

were gathered, in preparation for our plunge into the mountains. We were now among the outlying spurs of the great barrier which divides the plains of India from those of Turkestan. Of this barrier the nearest range is called the Kuen-lun, the centre the Mustagh or Karakoram, and the furthest the Himalayas.

On leaving Kugiar we headed directly into these mountains, and were fairly launched on our voyage of exploration, though the first three marches had been traversed by members of the Forsyth Mission. We crossed an easy pass named the Tupa Dawan, and then ascended a valley in which were a few huts and some felt tents belonging to a race called Pakhpu, whom Dr. Bellew, the skilled ethnologist who accompanied the Forsyth Mission, considered to be of a pure Aryan stock. They were very fair, and their features fine and regular.

Leaving this valley, I crossed the Chiraghsaldi Pass, over the main ridge of the Kuen-lun Mountains. The only aneroid I had was unfortunately not made to register up to such heights as the pass, but I computed its height at about sixteen thousand feet. We were now getting into the heart of our work, and as I looked out from the summit of that pass on to the labyrinth of pathless mountains, rising into tier after tier of snowy peaks, I felt that there was some real stern work before us, and that each one of our little party would have to brace himself up to do his very best if we wished to accomplish the task that had been set us. There were now no paths and no inhabitants. We were alone among the mountains, and it was not only the difficulties which they might present that we had to contend against; we also had to be ever-watchful against an attack from the Kanjuti robbers, who had for many years infested these parts, issuing from their strongholds in Hunza, and raiding on caravans trading between Yarkand and Leh by the Karakoram route, and even levying blackmail from villages in the Kugiar district. Three of the