

We were now once more on the Indian side of the great watershed of Central Asia, and all we had to do was to push on as rapidly as we could to India. We reached Gilgit on October 13, and after a few days' halt with Colonel Durand, who was still carrying on his work there, pressed on to Kashmir. Two years before, I had crossed the passes in that direction in the middle of December, and it did not strike me that there could be any difficulty at this season, when we were not yet through October. But this year the winter had closed in unusually early; there had been very heavy snowstorms, and consequently, when we came to the Burzil, a pass thirteen thousand four hundred feet in height, we found that a detachment of Gurkhas coming over it had suffered very severely. The evening we arrived there this detachment of two hundred men was expected, and we prepared dinner for the officers. But it was not till nearly one o'clock at night that any arrived, and then we heard that the mules carrying their baggage had stuck in the snow; the officers and men had worked for the whole of the day and halfway through the night to get them along, but the poor animals and their unfortunate native drivers—all of them, animals and men, from the plains of India, and unacquainted with cold and snow—had not been able to perform the task. The animals had to be unloaded in the narrow path through the snow, and left there till morning, while the men got what shelter they could in the woods farther on, near the camping-ground. When Captain Barratt, the officer in command, arrived, he complained of a pain in his foot, and this proved to be a severe frost-bite, which laid him up for nearly six months, and through which he lost three toes. Altogether there were one hundred and thirty-two cases of frost-bite among the men and followers of that detachment, who, coming up suddenly from the heat of India, were unable to withstand the unexpected cold.