

The only living beings that inhabit this Arctic waste are big marmots. Sitting on the top of their burrows as if to warm themselves in the sun, they did their best to attract attention by shrill whistling, only to disappear with lightning speed at the approach of danger. It took some time before my little fox-terrier realised this, and refrained from spending his breath in vain attempts to rush the provoking animals. 'Dash,' or 'Yolchi Beg' ("Sir Traveller"), as he had been renamed since I took to Turki with Mirza, proved true to his name. He marched as cheerily over the miles of snow as on earlier wanderings through the dusty dry Punjab plains or in the dripping jungle of Sikkim. My Turki servants soon grew fond of 'Yolchi Beg,' and, being untrammelled by the caste conventions of India, never hesitated to show their affection for my faithful companion.

It was one o'clock when I arrived at Chillum Chauki, the first rest-house on the Astor side of the pass, having left the snow behind about two miles before. All the ponies came in safely except one, the absence of which was soon noticed when I was looking out for breakfast. The pony carrying the kitchen 'Kiltas' had lagged behind, and I became painfully aware that something had gone wrong when hour after hour passed in vain expectation. My Surveyor, who had marched in the rear, brought news of the animal having broken down in the softening snow, and though I at once despatched coolies to its assistance it was not till after six in the evening that Mirza turned up with his charge. As if to console me for the delay in bodily comforts I got in the evening the cheerful news of the occupation of Pretoria from Mr. M., the road engineer, who arrived at the rest-house from a shooting excursion. News travels fast along the telegraph line, and although there is, apart from the Political Agent at Gilgit, no subscriber to Reuter's messages this side of the Burzil, telegraph masters in Astor and their friends were evidently well informed of what was happening far away in South Africa.