

CHAPTER XVII.

CHITRAL AND HER RULERS.

AT the end of May Mr. Robertson and Lieutenant Bruce returned to Gilgit, and I was left in Chitral with Lieutenant Gordon and his fifty Sikhs. During the summer months, when we could meet at polo and in various out-of-door amusements, I was able to see more of the Mehtar and his people than had been possible during the winter. Three or four times a week the Mehtar and his principal men used to come to our house and sit out under the great plane trees in the garden for a good two hours, talking over every kind of subject. In our garden, as in most other gardens in Chitral, an earthen platform had been made under the shade of the plane trees. Here we spread carpets, and placed chairs for the Mehtar and ourselves; twenty or thirty of the chief men were allowed to sit round on the carpets, and the Mehtar's guards and servants stood about in the garden. Then tea, biscuits, sweetmeats, sherbet, and ices were served round to the Mehtar and his principal men, and conversation was carried on upon any topic which might happen to arise. I could not speak Chitrali sufficiently well to converse in that language, so the native political assistant, Jemadar Rab Nawaz Khan, a native officer in the Bengal cavalry, who had been resident in the country for nearly eight years, used to interpret. Generally I brought down illustrated newspapers or books, passed them round, and talked upon the various subjects which were suggested by the pictures.