

ice, which I had then observed within a few hundred yards north of the pass, was now completely effaced. Only the top of one huge boulder emerged from this deep snow mantle, and on it we few were glad to crouch for a short rest. Nothing impressed me more with the toil these long hours of ascent had cost us than the subdued whining of 'Dash,' my inseparable little companion. For him, with his irrepressible young fox-terrier spirits, the month's hard travelling from the Swat border had seemed so far but an enjoyable outing. Nor were snow slopes any novelty for him; for had he not two years earlier when quite a young puppy by his delight of romping on the snow-beds of the Kaghan mountains earned his full-fledged Turki title of 'Kar-dash Beg' ('Sir Snow-Friend'), which I bestowed upon him for his incognito on prospective Central-Asian travels? Now he was eager to huddle up under the lap of my fur coat, and to forget all the stress of this day in a short nap.

When at last the first of the load-carrying men struggled up to us, we could leave this desolate watershed between Oxus and Tarim and begin our descent on the Chinese side. It proved far more trying than I had expected. Whether it was due to further softening of the snow—the sun had broken through again and was showing up the valley before us in the brightest afternoon glow—or to the cuttings effected below the surface by more numerous side-streams, progress was stopped again and again by portions of snow-beds where one would sink in to the armpits. It became necessary to seek for firmer snow on the slopes, or try to advance along snow-covered old moraines. All this meant wearisome détours and halts for us pioneers. Of the small lakes which in July 1900 I had passed in this valley no trace could be discovered now.

Some four miles from the pass the valley began to turn to the east, and an encouraging vista opened towards the head of the Taghdumbash Pamir lit up by the setting sun in glorious tints of red and purple. But of succour in the shape of yaks and men, for which we were all anxiously looking out to help the poor fellows left with the loads on or behind the pass, there was no sign yet. At last, when