

In Ashret village, 4800 feet above the sea, it felt quite warm, and the hour or so it took to pack our loads on a miscellaneous crew of lean mules and ponies was anything but a rest. The Native Assistant had done his best to raise local transport. But in a territory where the maintenance of about two hundred Commissariat mules practically exhausts all available fodder resources, privately owned animals must have a bad time until the summer grazing on the mountains commences. Most willing and polite the Chitralis seemed compared with the sullen or jaunty Pathans whom we had been in contact with during the previous days; but all their bustling attention could not make loads stick on rickety riding saddles when every rope seemed to break. More than one of the poor animals would have broken down on the sixteen miles still to be covered to Drosh, or else have deposited its load down the 'Khud,' had not the Mehtar's officials sent to escort me managed always to produce some willing 'hands' to keep the loads going.

That I had stepped into a different world, racially and politically, was brought home to me by the interesting figures of my new local attendants. There was the energetic and lively son of the Hakim or governor of Drosh, with the looks of a somewhat unkempt young Celt, whose good-natured hustling and pushing the country folk seemed always ready to receive with respect and humility. Except for his curled-up felt cap, the national head covering of all 'Dards,' he had donned clothes cut in the European fashion but of Chitral homespun. Old Kurban, a regular factotum and guide for all Sahibs whom duty brings to Chitral, still wore the wide flowing brown Choga of the Chitral gentry and high red leather top-boots of local make (Fig. 17). But he had attached himself too long to the 'Sirkar's' interests—he had fought with Sir G. Robertson's escort during the Chitral siege—not to adopt divers Indian importations in the form of Sam Browne belt, etc. More useful for me was it that he had learned to talk, not fluently, it is true, but intelligibly, that queer jargon, the Sahibs' Hindustani. I readily attached him to my side as interpreter and fountainhead for local information.