

near Peshawar through the Pathan tribal territory of Swat and Dir into Chitral, and thence across the Hindukush to the uppermost Oxus Valley and the Afghan Pamirs. My lamented chief and friend, Sir Harold A. Deane, K.C.S.I., that truly great Warden of the Marches, then Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province, whose kind help and interest never failed me, had readily agreed to my project. A political obstacle which I had reason to consider very serious was removed more easily than I had ventured to hope; for H.M. Habibullah, King of Afghanistan, on being approached through the Indian Foreign Office, had granted me, with a promptness for which I shall always retain sincere gratitude, permission to cross a portion of his territory not visited by any European since the days of the Pamir Boundary Commission.

But before reaching Afghan soil beyond the Hindukush I should have first to get into Chitral, and the misgivings entertained locally as to the possibility of safely crossing with baggage the difficult Lowarai Pass, leading from Dir to Chitral, then deeply buried under snow, still interposed a formidable barrier. I had the strongest reasons to apprehend the results of any delay in this crossing; for if I could not reach the headwaters of the Chitral River before May ended, I should run a very serious risk of finding its narrow uppermost gorges above Mastuj, which give access to the Oxus watershed on the Baroghil, closed completely to traffic by the melting snows of the spring. The official correspondence on this subject continuing for months had grown imposing. In the end its file was quite bulky, though much of it consisted of telegrams on the thinnest paper! So when April arrived without any assurance as to an early date being allowed for the Lowarai crossing, I felt it high time to leave Kashmir for the Frontier and to make personal efforts to clear the way for an early start.

A truly bright day, the first of the season, preceded my departure from Srinagar early on April 2, 1906. But the trees and fields I passed on the road down to Baramula, Nature's ancient 'Gate of the Kingdom,' were still