

official duties. The Tir villagers could not afford so large a bribe as the Kirghiz had given, so the interpreter waited and waited till the matter dropped out of sight, and the Kirghiz gained their point. Whatever might have been the merits of either case, I plainly could not interfere between the Tir villagers and the Chinese; and on my telling them so they expressed keen disappointment.

My next excursion was to the Sandal Pass, where Ram Singh sketched while I took observations at Keshna. When my work was done I sat in front of the camp-fire and chatted with the men, asking them questions and now and then making commonplace statements, which they were far too knowing to accept. It was interesting to notice that the more circumscribed the knowledge of the men, the more incredulous they were, showing an intellectual honesty which, in these days, was refreshing. Two of my Ladakis told me that they had never been further south than Kashmir, and they were as innocent of modern improvements as were the men of Tir, who had never been beyond their own valleys. They might possibly have heard of railway trains, but that these were driven by steam they could not believe. Bullocks or ponies hidden by the carriages might, they thought, somehow drag them along, but beyond this perfectly rational position these children of Nature would not go. While they rejected my statements, their looks said more plainly than words, "Do you suppose that we are fools?"

In a third excursion we bivouacked in the main valley, which presented no features of sufficient interest to be here described. Ram Singh and I had now seen and surveyed the region; we had ascended the Yarkand River from Tir to a point almost in sight of Sanglash, and from Bazar Dara downwards, except for a few miles, we were familiar with that portion of the river. It was therefore