

turning a rocky spur near where the Wakhjir route is joined by a side valley from the north-west, the keen eyes of Ram Singh, the Surveyor, caught sight of little black specks moving up slowly across the white bottom of the main valley. They were a drove of yaks which Munshi Sher Muhammad with a few Wakhi herdsmen from the Taghdumbash was endeavouring to hurry up to our rescue. So, after all, this strategic concentration of transport which I had endeavoured to assure weeks before, over such distance and ground, had not failed altogether.

Half an hour later I had the pleasure of shaking hands again with the 'Political Munshi,' representing the Sirkar in Sarikol. He was still the same fine-looking big Punjabi I remembered from our first meeting in these parts in 1900. But my assurance about all trouble being at an end vanished, when he reported how he had expected me to cross by the K k-t r k Pass, and how he had left all supplies and spare men at the mouth of the K k-t r k Valley while hurrying up now to meet me by the Wakhjir. It was not easy to account for the Munshi's original mistake about my route, nor for his own camp being left behind what I knew to be nearly a day's march. That old Indian force—or rather weakness—'Dastur' or routine, was probably the only explanation. The K k-t r k Jilga is the valley towards the Afghan Pamirs where the few European sportsmen coming from Gilgit always go up to shoot, and its mouth their regular camping-ground fixed by custom. So an Indian subordinate, having due respect for tradition, would necessarily expect a Sahib from the Afghan side also to come by that valley and to pitch camp at that orthodox spot, even though his written communications might explicitly indicate a different intention.

If Sher Muhammad's yaks had only been utilized for bringing up some dry fuel, we might have remained for the night close to where we had met them, uninviting though the ground was. But without any means to light fires for drying ourselves and for cooking, there was nothing left but to try and push on to K k-t r k. When the advance party of Wakhis with light loads had at last struggled