

care for the journey back to India. To take him along with myself to Europe was out of the question. Equal as my little companion had proved to all hardships of mountains and desert, it would have been cruel to subject him to weeks of a wearisome journey by rail merely to leave him in the end to the confinement of quarantine on reaching England. Yet I confess I felt the separation from the devoted comrade of all my travels, until we joyfully met again one November night on a Punjab railway platform. He had ailed a little before my return, but soon picked up his spirits again—only to pine away in the end when my scientific task had forced me once more to proceed to England. Fate favoured him in the place of his death, for he breathed his last in Alpine Kashmir, which he loved like his master.

On May 29, 1901, exactly a year after leaving Srinagar, I started from Kashgar for Osh, the nearest Russian town in Farghana. My caravan was small, six sturdy ponies carrying my antiquities, while two more sufficed for a *tente d'abri* and my much reduced camp outfit and personal baggage. Besides the men attending to the hired animals only Sadak Akhun accompanied me. Safely removed from the evil spirits of the desert (*recte* the temptation to take too large doses of 'Charas'), he had become again a fairly sober character. The caravan route from Kashgar to Osh, across the Alai mountains, is reckoned at eighteen marches. Anxious to save time, I managed to cover it in ten days, keeping in the saddle or on foot from early morning until nightfall.

Owing to the exceptional rain of the previous weeks and the rapid melting of the snows, the feeders of the Kizil-su, which the route crosses repeatedly before reaching the Russian frontier towards the Alai, were all in flood. The passage of my precious loads of antiques across the swollen streams was hence a daily anxiety. However, with care and some good fortune we managed to negotiate each of these obstacles without a single box getting drenched, and on the evening of the fifth day I arrived at Irkeshtam, the Russian frontier post. Never have I felt so much the significance of a political barrier. For it seemed Europe indeed into