

day we struck the actual route by a short cut over a spur west of it, and there obtained a parting view of the Yurung-kash head-waters (Fig. 330). That night we had a fairly heavy fall of snow, and its cover was promptly used by the wily Pasa to decamp with his comrade. He had shown so much experience of these mountains and such resourcefulness that I had been eager to enlist his help as a hunter and 'guide,' even though he protested never to have been beyond the uppermost Keriya River. His taking French leave in this fashion without waiting for his wages was a proof both of his half-savage slimness and of the dread which he, too, hardened as he was by his roving life in the mountains, entertained for the wastes before us. Yet I felt so grateful for his previous guidance that in the end, disregarding this desertion, I sent a well-earned reward through Badruddin Khan to his home near Keriya.

Both Lal Singh and Jasvant Singh had followed the route before. So we had not much difficulty, in spite of repeated snow-showers, about finding the track to the Baba Hatim Pass, which at an elevation of about 17,600 feet gives access to the Keriya River. But the descent from it proved unexpectedly trying. The last few days' rain and snow had sufficed to turn the steep but otherwise easy gorge into a perfect couloir of loose boulders intermixed with sliding mud. It took long hours to get the ponies down, and our poor donkeys could not be brought in till late at night. Even then half their loads were left behind in the gorge to be recovered next day.

From that bleak and wind-swept spot we made our way south in two marches to the head of the great elevated basin, at an altitude of about 17,200 feet, where the Keriya River rises at the foot of a line of great glaciers. The range from which they descend proved identical with the easternmost part of the ice-clad range confining the Yurung-kash sources. Our passage up to the Keriya River head-waters, and for days after, was greatly impeded by trying weather. Frequent snow-storms swept across the high plateaus and valleys, and the slush they deposited, slight as it was each time, soon converted the gentle