

Habibúla, who was elected King of Khotan when the Chinese were turned out of the country, sent messengers to try and open up this route in 1864. They were seized by the Chang-pa and compelled to return to Khotan with the threat that any subsequent explorers would be put to death. The inhabitants of Keria and Polu go as far south as Ghubolik to procure sulphur. They also go west of this towards the head of the Yurung-Kash (or Ilchi) River where they search for gold and jade, but it would appear that although the Khotanese claim the country up to Lake Yeshil Kul, the head of the Kiria River, as their boundary, yet practically from fear of the Chang-pas they never go quite so far to the south. On the other hand the Chang-pas who probably have equal reason to fear the Turks from the plains, would appear not to wander further north than Rikong Chumik, the ridge to the north of which separates their grazing grounds from plains on the north, through which flows a considerable stream, passed by the Pundit, asserted by his guide to be the head of the Yurung-Kash River.\* It would thus appear that owing to the mutual hostility of the two races there is a large tract of neutral ground which is never occupied by one or the other, extending from Rikong Chumik to Ghubolik; here the Pundit saw large herds of yák, antelope, and jungle sheep (*oves ammon*), which had apparently never been scared by the sight of man. Near Rikong Chumik were the remains of numerous huts; others were frequently seen along the road, but fortunately for the Pundit, he did not meet or see a single human being between Ghubolik and Noh, a distance of 244 miles, a circumstance which enabled him to complete his route survey up to Noh† without interruption.

The newly acquired knowledge of this road may perhaps lead to important practical results, but not until our relations with the Chinese Empire, and their too independent subordinates in Thibet, are placed on a more satisfactory footing than they are at present. It is apparent by combining the results of this survey with other information collected by the Survey Pundits during the past few years, that a road exists between the plains of Hindustan and Turkestan which entirely avoids the territories of the Maharaja of Cashmere, and which in the summer months may be traversed without once crossing snow, or without encountering one really difficult pass, such as we know to exist on the Karakorum and Changchenmo routes. Leaving the plains of India at the ancient city of Najibabad (between Hurdwar and Moradabad), the starting point of the old Royal Road stated by Moorcroft to have crossed these same mountain systems, a good road about 210 miles in length, and only crossing one low pass,‡ leads to the Niti Pass (16,676 feet high) over the main Himalayan range. Descending from the Niti Pass, due north into the Sutlej valley, and crossing that river at Totling (12,200 feet) by the iron suspension bridge still existing (said according to local tradition to have been constructed by Alexander the Great), and crossing by the Bogo La (19,210 feet) into the Indus valley at Gartokh (14,240 feet), the road would then follow that river to Demchok.§ Thence it would go over the Jara Pass due north to Rudokh and Noh, and by the newly surveyed route to Polu and Khotan.

Estimating the distance from Najibabad to the Niti Pass at 210 miles, thence to Noh at 275, and from Noh to Khotan (*viá* Keria) 446 miles, we have a total distance of 931 miles

\* In the map which has been prepared for submission with this report I have not shown this stream as flowing into Yurung-Kash, but I think it not at all improbable that it may find its way through a gap which I have left in the Kuen Luen (just between the letters E. and N. of Luen). I would have inserted it, but it hardly appears consistent with Mr. Johnson's statements as to what he saw when ascending these Kuen Luen peaks in 1865, although, on the other hand, the fact that the river he crossed at Karangolak was a very large and rapid stream would indicate that it probably came from a considerable distance; knowing also as a fact how the Kárakásh cuts through the same range at Shahidula and how extremely difficult it is to form an accurate idea of any mountain range when viewed from a single point, I am inclined to regret that I did not show this stream in my map as the head waters of the Yurung-Kash or River of Khotan.

† From Noh he tried to get to Rudokh, but was not permitted to do so; in fact the inhabitants tried to compel him to return by the way he had come, and it was with great difficulty that he at last got permission to go to Leh direct. Anticipating a search by the first people he should encounter, he had, when nearing the village of Noh, concealed his instruments and papers in a bush. He was duly searched, but of course nothing was found, and he afterwards succeeded in again getting possession of his valuables. In Thibet the great difficulty encountered by persons entering in disguise is always on the frontier, where the examination is very strict. When once allowed to pass into the interior of the country there is little to fear.

‡ The Langar Pass 6,500 feet high which is on the 3rd day's march from the plains.

§ A more direct route exists from Totling *viá* Dankhar to Demchok.