

reached the crest just before me, and his Chitralis were most useful in helping my men down.

There was little temptation for any of them to tarry long on the precipitous snow slope which lay below the crest wall and only some 1200 feet farther down assumed an easier gradient. They all knew that in this avalanche couloir there lay buried the twenty-four unfortunate men who had been overwhelmed by falling masses of fresh snow in the preceding December, when the Mehtar of Chitral, returning from the Prince of Wales's reception at Peshawar, had insisted upon crossing in the face of a snowstorm. The loss of the seventeen ponies which perished on the same occasion appealed, perhaps, even more to the men's imagination; for human lives have never been valued high in this region. About half-way down this incline, which seemed almost too steep for glissading, we came upon the trail of a quite recent avalanche. According to the Native Assistant's statement it had descended early on the previous afternoon—just as I had expected might happen after the two wretched days spent in Dir.

Where the formidable snow-shoot from the pass was joined by some smaller gorges and the meeting masses of snow had thrown up a mighty barricade, I halted to let the whole convoy assemble. A dangerous place, the Chitralis called it, earlier in the season; but now the coagulated dark surface here and lower down in the gorge showed that it lay well beyond the actual avalanche zone. While I refreshed myself with cold tea and a hurried breakfast of sorts, the watching of the straggling parties behind afforded amusement. I only wished the light of the early morning in this confined debouchure had been strong enough to permit of a snapshot at my new cook. With three nimble Chitralis to support him he was brought down more like a log than an animate being.

The next three miles' descent to Ziarat seemed easy, though snow choked the bottom of the gorge to a great depth. The high snowy range which divides the main valley of the Chitral River from the Bashgal portion of Kafiristan, rose in glorious tints before me. The sides of