

Next day Davison and I, with our sturdy Yarkand ponies now inured to cold and snow, crossed the pass without mishap, and, finding the ponies still had work in them, we were able to accomplish another march on the opposite side as well.

Two days later we crossed our last pass, the Tragbal, eleven thousand four hundred feet, and from the summit saw once again the lovely vale of Kashmir spread out at our feet, and looked out on the pine-clad slopes, the cultivated village lands, the placid lake, and the distant range of snowy peaks beyond. All was deep in snow at the summit of the pass, and the cold intense in the early morning, but at each step we descended towards the valley of Kashmir the air grew warmer. The icy blasts of the Pamir passes, and the gloomy frosts of the Burzil, were now left well behind us. We discarded our fur cloaks, and, as we approached the valley, even our coats also; and then, as evening was drawing in, we reached the shores of the lake and threw ourselves into one of the luxurious Kashmir gondolas which was awaiting us.

Another journey had been accomplished; all the difficulties and all the anxieties of it were now over. For seventeen months I had been away from civilization, and cut off from intercourse with my friends, and now once more I was returning to all the pleasures which that can give. As the sun was declining towards the horizon, and casting the long shadows from the mountains over the still waters of the lake, we pushed off from the shore, and were paddled smoothly and quietly over its unruffled surface. No more exertion on our part was now necessary; all we had to do was to recline luxuriously in the boat, while we were borne swiftly and easily over the water. The sun set in a glow of glory. The snows of the mountain summits were tinged with ruddy hues, the fleecy clouds overhead were suffused in ever-changing colours; then slowly the peaks in the distant east grew grey, the warm tints faded