

In our bleak camp it was a busy and anxious time for me. Our Kirghiz and Wakhis did not disguise their fears about the difficulties to be faced in crossing the pass with heavy baggage. I myself felt constrained by previous experience to believe what they said, and knew that without our Afghan protectors' emphatic orders the men could never be got to make the attempt. So it was a great assurance that Shirin-dil Khan's support allowed of no objections, and that, besides an ample number of yaks, we were to have the help of every available Wakhi and Kirghiz to get the baggage across. But would the weather permit the attempt on the morrow? Driving showers of snow descended at intervals through the afternoon, damping the men's spirits still more.

Inside my Kirgha I was busy completing Persian versions of my letters to H.M. the King and Prince Nasrullah, which were to convey my genuine gratitude for the whole-hearted assistance received while on Afghan soil. Colonel Shirin-dil Khan and the Hakim of Wakhan, to whose excellent arrangements I had not failed to give amply deserved praise, were naturally eager to possess authenticated translations for their own assurance. Accounts, too, for supplies and the rest were settled with the Wakhi and Kirghiz head-men; for to my special satisfaction it was understood from the outset that, notwithstanding the special protection afforded, I should be allowed to settle all expenses of my journey through His Afghan Majesty's territory in a business fashion. That, in addition to the official presents delivered on arrival at Sarhad, I was able to leave now a few articles from my own equipment as personal souvenirs to Shirin-dil Khan and the governor, was an attention mutually appreciated.

In my last quiet chat with the kindly old Colonel the wistful hope for a chance yet to come of seeing him in Badakhshan was the main theme. To a minor point of regret we could only allude with discretion. I had been eager to provide myself with a hardy Badakhshi for the long travels before me. The Colonel's spare mount, the excellent grey I had ridden all the way up from Sarhad, had greatly taken my fancy, and I understood from a