

By the present system the animals employed in this traffic are subjected to an unnatural strain, being overladen and forced frequently to carry loads not only through from Yarkand to Ladakh, and *vice versa*, without rest, but being pushed on to India where they arrive in an exhausted condition.

The trade with Turkestan, on its present footing even, is dependant on the carriage available; it is consequently incumbent to study closely the best means of developing and improving the system of carriage. Every encouragement and even pecuniary assistance, if required, should be given to carriers, who should be protected by regulations indicating—

*I.—The weight to be carried by each animal.

†II.—The amount of compensation to be made to the carrier on account of loss of cattle during the journey when travelling out of season.

The profits which fall to the trader will allow of the carrier being more liberally treated, and of the beast of burden meeting with a greater amount of consideration than has hitherto been shown to him.

The trader is protected by the carrier engaging to convey his loads to their destination at the risk of whatever loss in cattle.

The present difficulties in the matter of carriage are abnormal, and given a measure of encouragement, they will be removed by the actual requirements of the trade.

In crossing the Karakorum from Yarkand during the present season, every animal belonging to the British Mission was equipped with a double sack containing mixed forage for 4 days (consisting of bhoosa, chopped lucerne grass, and grain weighing some 30 lbs.), this double sack when thrown over the saddle and under the load protected the animal's ribs if properly adjusted, and the small store of provision guaranteed him against absolute starvation when crossing the Karakorum.

The additional weight of 30 lbs. thus imposed had no evil effect. A Kerai Kush in crossing from Yarkand will invariably place numdahs in a similar position upon which he intends realizing a profit in Ladakh: these however distress the animal and add to the weight of the load unnecessarily.

The construction of rough shelter houses along the Karakorum route, and the cultivation of additional grain and fodder (lucerne) in the villages of Ladakh are desiderata which would materially promote the traffic.

A proposal to establish an annual fair at Leh, the capital of Ladakh, has been made.

Leh is half-way between Yarkand and the Punjab: it was of old an emporium of trade, and with a little arrangement might be made an entrepôt of great importance. There are many merchants who would travel as far as Leh, both from India and from Yarkand, who would not care to undertake the whole journey involving the long absence from home already alluded to. Traders from India would be able to take their goods to Leh on their own mules or ponies, and on camels too, and return home the same year with the exchange commodities.

The months of August and September appear to be the best months for holding a fair at Leh. Traders visiting the fair, from either side, would thus have time to dispose of their goods and return the same season to their homes; or if their goods were not disposed of advantageously at Leh, they might pass on to Yarkand or India as the case might be.

Any one who has studied the customs of Central Asia must have noticed the very extensive resort to the system of fairs which prevails. It is a custom which commends itself at once to the mind of the Turk, and it was with a knowledge of the habits of people inhabiting those countries with which Russia desired to establish trade relations that a fair was established at Nijni Novgorod.

* 2 maunds 32 seers is the load accepted by carriers leaving the Punjab and Yarkand. Goods at either extremity of the route are made up to this weight: it would be impolitic to enforce the breaking up and redistribution of loads in Ladakh, consequently this appears to be the best load, but it should not be exceeded.

† A proportion only of the value, according to the season and difficulties in obtaining supply; Rupees 5 or 10 as the case may be for each horse.