officer of a famous Frontier regiment; he was destined never to gain the chance of exploration that he longed for, but to lay down his life for his country three years later after distinguished service in France and Mesopotamia.

Route by  
Karambār  
headwaters.

For a variety of geographical reasons the ground we traversed on two long marches past the glacier sources of the Yārkhun and Karambār rivers could never have witnessed historical events of importance. The great elevation, from about 12,000 to 14,000 feet, of the main valleys on either side of the Karambār saddle precludes cultivation. The close vicinity of numerous large glaciers—the largest of them, descending to Showar-shur from the south-east, is shown by the map<sup>2</sup> to extend over a direct distance of some 22 miles—must make climatic conditions on this high ground more severe than they would be at a corresponding elevation on the Pāmīrs. Moreover, though of easy approach from the side of Sarhad and uppermost Wakhān, the area containing these head-waters represents a *cul-de-sac*. From Hunza it is separated by a very high ice-clad range over which communication is possible only by the Chillinji pass, some 17,500 feet above sea-level. This can be crossed by men on foot for a few summer months only, and even then, as my experience showed, under exceptional difficulties.

Karambār  
valley  
difficult.

To the south, along the Karambār or Ashkūman valley, there is no practicable route during the spring and summer. The extremely narrow gorges below the Chillinji glacier are then for several marches completely filled by the river, and the rock walls on either side are sheer precipices impassable for any but cragsmen unencumbered by loads. Even in winter the track leading down the valley to the Gilgit river at Gākuch is extremely difficult, and at that season communication with Wakhān across the passes northward is blocked by snow. It is only for a few weeks in the early spring and autumn that it is possible to follow the route leading up the Karambār valley to the north

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Northern Trans-frontier sheets No. 2 sw. and se.; also map in Curzon, *Pāmīrs*.