

plan would act as an incentive to Ramzan and his two companions to recover the mules speedily. During this march we followed for most of the way a freshly used trail, but whether ponies or kyang had last used it we could not be certain, nor were the caravan men able to enlighten us owing to the common belief that the natives of this country could not afford the luxury of shoes for their ponies.

We were not left long in doubt of the presence of inhabitants, for, early in the morning of the second day after we had left Camp 31, Nurdin arrived with the news that the day after our departure a few Chukpas had suddenly visited camp, and having seized and bound the two men, had looted the baggage. Fortunately, photographic films, packed in hermetically sealed tins containing half a gross each, were not considered of much value, matches, rice, and suttoo being more prized by the Chukpas. I have but little doubt that the guards left behind were far too frightened when the robbers appeared to offer any resistance, for only two visitors were seen and no mention was made of any attempt on the part of Ramzan or Nurdin to protect the baggage. As there was still no news of the eleven mules, we now very naturally considered that the Chukpas were in possession of them, and we promptly held a council of war to settle the best plan of operations to regain the food stolen from camp as well as the much prized and indispensable beasts of burden. As the missing animals were undoubtedly the best we had and free from sores, it was considered far more likely that they had been stolen than that they had strayed, notwithstanding their well-known propensity to stray even when in the midst of good grazing.