

then established custom seems to have inveigled or forced every Sahib coming from Gilgit for Ovis Poli shooting to establish his camping-base at this same dreary patch of bare gravel. All round the dry bones and offal of the animals skinned here or slaughtered strewed the ground thickly, while the tattered and mouldering felt tents had become infested by a resident population of vermin which the bleakness of the surroundings seemed to have rendered only the more bloodthirsty. Altogether I felt convinced that this 'Dastur'-decreed halting-place was the filthiest spot on all the Pamirs.

So I was anxious to escape from it as soon as our baggage was complete. An urgent message sent down the valley had brought up my old Wakhi friend and host, Muhammad Yusuf, now Beg of the Taghdumbash valley, with ponies and more yaks. Our helpers from the Afghan side, who had overcome the fatigues of that crossing so manfully without harm to themselves or the baggage, were paid off with ample gratuities (Fig. 30). Then after a hearty farewell to the Wakhi head-men from Sarhad, whom I entrusted with a letter for my kind protector, the old Colonel, I set off for Muhammad Yusuf's encampment at Tigharman-su. With regret I thought of the shortness of that chapter now closed behind me on the Oxus. But there was the cheering assurance that the road to distant and new fields eastwards now lay open.