

The force of the five or six men on the pulling rope by my side was not sufficient to stem the gliding raft. But luckily no one had been struck by the snapped wire, and they were holding on pluckily, though the rope cut into their hands, and the jerk had nearly precipitated them into the river some thirty feet below the vertical rock bank. We all rushed to their aid. For seconds which seemed terribly long I feared the worst for poor Musa; but then the previously slack rope from the right bank helped to hold back the raft. The men on that side, realizing the danger, pulled away with all their strength, and, aided by the bearing of the current, succeeded, after some anxious minutes, in dragging the raft safely ashore. Musa lost no time in divesting himself of his dripping fur coat, and soon to my comfort I saw him drying himself on a rock and composedly munching an oat cake.

Experience had shown that our wire rope, though tested for great weight, could not resist the terrific force of the current, and that the raft, however sound in design, could not be used here in safety. So we decided to trust to the wire alone, of which there was still a spare length intact, and to hoist the loads across by its means. This changed procedure necessitated fresh anchorages; for between the steep rock walls where the wire was first fixed the loads could not have been safely unslung. Hours passed over this, and when the newly fixed wire had at last been tried by the transport of a big boulder it was too late to commence the passing of loads. So camp had to be pitched once more by the side of the roaring river.

The evening passed in long and fruitless enquiries from the wily Taghliks as to any route for reaching the grazing-grounds suspected to exist on the upper Yurung-kash or for crossing the great mountain barrier southward. To all questions that surly '*bilmaiman*' ('I do not know'), to which the tactics of the men of Karanghu-tagh six years before had accustomed me, was the stereotyped answer. There could be no doubt that the pretended ignorance of Brinjaga, which even the people of Mitaz and Nissa had heard of, was the result of a systematic conspiracy. It was difficult to guess the reason of this so long as the position