

we were running a risk in starting without our supplies complete, but the exploration of such a region could not be accomplished without running risks of some sort. Camels in sufficient numbers could not be obtained, and it was therefore necessary to make the most of those that were available, and trust to the second instalment of supplies reaching us as arranged for.

The ponies and their equipment having been thoroughly looked to, the pack-saddles repaired, and the loads properly made up, we left Shahidula on September 3, leaving behind the seventeen Kashmir sepoy, who were to stay for a month at Shahidula to protect the trade route, and then return to Leh. The party now consisted of six Gurkhas (guard); one orderly surveyor; one interpreter (an Argoon of Leh); one cook (a Ladaki); two Balti raft-men; five Kirghiz. Total, sixteen men, with nineteen ponies (including one riding-pony for myself) and thirteen camels. The Kirghiz all rode ponies in addition.

We struck off westward from Shahidula, following the route which Hayward had taken on his exploration of the upper course of the Yarkand River. We followed the valley of a river on which were several patches of fine grazing, and till the previous year had been well inhabited, but was now deserted on account of Kanjuti raids. This valley is known by the name of Khal Chuskun. Chuskun in Turki means "resting-place," and Khal is the name of a holy man from Bokhara who is said to have rested here many years ago. The mountains bounding the north of this valley are very bold and rugged, with fine upstanding peaks and glaciers; but the range to the south, which Hayward calls the Aktagh Range, was somewhat tame in character, with round mild summits and no glaciers. The Sokh-bulak is an easy pass, and from its summit to the east could be seen the snowy range of the eastern Kuenlun Mountains, while to the west appeared a rocky mass of mountains culminating in three fine snowy peaks which