

reported cause of the abandonment of other villages in the same vicinity is that the streams have undermined and largely removed the terraces on which the fields were located.

At Kurgil, where the Suru River joins the Dras, we reached the first large village of Ladakh. Tibet seemed very near. In fact, we were already in Little Tibet, and our men always spoke of this, their own country, as Tibet, while they called Tibet itself, Lhasa. Thus far, the people whom we had met had been Mohammedans like our servants, but now we began to meet Buddhists with greasy pig-tails and big turquoise-studded earrings. When I met the first of them, I suddenly remembered a book on Ladakh which I had read years ago, and I saw again the mental pictures of Buddhist sculptures, monasteries, and prayer wheels that I had formed as a boy. Nor were they far from wrong.

We had left the abundant snow of the Kashmir region, and were in a region of slight precipitation. Although Kurgil lies at an elevation of 9000 feet, the snow had almost disappeared on April 17th, and the field where I watched a primitive game of native polo that afternoon was almost dry. Not one part in a hundred of this rugged country can be cultivated. As one looks abroad, nothing can be seen but jagged white peaks and deep, narrow gorges of naked rock, dull and slate-colored most often, but sometimes of the pale gray of granite, or tinged with red, brown, and purple.

From the appearance of the map, we had supposed that our road from Kurgil would follow the Dras River ten miles farther to the northeast to its junction with the Indus, and then would go southeast up that stream to Leh. As a mat-