

CHAPTER IV

IN CHITRAL

IN spite of the strongly pressed offers of further hospitality, I set out in the forenoon of May 5th from Drosh for the double march to the Chitral capital. I was eager to meet there Captain E. Knollys, the Assistant Political Agent, and to commence my antiquarian and anthropological enquiries. It was a long day's ride, some twenty-six miles by the road, and lengthened still further by the visit I paid to an inscribed rock on the left river-bank beyond Gairat. The sun shone from a specklessly clear sky all day, and its power was strong; for Kala Drosh lies only 4300 feet above the sea and Chitral but 600 feet higher. But in spite of the heat I could not have wished for a more enjoyable introduction to ground and people in Chitral proper.

At Kala Drosh the presence of a relatively large garrison with its Commissariat lines, Bazar, etc., imparts a certain Indian air to what was before 1895 only a cluster of hamlets scattered over a broad alluvial plateau. In the fine grove of Chinars just below the fort I had even passed the whitewashed structure of the 'Victoria Reading Room,' a curious proof of the presence in strength of those worthy Babus whom the non-combatant branches of an Indian force are bound to drag with them to the remotest outposts. But once beyond the rifle ranges constructed in the little plain where the Shishikuf Valley with mighty snow-clad peaks in the background joins in from the north-east, I had true Chitral to myself. Bare and bleak the rocky spurs rose on either side, with broad talus shoots along their faces where falling stones are a