

mountaineers whom Nature itself seems to have bred for the defence of the Hindukush ramparts. With the men so eager to show their new training, I almost regretted the antiquarian zeal which had induced me to scale previously the rugged ridge overlooking the river and known as the site of the Sanogharo-noghor, the old fort of Sanoghar. Ancient potsherds of remarkable hardness showed that the position had been occupied from an early date. It offered additional interest by commanding a full view of the Nisar-gol plateau opposite, where Colonel Kelly in 1895 had fought his successful action and cleared the way for the relief of the Chitral garrison.

At a mighty avalanche stretching right down to the river about a mile above the village I said good-bye to Captain Sawyer. Then crossing the gloomy river gorge below the wall-like cliffs of Nisar-gol I hurried on to Mastuj. It was close to nightfall when I came in sight of the capital, a cluster of tiny hamlets spread over the bare stony plateau where the Yarkhun river is joined from the south by its first main affluent, the river of Laspur. At the bridge leading back to the left bank old Bahadur Khan, the actual ruler of Mastuj and a cousin of the Chitral chief, awaited me in person with two youthful sons (Fig. 18). Though close on eighty years, the portly white-haired chief seemed still full of vigour and genuine enjoyment of life and its pleasures. He had loyally stood by the British side when the Chitralis and Umra Khan's Pathans invested Mastuj Fort, and the staunchness he then showed as governor has secured for him practical independence from Chitral. His straightforward, simple ways, full of old-fashioned courtesy withal, have made him a favourite with all European officers in Chitral.

He insisted now on conducting me to my tent, pitched in one of the few modest groves of fruit-trees of which Mastuj can boast. On the lawn around the hardy small kind of iris which has become my old friend from Kashmir and the Turkestan valleys, raised its delicately scented pale blue flowers in plenty. White plum blossoms, too, strewn the ground. Glad was I for the peace and seclusion of my little orchard, with abundance of work to