

needing a large number of load-carrying men would be likely to result in serious loss of life. Vainly did I assert that my Alpine experience would necessarily make me take all needful precautions. As a last resort, I had told Colonel Dunlop-Smith of my difficulty, and that kindly *deus ex machina* offered to write a note in the right sense to the cautious Guardian of the Passes. Whether it was this friendly note from the Viceroy's camp or a mere lucky coincidence, I had scarcely been at Abbottabad for twelve hours when a long telegram announced the receipt of good reports from Chitral. They seemed to have cleared away, as if by magic, most of those formidable snow barriers on the Lowarai and of the still more cumbersome responsibilities.

It was as well to have my mind eased on this point; for the work awaiting me at Abbottabad was heavy for the short time in hand. There was the checking of all equipment articles, instruments, and stores; their safe distribution and packing into mule trunks to make loads of the right weight for the difficult tracks ahead; the preparation of exact lists; not to mention writing work of all sorts which an Indian official can never hope to escape from—not even in Central-Asian deserts. It scarcely meant any lessening of this initial strain that I was now being joined by my Indian assistants. The first to arrive was worthy Naik Ram Singh, the fine-looking Sikh corporal of the First (Prince of Wales's Own) Sappers and Miners, who, through the kind offices of my friend Colonel J. E. Dickie, R.E., Commanding Royal Engineers on the N.W. Frontier, had been allowed by the Military Department to volunteer for my expedition. When he had paid me a visit in my Kaghan camp the previous summer, his look of physical strength and cheerful disposition, and his hereditary skill as a 'Mistri' or carpenter, seemed to show him specially suited to act as 'the handy man' whom I should need. I had taken care to make it clear to him that the task for which he had volunteered, and for which he was to receive substantial compensation in the shape of a salary about five times as big as what he would be entitled to in the way of pay and allowances even when employed on field service outside India, implied