

When the yaks had been dragged down too, with much trouble, we began to make our way up the ravine. A wall of impassable rock, with a stretch of deep water at its foot, forced us soon to search for a ford to the opposite side. This we found, and thanks to the yaks, which waded splendidly in the ice-cold water undismayed by the rapid current, we managed to get safely across. The yak is a difficult animal to guide, even on the best ground; when in the water any attempt to control its movements would be useless. So it was with a feeling of relief that I noticed the instinctive care with which our yaks made their way from one convenient boulder to the other. The limpid water made it possible for them to see their way as much as to feel it.

On the left bank we had scarcely advanced a few hundred yards over jumbled masses of rock that had been swept down from the slopes above, when we were stopped again by a precipitous rock-face washed at its foot by the ominous blue water. To cross over to the opposite bank, where a stretch of boulder-strewn ground might have allowed an advance, was quite impossible. The yak we drove into the water to test its depth was soon obliged to swim, and had we attempted the passage we should have had to follow its example. In order to effect a crossing here with the needful baggage a raft or boat was manifestly indispensable. But how could we secure it in this forlorn region, where wood was practically unobtainable, and where the people had never even heard of that most useful implement, the 'Massak,' or inflated skin?

The only chance of progress left was to take to the crags above us, and to trust that further on a descent might be found again to a practicable portion of the river-bed. After a difficult climb of some 500 feet I managed to bring myself and my men safely to a narrow flat ledge, but the yaks had to be left below. We followed the ledge for some hundreds of yards until it ended at the flank of a ravine that would have defied any cragsman. A careful search for a point