

## CHAPTER II

### THROUGH CHITRĀL AND MASTŪJ

#### SECTION I.—CHITRĀL IN ETHNOLOGY AND HISTORY

ON May 4 I gained access to Chitrāl by crossing the Lowarai Pass, still a formidable obstacle at that season, through gorges deeply choked with the snows of avalanches (Fig. 2). Among the alpine territories flanking the main Hindukush range on the south, Chitrāl with its mountains of barren grandeur, its fertile if narrow valleys, its curiously mixed population, and the manifold indications of an old and relatively well-developed civilization, offers special attractions alike to the student of geography, ethnology, and antiquities. Chapters III and IV of my personal narrative will show how deeply I felt these varied fascinations, and how great my regret was at the very limited range which the unavoidable rapidity of my passage imposed upon my inquiries. The fact that my travel and stay in Chitrāl were confined to a week will explain why my present account can touch only the main geographical relations of the country, the few early historical data, and such antiquarian observations as I was able to make *en route*.

Arrival in  
Chitrāl.

The political importance of Chitrāl, the interesting mixture of its population, and the advanced economic conditions prevailing all find their explanation in the fact that nature has placed Chitrāl on the line of the nearest, and in many respects the easiest, trade route between Central Asia and the extreme north-west of India proper. A series of natural features combine to favour the line of communication which connects the valleys of the Indus and Oxus through Chitrāl. The fertile valley of the Kūnar, accessible from the side of the Peshawar and Swāt Valleys by a number of passes all considerably lower than the Lowarai, provides an excellent thoroughfare, leading due north without inconvenient détours, which is open to laden traffic at all times of the year. In the case of all routes which lie to the east of it, a succession of high outer ranges have to be surmounted before the main Hindukush watershed is approached, while the valleys are not only narrow and difficult, but are devoid of that surplus produce which in a mountainous region is essential for fostering traffic.<sup>1</sup>

Political im-  
portance of  
Chitrāl.

There is no lack of local resources anywhere in the ascent of the main Kūnar river valley up to the large cluster of villages which forms the Chitrāl capital, and from which the territory derives its current modern name.<sup>2</sup> The same favourable conditions continue in the side valley of Lutkhō,

Main routes  
through  
Chitrāl.

<sup>1</sup> It is this want of spare food supplies and fodder which has constituted at all times so serious an obstacle to the use of the routes leading from Kashmīr through Gilgit, Yasin, and Hunza, whether for trade or military purposes. It would affect also traffic through the Yārkhūn Valley notwithstanding the easy passage northward afforded by the Barōghil saddle.

<sup>2</sup> The old indigenous name, and one still in current use both in the hill state itself and the adjoining territories, is *Kāshkār*. This term includes both Chitrāl proper, or 'Lower Kāshkār', and 'Upper Kāshkār', comprising the main valley from some distance below Mastūj along with the

important side valleys which join it from the Hindukush watershed. Cf. Biddulph, *Hindoo Koosh*, pp. 59 sqq.; and the explicit statement given by Raverty, *Notes on Afghānistān*, p. 152, from Mughul Bēg's surveys dating from the end of the eighteenth century: 'Under the general name of *Kāshkār* are included two tracts of country: one *Kāshkār-i-Pá'ín*, or Lower *Kāshkār*, also called Chitrāl, which, on account of *l* being interchangeable with *r*, is also called Chitrār, and the other *Kāshkār-i-Bálá* or Upper *Kāshkār*, or Mastúch, from its chief town.'

For an early Chinese rendering of the name *Kāshkār*, see below, p. 31.