

I bade farewell to Malakand and its hospitable 'political' guardian. The nine miles down to Chakdara, by the splendid military road quite Roman in its breadth and solidity, were covered within an hour. Glimpses only could I get of those sites of hard fighting in 1895-97 near Khar, Batkhela, Amandara, and of the pretty side valleys of Shahkot and Charkotli, where I had once explored interesting old ruins. Chakdara Fort (Fig. 2), on the grim old rocks which Nature has set to guard the passage across the Swat River, had changed little since I last enjoyed its shelter soon after the siege. But instead of the Afridis and Sikhs who had then so bravely defended it, I found stalwart men from Oudh, the 7th Rajputs, forming its garrison. Hospitable reception awaited me here, too, in spite of short notice and the exceptional demands upon the limited accommodation available. General Sir Edmund Barrow, commanding the Peshawar Division, with his staff had just arrived on inspection. My evening passed most pleasantly in the Mess, a simple room but gorgeously adorned with the regiment's 'art acquisitions' from Peking. If any, the brave Rajputs who first relieved the Legations had a right to display such exquisite loot. To me it seemed like an invitation from the distant Cathay I was bound for. Heartily glad, too, I was for the chance which had allowed me at this outpost to meet again the distinguished and far-travelled general who had more than once shown kind interest in my explorations. I owed gratitude to him, also, as the original author of that excellent guide to all the mountains between Oxus and Indus, the confidential *Hindukush Gazetteer* of the Indian Intelligence Department.

The morning of April 28th found me busy with letters from daybreak and then supervising the distribution of the twelve mule-loads to which our baggage was to be restricted. By 11 A.M. the wretched much-belated cook was at last safely delivered under a Levy escort from Dargai, alive and well, but looking distinctly crestfallen. Half an hour later my caravan filed out of the Fort gate, and I, too, soon cantered after it, buoyed up by kind wishes of luck and by thoughts of the freedom before me.