

from bKor-rdzod to Nyoma on the Indus, and from Nyoma to rGya in Ladakh, were without this last touch of culture, a nose-ring. They had neither saddles, nor bridles, nor even nose-rings, they were absolutely undefiled products of nature. When I asked the nomads why even this last remnant of civilisation was not found on them, they said that this particular breed of yaks did not possess any noses. I was pitying the poor creatures for whom the roses had no scent, when I noticed that two little holes could be distinguished above the mouth. That in these circumstances it was no easy matter to use the yaks for riding, can well be imagined. In fact, their management was so difficult, that I would have gladly renounced this doubtful pleasure altogether, if the rarified air of those altitudes had not compelled me to use these uninviting beasts. When I was tired, I would tell one of the nomads to get me a yak for riding. Then all the men would run in front of the herd of yaks they were driving, shouting at them and waving their arms in the air, to make them understand that they were wanted to stop. A single one could never be made either to stop or to start. Their *esprit de corps* was so strong that they insisted on doing everything together. Now, when the herd was stopped, one of the unladen yaks was singled out for my use and seized by the horns. Naturally he disliked this treatment, and whilst he was dancing round the man, I was supposed to fly through the air and drop on the yak's back. As soon as I had reached my seat and seized its mane, the nomad would let go the horns, and off went the yak galloping up and down the hillside, until he had found his natural equilibrium, when he joined the herd again. The nomads had the kindness to select for me the least savage of their yaks, but the Khalasi and Khansaman had to take what remained, and that led often to exciting performances. I still see the Khalasi seated on the tail and hindquarters (for he had failed to drop down in the middle part of the animal) of a furious yak, which charged up and down with him on very uneven ground on the Thaglang Pass. Then, when the yak had found his place in the caravan of snorting beasts, he would look out for another yak, his adversary, and poke him with his horns. The opponent, naturally offended by this act of special attention, would pay it back in the same coin. In these continual fights, the yaks knocked a lock off one of our boxes, made holes in several others, and smashed the tripod of our camera. That they did not smash our own legs, was due to the continual care with which we watched these fights. Whenever one's own yak was charged by his adversary, one had to lift high the threatened leg, and join in the struggle by using one's stick and umbrella. There was, however, one weapon which was respected by all the yaks. That was the stone whip of Rubshu. We were now in the centre of a large treeless country, and thus it is not to be wondered at, that even the whip should be a stone implement. It was an oblong stone, three to four pounds in weight, with which the yaks were hammered on their hind quarters, whenever they showed signs of laziness. Curiously, the animals seemed to fear the sight of this stone implement more than its weight. The one I was riding on was often energetically hammered by a nomad behind me, a treatment which he endured with the utmost indifference. But the moment he saw another nomad using his stone against a yak in front of him, he shuddered with terror. When the hammering failed to make an impression, the stones were thrown at the yaks.