

about ancient remains in Badakhshan and old Bactria, the regions which he knew so well and to which my own thoughts were ever eagerly turning, but himself also, as it were, a fascinating historical record. Was it not like being shifted back many centuries to find myself listening to this considerate and gentlemanly old soldier, who in his younger days had helped to build up pyramids of rebel heads just to establish order in the time-honoured fashion of Central Asia? Of course, much of our talk used to turn on things of the past, for which a lucky dispensation had endowed my friend with real interest and a great deal of shrewd practical observation. Yet quite as enticing was it to listen to his enthusiastic descriptions of all the charms of Badakhshan, its well-watered valleys with shady groves and abundance of all fruits, and its extensive Alpine plateaus offering rich grazing and cool retreats for the summer. Ever there rose before me, during such converse in these bleak wintry valleys, pictures of my cherished Kashmir, and I wondered when the time might come for me to see its Central-Asian *pendant*. May kindly old Shirin-dil Khan be still there then to welcome me!

Our onward march on May 22nd proved difficult in its first half. The crossing of the big snow-fed stream dashing down the side valley of Baharak involved much trouble and risk for the baggage (Fig. 26), and the fifteen hundred feet ascent to the Bashgaz spur which followed had to be effected in many places over steep and slippery rock faces. Without the energetic assistance of our Afghan protectors the baggage which had to be unloaded again and again would never have been hauled up, in spite of the additional Wakhi carriers brought from Sarhad. By a narrow track which kept winding along steep slopes high above the impassable river-gorge, and in a few places passed small alluvial plateaus, where patches of ground looked as if terraced for cultivation in ancient times, we reached camp at Langar in the evening. The little mud-domed structure which has given the place its name, meaning 'rest-house' in Turki, was uninviting; but the broad gravel 'Dasht' on which we camped, with its easy slope towards the river, gave promise of easier ground before