

CHAPTER XI.

Memorandum on the use of sheep carrying supplies across the Karakorum by Captain J. Biddulph.

I LEFT Tankse on 18th September, taking with me thirty sheep carrying loads of grain and flour. Wishing merely to test their marching capabilities, I looked upon the supplies they carried as extra, and their loads remained intact till within four marches of Shahidoolla, when I was forced to commence using them.

The Tartars usually make their sheep carry a load of 32lbs., and march seven or eight miles a day only, making frequent halts; as, however, I expected to be marching hard at times, I put only, a load of 20lbs. on each sheep. Beyond this I took no care of them, and they simply took their chance.

A great part of the route was over rough and stony ground, but only one sheep broke down, though many of them showed signs of footsoreness at times.

The loads secured by breast and breach ropes ride well, sinking into the fleece, and not being liable to shift.

On fair ground where they travelled with a broad front they marched at the rate of $1\frac{3}{4}$ mile an hour; a large number would no doubt travel slower, and much must depend on the breadth of the road.

The greatest difficulty they had to contend with was crossing streams, and while marching in the Karakash Valley they were sometimes obliged to cross the river three or four times in a day. Not only were their loads liable to become damaged, but the weight of water hanging in their fleeces, and on several occasions freezing, greatly impeded progress.

On the days on which they had no grass, they had literally nothing to eat, as they refused grain, not being accustomed to it.

One man was sufficient to manage the lot, and two men, I should say, could easily drive and manage an hundred.

On arrival in camp they were unloaded, and turned out to shift for themselves till dark, when they were herded for the night.

The fact that a flock of sheep carrying 20lbs. loads should be able to march 330 miles in a month with only one casualty, through a country in which forage is always scanty, and at a very inclement season of the year, is remarkable. After the first march the elevation was never less than 11,000 feet, and the thermometer at night sank to 15° and 16° below zero. The sheep, however, apparently did not feel either cold or elevation. Future exploring parties on the Karakorum will, I feel certain, find a flock of sheep a most useful addition to their camp. Not only are they very easily looked after, but they can feed themselves as they go along, which ponies cannot do, and can pick up a subsistence on the scanty pasture grounds and among the rocks where horses would starve. Besides this, when their loads are disposed of, they can themselves be eaten.

The accompanying table will show the particulars of the marches they made. I was accompanied the whole time by a Survey Pundit, who paced the distance each day.

Table showing marches taken by a flock of thirty sheep carrying loads of 20lbs.

MARCH.	DATE.	MILES.	REMARKS.
1873.			
Tankse to Tchur-ka-talab ...	18th September ...	14	
Lukung ...	19th " ...	$7\frac{1}{4}$	
Chagra ...	21st " ...	8	