

The guide, going on in front, made his pony smash through the ice, and thus prepared an easier passage for me. Dalbir Rai's pony, however, being allowed to take his own course, mounted on the ice which broke up into large patches, swaying under their load like planks in a rough sea. Dalbir Rai seemed a tender, sensitive man who had not sufficient strength of will for the guidance even of a pony. When I remonstrated with him for not taking the prepared course, he thought it a sufficient reply that the pony wished to go another way, and he evidently felt aggrieved at my remarks. I did not reach Oprang till about half-past eight in the evening; but two of the men, over-confident in their ability to find the route, were quite belated, one of them having to spend the night in the open air, while the other was sheltered by some Kirghiz.

A few days were devoted to sport in the neighbourhood of the Kungerab Pass, where shikar were plentiful, and, in the meantime, Islam, a Ladaki, was sent to reconnoitre the route *viâ* the Oprang Pass to Raskam. There had again been difficulty in finding a man to accompany the Ladaki, the stereotyped reason, that the route had been destroyed by earthquakes, being strengthened by the rumour that neither grass nor fuel could be found there. The opposition of the Tajiks made me the more determined to go to the west end of Raskam, and eventually a native was found to accompany Islam. The efforts of this guide seemed less directed to finding whether the route was open than to proving that it was not; but Islam remained faithful, and at length brought back the welcome news that the route was perfectly easy, with plenty of grass and fuel as far as Issok Bulok (Hot Springs), the furthest point he had been required to reach.