

fluttered gaily in the wind, just as if they marked the approach to a Buddhist establishment in Sikkim or Ladak. The open view across the broad valley was most cheerful after the gloomy confinement of the previous camping grounds. Far away to the north-west I even beheld a snowy ridge which clearly belonged to the watershed towards the Oxus. I felt at last that the Pamir was near.

At Misgar I was able to discharge the hardy hillmen who had carried our impedimenta over such trying ground without the slightest damage, and on the morning of June 27th I moved on with fresh transport. This consisted chiefly of ponies, as the route further on is open to baggage animals at all seasons. Though the road no longer offered special difficulties, it was tiring owing to the boulder-strewn wastes it crosses for a great part. At Topkhana, where there stands a half-ruined watch-tower amidst traces of former habitations and fields, I was met by a jolly-looking young Sarikoli, whose appearance and outfit at once showed that he came from Chinese territory. It was one of the soldiers of the 'Karaul' or guard kept by the Chinese on the Mintaka Pass who had been sent down to inquire as to my arrival. He carried a long matchlock with the gable-ended rest sticking out beyond it, an indispensable implement of the Celestial soldiery of the old type all through the empire. Ruddy-cheeked and clothed in fur cap, mighty boots, and a series of thick 'Chogas' or coats, the young fellow looked serviceable enough. Less so his matchlock, which had lost its breach-piece, and in the barrel of which a broken ramrod had stuck fast evidently for many a long day. He assured me that the expected yaks and ponies were already waiting for me, and tried to make himself as useful on the rest of the march as if he belonged to my following of Hunza levies.

In reality the frontier line seems of little consequence to the Wakhi herdsmen who live on either side of it. When after a march of over twelve miles I arrived at Murkushi, where