

reliable quarter that a 'deal' would have been equally welcome to the owner. But how to effect the transaction in the face of the Amir's strict prohibition against all export of Badakhshan ponies? We both respected the law; but I never ceased to regret afterwards that there was no conveniently irresponsible Kirghiz smuggler at hand to relieve us of loyal scruples.

Knowing that the great difficulty before us was from soft snow, I was anxious for a start as early as possible on the morning of May 27th. At 3 A.M., when the yaks had been loaded, a thick mist full of floating ice-particles was hanging over the valley. So a party of men had to be sent ahead to search out and mark the right track. With the fresh snow hiding boulders and shallow water-courses the yaks' progress was terribly slow. Though the atmosphere steadily cleared, the foot of the proper ascent to the pass was not reached until full daylight. There I bade a hearty farewell to Colonel Shirin-dil Khan, who with the Hakim and his principal followers had insisted upon accompanying us thus far. As I took a parting look at his features, I found it hard to believe that scarcely more than a week had passed since our first meeting. And when might be the next? To our Wakhis and Kirghiz he repeated his injunctions, under threat of severe penalties and in a tone which admitted of no trifling, not to show their faces again on the Afghan side unless they could bring my written acknowledgment of all baggage having been safely delivered across the pass. And to make quite sure of the effect and to be ready for help if needed, he declared his intention to await their return in our last camp.

The snow ahead lay so deep that soon my Indians, who had torpidly stuck to their yaks, had to dismount. In spite of a minimum temperature of 25 degrees below freezing-point in camp that morning, only the surface of the snow was hard frozen, and that rapidly softened under the rays of the sun when he rose after 7 A.M. above the broad gap of the pass north-eastwards. The unladen yaks, which were pulled and driven ahead through the soft snow to beat down a track for the rest, before long floundered hopelessly