of the Surakwat stream towards the Aghil Pass is in parts very
difficult, as the valley narrows to a gorge, and at two places we
had to spend some hours in building up a staircase to enable
the ponies to get round steep rocky cliffs. The numerous
boulders, too, with which the valley bottom is strewn, made it
very trying work for the ponies; but we eventually emerged
on to a small plain, at the further end of which the main
summits of the Aghil Range rise up like a wall in front of one
rugged and uncompromising. Here we passed the same rock
behind which, in 1887, I had spent the night lying in the open,
as I had always been obliged to do during my passage of these
mountains, for fear of attack from Kanjutis, should I make my
presence known by setting up a tent. Retracing my former
footsteps on September 11, we crossed the remarkable de-
pression in the range which is known as the Aghil Pass.

So far we had been travelling over known ground, though
I was the only European who had been over this pass before;
but now there was some new exploration to be done. I have
before described the wonderful view that is to be obtained from
the summit of the Aghil Pass—snowy peaks, the grim wall of
mountains, and the glaciers, like some huge dragons, creeping
down the valley bottoms. Away to the eastward, up a glacier
which stretched across the valley of the Oprang River at our
feet, Wali the guide had told me there was a way to Baltistan
by a pass called the Saltoro. No one, apparently, had crossed
this pass for many years, and it was more than likely that it
would prove just as difficult as the Mustagh Pass had been;
but before going on to the Shimshal I thought I might well
employ a week or ten days in seeing what it was really like.
We descended to the valley of the Oprang River, and camped
at a spot where some little grass could be obtained, and here
I left my Gurkha escort with the heavy baggage and went on
with Shahzad Mir, my orderly, Shukar Ali, and a Balti. We
took five ponies and ten days' supplies, including fuel, and