

became scarce, and when we returned to it they again became abundant.

On the first day after joining the main caravan road in this region, I counted the remains of thirty-two horses, half eaten by wolves and ravens. The following day, in eighteen miles I counted two hundred and twenty skeletons and carcasses of animals that must have died within the last two or three years. We also passed, that day, thirty-six bales of tea, spices, cloth, and Korans, abandoned the previous fall by a caravan which started too late from Leh. Rasul, our headman, had heard all about it: one horse gave out here, two there, and three in another place; then a snow-storm came on, and the men fled for their lives, leaving the remaining loads, ropes and all, in the middle of the flood-plain of a stream. The owner expected to send a new caravan in a month or two to get the goods and carry them on to Yarkand. He knew that they would be safe, for such incidents are common. Custom, stronger than law, binds all travelers to respect the property thus temporarily left in the road. We camped at an elevation of 17,400 feet, near twelve of the bales, which our men used as a wind-break, unmindful of the carcasses of four or five horses lying close at hand.

We had now reached the centre of the plateau. The next day, June 2, we crossed the Karakorum pass, 18,300 feet above the sea, the culminating point of the highest trade route in the world. In twenty-one miles I counted four hundred and seventy-four dead horses, not to mention numerous dismembered skeletons, thirty-two bales of merchandise, and one human corpse. His fellows had no time