

and proved of no further use. For about half a mile onwards, the men pushing ahead, first in single file for short distances, and then returning each time to the baggage, managed to drag the laden yaks on, three or four helping each animal.

But as their heavy bodies kept sinking helplessly into the soft snow, which gave no hold even for these wonderfully sure-footed animals, the procedure soon proved too exhausting for beasts and men alike. At a point which, from my recollection of the ground and the map, I estimated to be still fully two miles from the watershed, the last of the powerful Kirghiz yaks had to be left behind and all the loads transferred to the men. Their total number was close on thirty. But in such snow and at an elevation well over 15,000 feet even the lighter baggage articles required frequent shifts, and the heavier boxes three or four men at a time. So the transport had to be effected by instalments over short distances, the men then returning to fetch the remainder. It was painfully slow work, and but for the energy and watchfulness of the Wakhi head-men and the care of my experienced Yarkandi Muhammadju the risk of packages getting left behind in the snow would have been serious.

As long as our track skirted the steep slopes looking south near the debouchure of the Wakhjir stream, there was danger from possible avalanches; but this grew less after we could take, about 10 A.M., to the deep and almost flat snow-beds filling the broadening valley as it gently rises towards the pass. Pushing ahead with the two Ram Singhs and a couple of Wakhis, who carried the precious cameras, I struggled through the snow in which we often sank waist-deep. Grateful was I for the light mist which settled after mid-day, and somewhat relieved the intense glare which added pain to this toil. At last towards 2 P.M. we gained the flat expanse of snow marking the top of the Wakhjir. My hypsometrical readings of 1900 had given a height of about 16,200 feet for the watershed; but how deep this now lay buried under snow it was impossible to determine. Even the high glacier tongue with beautiful stalactites of the purest