

For afternoon tea my hosts took me to a pretty 'Marg' on the top of the ridge above their camp. From this height the Indus Valley, in its barrenness of rock and sand, could be seen descending far away towards Chilas and Darel. The day will come when this natural route to the Indian plains will be open again as it was in old times. Then the last bit of terra incognita along the Indus, which now extends from Chilas down to Amb, will be accessible, while the difficulties inseparable from a line of transport crossing the great barriers of the Kashmir ranges will no longer have to be faced.

On the morning of the 10th of June I took leave of my kind hosts and hurried down towards Bunji to catch up my camp. As I descended the defile of the Astor River, where the road leads along precipitous cliffs and past shingly ravines, the heat rose in a marked degree. I could well realise what the terrors of this part of the route, known as Hatu Pir, absolutely waterless and exposed to the full force of the sun, must have been for the Kashmiri coolies of old days. On the eleven miles which brought me down to the level of the Indus close to the point where the Astor River joins it, I did not meet with a single traveller. Equally desolate was the ride from Ramghat, where the road crosses the Astor River, to Bunji, some eight miles higher up on the Indus. The broad rocky plain which stretches from the bank of the great river to the foot of the mountains showed scarcely a trace of vegetation. The radiation of the sun's rays was intense, and I was glad to reach by one p.m. the shelter of the Bunji Bungalow. The neighbouring fort is still held by some detachments of Kashmir troops, though the ferry over the Indus which it once guarded has become disused since the construction of the new road. During the hot hours I spent at Bunji there was little to tempt me outside. A hazy atmosphere hung over the valley and deprived me of the hoped-for view of Nangaparbat, which, rising fully 22,000