

Except when crossing the Shandur Pass—and even that was not very exhilarating—we were always at the bottom of narrow valleys, with lofty mountains overhanging and enclosing them in. Not a blade of anything green was to be seen, for all that was not buried in snow was withered by the frost. All the trees were bare and sombre-looking, and the mud-built villages damp and cheerless. Chitral itself we found to be, not a town or even a large village, but a collection of little hamlets scattered over a stretch of cultivated land about three miles in length and a mile and a half in width, at the northern end of which, close by the river, stood a small fort, which formed the residence of the Mehtar. This was Chitral, a place at that time almost unknown to English people.

Our first month or two in Chitral was certainly not enlivening. We lived in a native house, without windows or chimneys, and with only a hole in the roof by which to let in the light (and the snow and the cold) and to let out the smoke (and the heat) of a fire lit in the middle of the floor. There was little to do out-of-doors, except to take a walk one day up and the next day down the valley, and the weeks wore by with monotonous regularity. But as spring came on the whole aspect changed. Through January and February we had frequent falls of snow, and the thermometer at night ranged from twelve degrees Fahrenheit to the freezing-point. But in March the snow cleared away from the valley bottom and the lower hillsides, the new grass began to sprout, the young corn-shoots appeared in the fields, little purple primulas and a beautiful yellow and crimson tulip bloomed out on the river-banks; then the willow trees were tinged with green as the young leaves budded out. By the beginning of April the apricot trees burst into blossom, and the valley was covered with clouds of white bloom, and then, as day by day the sunshine grew warmer, every tree—the magnificent planes, the poplars, the drooping willow, and the orchards of apricots,