

But the attempt to reach the saddle that day soon proved hopeless, as I had feared. The warmth of that brilliantly clear day had made the snow so soft that after a mile or so walking became most difficult even for men, while the laden animals stuck helplessly after a few hundred yards. There was nothing for it but to pitch camp at Chikmar-robat, and to try to open a track for the morrow by sending ahead all ponies unladen, with every available man that could be spared.

From the easy slope above our camping-place I enjoyed a glorious view of all the high peaks which flank the Darkot, and of the mighty ice streams descending from them (Fig. 24). Chatiboi was visible in its full length, with the needle-like Koyo-zum Peak rising behind its topmost névé beds. The highest part of the glacier, known as Kalandarghum, and an object of Mastuji legend, has so steep a fall that it looked from this distance almost like a huge frozen cascade. The route to the Darkot lay mostly hidden. But even without the previous day's experience the glittering walls of snow and ice rising on either side would have sufficed to give an idea of the difficulties which must attend its crossing at all times. Here, too, as in Hunza, it is not the main watershed range but the mountain chain south of it which forms the true rampart against northern invasion.

In spite of the messengers sent ahead from Mastuj there was no sign yet of the hoped-for men and transport from the Afghan side coming to meet us. As the evening drew on news was brought that the ponies had exhausted their strength in pushing through the snow to the 'Kotal' and could not advance down the Wakhan side, where the snow lay equally deep. The prospect of making the same tired animals cross laden next morning seemed slight, indeed, and the available number of men was far too small to give a chance of effecting the transport by their means without spending some days on the pass. So the outlook was decidedly gloomy until late in the evening, when a letter arrived from the Afghan Colonel of whose presence I had heard already at Chitral. It promised fresh ponies and all needful help for the morrow. The lively young