

## CHAPTER XXV

### ACROSS THE PĀMĪRS

#### SECTION I.—PREPARATIONS AT KĀSHGAR

Arrival at  
Kāshgar.

My arrival at Kāshgar on the morning of May 31st had brought me back to my familiar base in time to benefit by all the friendly assistance and official support which Colonel (since Brigadier-General) Sir Percy Sykes, who had temporarily replaced Sir George Macartney as H.B.M.'s Consul-General, could give me before his departure a week later for a shooting trip in the Russian Pāmīrs. Though I was so soon deprived of the congenial company of this distinguished soldier-statesman and traveller, his kind arrangements for my accommodation and for other facilities greatly assisted me in getting through the heavy work that detained me at Chīnī-bāgh until the beginning of July.

Repacking  
of antiques.

The most troublesome part of this work and that which took longest time was the careful repacking of my collection of antiques for its long and difficult journey across the Kara-koram to Ladāk and thence to Kashmīr. The assemblage of the requisite materials and the careful sorting and packing of the antiques, many of them of an extremely brittle and friable character, kept my assistants and myself busy for fully five weeks. It was due mainly to the care then taken that the fragile contents of those 182 tin-lined cases, after a difficult journey of over 800 miles through high mountain ranges and across ice-covered passes on camels, yaks and ponies, finally reached Kashmīr safely. Fortunately practical help was forthcoming, thanks to the presence of my old friend Khān Sāhib Badruddīn Khān, Ak-sakāl of the Indian traders at Khotan, who once again came to my assistance with the same efficiency that he had so often shown at his own place.<sup>1</sup> I had equal cause for satisfaction in finding that Chiang Ssū-yeh, my devoted travelling companion on my second journey, was as eager as ever to place his scholarship at my service in carefully deciphering and transcribing the Chinese documents recovered in the course of my explorations. The value of the service thus rendered by my learned and lamented friend will, I trust, be duly appreciated when the publication of all these records is completed through the efforts of M. Henri Maspero.

Proposed  
journey  
through  
Russian  
Turkestan.

Amid the mass of work which kept me fully occupied all through that hot month of June, none caused me more concern than the arrangements for my long-planned journey across the Russian Pāmīrs and through the mountains and valleys north of the Oxus. For many years past my eyes had eagerly turned towards this extreme east of Irān and that part of the 'Roof of the World' under which it shelters. In the original proposals for my expedition, as submitted to the Government of India in 1913, I had conveyed the request that I might be enabled, with the permission of the Imperial Russian Government, to make my way from Kāshgar towards the Trans-Caspian railway and thus to north-eastern Persia and Sīstān by the route which the ancient silk trade may be assumed to have followed across the Alai and along the Kara-tegīn valley. I hoped

<sup>1</sup> See e. g. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 516; *Serindia*, iii. p. 1320.