

CHAPTER VII

Preparations at Srinagar—Start from Bandipoora—Trouble with Khalik—Trial of Khalik—Stay at Gilgit—Hunza—Mutinous pony men—Journey to the Pamirs—Frost-bitten—Difficulty of surveying in winter—Trouble with natives—Visit to Cobbold.

LIKE other British officers smitten with the exploration fever, I had had difficulty in obtaining sufficient leave of absence from my regiment, but in March, 1897, owing to troubles arising from an unhealthy liver, I found it necessary to resign my commission and quit India for good.

The immediate purpose of the first portion of this journey for which I now prepared, was the exploration and careful survey of that part of the valley of the Yarkand River extending from the west end of Raskam to the neighbourhood of Yarkand. The most recent map of this region with which I was provided was Lord Curzon's, published in the *Geographical Journal* for July, 1896. On this carefully compiled map, showing the Pamirs and adjacent country, a long stretch of the Yarkand River is represented by dotted lines whose general direction is about north-north-east, and I resolved to investigate what truth there was in this doubtful representation. Some Europeans had crossed the river at Langar, and Grombchefsky had crossed it at Sanglash, but no other traveller had followed its course below the west end of Raskam. For the purpose of this investiga-