

hand in carrying me on an improvised litter. They were not accustomed to burdens, and the great elevation, no doubt, made it a trying business. So all I could do was to get myself strapped on the padded saddle of a camel, as soon as the going in the gorge became sufficiently safe for the animal under such a load. The constant jerks and swayings were most painful, and I shall not easily forget the sufferings of that day.

At Abdul-Ghafur-tam I found Ibrahim Beg with our ponies, and there I managed to have my camp-chair of Major Elliot's pattern made up into a sort of litter resting between two poles which were fastened to a pony in front and another behind. It cost no small effort to improvise sufficiently long poles out of the short pieces of bamboo which jointed served as our tent poles. Every mile or so the pieces lashed together would get loose or slide from the ponies' saddles, threatening to deposit me on the ground. But at least I could keep my feet high up on the felts and rugs made up into a foot-rest, and luckily the going in the broad Kara-kash Valley was easy.

There is no need to describe in detail this dolorous progress. Whatever the number of daily breakdowns I always felt grateful for my improvised litter, and even more grateful when at the end of the march I could be laid on firm ground. Half-way down to Portash, where I had previously ordered Tila Bai to join me with the heavy baggage, I was met by Muhammadju returning with heavy mail-bags brought across the Kara-koram from Ladak. The many letters from friends, now eagerly expecting me back in India and Europe, were cheering in spite of my crippled condition, and so also the presence of my trusted old follower who knew the Ladak route well and had something like genuine sympathy to offer. Lal Singh, Jasvant Singh, and he did all they could to alleviate my physical troubles. Portash was reached by September 27th, and there I had the satisfaction to see again my heavy caravan of antiques safely arrived across the Sanju Pass. Not a single case had suffered, in spite of the difficulties of the track and the exceptionally late flood in the gorges.

For two days I was kept hard at work on my camp-