

From this first tour through the Himalayas I came back with the exploring fever thoroughly on me, and I plunged incessantly into books of travel. Very fortunately, too, just a few months later on, in the cold weather of the same year, I found some small scope for my superabundant energies in a three months' reconnaissance which I was sent to make upon the Indus and towards the Afghan frontier; and then, after being attached for some weeks to the Quarter-Master General's department under the present Sir William Lockhart, for the durbar in honour of the Amir of Afghanistan, I was sent to Simla as an *attaché* in the Intelligence Department, and ordered to revise the "Gazetteer" of the Kashmir frontier. Here was most congenial work, for it dealt with all the approaches to that mysterious land of Yarkand and Kashgar which had so fascinated me at Dharmsala, and of which I had so often heard in connection with my uncle, the explorer. The fine library of books of travel in every part of Asia which was now at my disposal was yet another incentive to exploration, and many were the schemes which I revolved in my mind that summer of 1885 at Simla.

But the immediate cause of my first big journey was Mr. James.* It was by the greatest piece of good fortune that we came together. We met first at a dinner-party, and the conversation between us turned on Yarkand and Kashgar. (I would beg my readers thoroughly to impress upon their minds the position of these places, for their names will frequently be mentioned throughout this book.) I naturally waxed eloquent on the subject, and a week or two afterwards we again met at dinner, and again talked about the same places. And then, after a few days, on one Sunday afternoon Mr. James walked into my house and asked me if I would go a journey with him. Nothing was said as to where we

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