

## CHAPTER III

### ACROSS THE LOWARAI

MAY 3rd, when I escaped from my prison-shelter at Dir, was a gloriously clear day, and as we drew nearer to Gujar, the last summer grazing-ground at the foot of the Lowarai Pass, some 7800 feet above the sea, my spirits rose rapidly. In the tiny hamlets lower down the fruit-trees and hedges were just in blossom, while above the first shoots of grass were only beginning to sprout near the banks of avalanche snow (Fig. 3). To Mirga, the last hamlet, where Captain Knollys, the Assistant Political Agent for Chitral, was caught early in December of the previous year by an avalanche and, though nearly buried himself, by heroic exertions saved his party, the inhabitants had not yet returned. But I had already been met by a large contingent of willing carriers from Kashkar, Kolandi, Miana, who were to help in taking the baggage across (Fig. 6).

I had been warned of the grave reluctance with which the local people attempt a crossing before June. But in reality everything seemed to show that, with the peculiar indifference or ignorance which clings to Pathans in all matters of snowcraft, these hillmen would not have needed much temptation even for a crossing two days earlier, had I been prepared to indulge in so foolish a venture. It was but a fresh instance of the different aspect 'local opinion' on the Frontier assumes, according to whether it is tested on the spot or reported from a distance for official consumption.

Gujar consisted only of a tiny Levy post and some wretched huts half-crushed below that year's snow (Fig. 7). All men of the valley agreed that the snowfall had