We had our camp in a lovely grove of young willows with nice moist turf underneath; no dry dusty sand as in Ladakh. Red bear had been seen not many weeks before in the nullah to the south and R. thought he would try to get one. So next morning at three o’clock he got up and started up the nullah. The moon was shining and I could see the Plough from my bed—it seemed to be resting on the top of a hill. I lay awake for an hour or more, then went to sleep and did not waken again until the sun was well above the horizon. It was a perfect morning, blue sky and a soft breeze, the air laden with the smell of willows coming into the tent. Even the dogs slept until after eight o’clock.

The night before we had not been able to get baths as the wood supplied by the chowkidar was so wet it would not burn and khansamah had difficulty in getting dinner ready by eight o’clock. I called for my bath—a morning bath being a luxury that can only be had on days spent in camp. Breakfast was served on a little table under the willows; porridge and cream and scrambled eggs with khansamah’s very good girdle scones. The larks were singing, and to my great surprise I heard a cuckoo calling. It was really an Arcadian morning; I didn’t want to do anything but just sit and be happy.

I gave my old topee another coat of brown water-colour paint, as it was looking shabbier than usual I thought, and there were more people on the road now. We were getting back to civilization. I had hardly finished when there was a shout, and R. and the shikari appeared. They had no luck; they had seen no red bear, only traces a few weeks old, but they brought back a nice marmot skin and a bundle of rhubarb; both very welcome, perhaps the rhubarb especially so, as we had by that time neither vegetables nor jam, and our potatoes were running low. Rhubarb seems to grow in quite high parts of Kashmir; later I myself found it coming up just where the snow had melted, in black moist soil, when the grass had not yet begun to appear.

We had a delightful quiet day lying on rugs under the trees; then dinner about six o’clock, and so to bed. It was a real Sunday for once.

The shikari brought down the visitors’ book from the Dak Bungalow.
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and looking through it I found R.'s signature in May, 1912, when he was on his way to Baltistan after ibex. We were interested to see who had gone up "the road" to Baltistan while we had been in Ladakh.

The next day from Dras to Matayan was one of the easiest we had had. It was extraordinary trying to recognize the country we had passed through in April. There had been so much snow that the only feature of the landscape that was recognizable was a little wood beyond Pandras. Pandras itself looked so different, and the valley beyond, over which we had walked on hard snow as quickly as possible before it melted, was now a perfect meadow with many flowers.

We camped beside a stream of grey blue snow water at the foot of a nullah not far from Matayan village.

I was hot and dusty after the march and the stream looked cool and tempting. I put on my bathing dress and had a plunge in a pool just beside the tent. It was what it looked, icy cold, and it freshened me up a lot.

In the Dak Bungalows between Spittok and Macchoi the Joint Commissioner has supplied six novels in each bungalow for the use of travellers. These are a great boon and we appreciated them very much. They can be taken out one at a time from one bungalow to another. We had been reading one by Anthony Hope and lit a candle and sat up in bed to finish it, as it had to be returned next morning.

XXVI.—BALTAL.

July Sixth (Tuesday we thought.)

How well I remember my feelings on reaching this place on the way up; very very weary after two days marching, nine hours each day in soft snow, and the pass still ahead of us. The fire in the grate only heating a small circle round it. Icicles all round the roof, and the floor of the verandah covered with drifts of snow. We did not go up to the bungalow again, and there were plenty of delightful camping grounds near the river.

It was a bitterly cold start that morning. I wore a jersey under my coat, but was glad to pin the woolly Ladakhi saddle-bag round me until after an hour and a half marching we got into the sunshine about a quarter past seven. R. had the gun with him as there was a chance of getting more marmots, and we saw four playing about. They were within easy rifle range but he could not get near enough with the gun; the ground was too open and there was no cover of any kind. They sat up, looking for all the world like little brown dogs begging, and then whistling, disappeared into their holes. I suppose these little animals must store food underground for the winter, for their holes must have been under many feet of snow for four or five months. Several times we crossed the debris brought down by avalanches; great piles of unmelted snow with rocks and stones embedded in it.
Progress was slow as the ponies slipped if they did not go very carefully. Soon we rounded a corner and came to the place that I had called "the great white valley"; its stillness and lifelessness were awesome, and we had been glad to leave it behind us. Now it lay before us a fertile meadow with a broad river running through it, green hills on either side, and flocks and herds of sheep, goats and ponies feeding everywhere. Kashmiri shepherd boys had their camps all over the valley, either using tents or some rough temporary shelter made from turf and stones. There were all kinds and colours of goats, some very big ones from the plains and all colours, brown, grey, white and black. It made me think of Laban and his herds, but no water had to be drawn from wells here. It was a paradise of pasture!

Further down the valley towards Macchoi ponies covered the hillsides; I do not remember ever seeing so many ponies together before. We met families moving their live stock further up the valley. A herd of goats would come first, nibbling the grass as they came, then ponies, cows and dogs. The father usually carried a younger child on his shoulder, the child clinging to his neck in the usual Indian fashion. Another child aged two or three years was perched on a pony above piles of bedding; these children were not tied on, but the tiny hands clung to the rope which bound the bedding to the pony. I saw ponies going up most precipitous paths with children perched on blankets in this way. I thought for several days that the women in addition to carrying the family cooking and water pots,
carried their rations of flour in the black cloth across their backs, which is
slung from their heads. I discovered later that it was their infants that
were carried in the sling. No part of the baby was ever visible and it could
get little or no fresh air, but probably the actual position in a sling of cloth
is more comfortable than being carried in arms, but it could not be healthy.
I do not understand how these poor women lived in the open as they do for
months; during an illness they have no real protection from rain, and it
could be very cold indeed on these high pasture lands when the sun was
behind clouds for a few days.

I had not expected to see many wild flowers until we got to the other
side of Zoji La, down in the Sind valley, but here to our delight before
reaching Macchoi, knolls were blue with forget-me-nots intermingled with
a tiny white flower which I have seen cultivated in rockeries at home.
Anemones were everywhere, tiny single ones, and larger ones growing in
clusters. Wild strawberries were in flower, and yellow pontentilla, and we
found at least four varieties of primula; the little short blue reptans, the
common blue, the rosae, and a very small pale one. Buttercups were every­
where like a meadow in England in a buttercup year. There were yellow
marigolds in thousands among the rubble where a stream came down the
mountain side, and white marigolds on the level ground.

There a caravan of pack ponies passed up laden with a Sahib's kit.
There was so much furniture we said to one another, "These people are
not going far." Later two men walking, and a lady on a white pony,
with a red parasol which looked very civilized, appeared over the rising
ground. We said good-morning in passing, and then recollected the faces
of people from Ambala who had been in Kasauni the year before. How
small India is so far as Britshers are concerned!

There was still a mass of drifted snow to cross 20 or 30 yards long
before we had gained the upper path which is cut out of the hillside.
Looking down into the actual pass, still deep in snow, it was almost im­
possible to picture that we had climbed up there following an almost
indistinguishable track. The gorge is impossible to look down on from the
higher path, and the size of the cliffs opposite could be appreciated. It
was terrible to think that three men and five ponies had been swept away
by an avalanche three weeks after we had crossed. We heard that they
had made a late start after the sun was up, and that was asking for trouble.

It was easy going down by the high path, and we soon came to a corner
where we got a fine view of the Sind valley lying at our feet. R. took
photographs, one looking down the Sind river and the other looking towards
Amarnath. Coming up there had been nothing but snow, and here we
suddenly looked down on this English park-land, with verdure-clad slopes
above, then rising to snow-capped peaks. It was amazing; so delightful
to smell pines again after all these months.

Our servants began to collect firewood; it was not sold at a premium
here at this season. It had been brought down from the forests above by
snow drifts and was lying about everywhere. The tents were pitched on
the meadow close by the river, a very turbulent stream compared with the
river we had seen at Gund coming up.

XXVII.—Sonamarg.

The road and the scenery between Baltal and Sonamarg were both new
to us. Only one or two snow-capped peaks were familiar. We rode most
of the way as it was a warm morning and the path was good.

There were quite a number of people going up to Baltal; ladies riding,
and a party of people who had a special "doolie" — a variety of dandy

carried by coolies for their dogs. It looked as if we might meet many more
travellers on the road before reaching Sonamarg, but we got there sooner
than I expected. Those nine miles did not take us nine hours this time.

We called at the Post Office for our mail and were glad to find a parcel
of stores ordered from the Army Agency in Srinagar. We opened new tins
of butter and jam for lunch, which we ate sitting under the pines on the
hillside. The baggage soon made up on us and the shikari said he knew a
nice spot a mile further on where "Sahib log" usually camped, so we
followed on later. It was a very warm day so I sent word with the tiffin
coolie to be sure and pitch our tent in a shady place. We wandered along
with the dogs shortly afterwards by a small path. There were one or two
flowers we had not seen before, Jacob's Ladder and a small primula.

The camp was in a delightful spot beside a wood, but our tents were in
full sunshine, while the kitchen ones were under the trees. However, we
took a rug out and had tea in shade. The hills opposite were perfect; very
satisfying to look at in the evening light. Barren Ladakh has a fascination
which is its own peculiar treasure, but the smell of trees and grass and
flowers and the very dampness in the atmosphere were soothing and restful
to us who had been without them for so long.

Sonamarg was, I believe, a great camping ground in the 'eighties but
since Gulmarg has been built and Pahlgam developed, it has lost its popu-

larity. It must be an extraordinarily good centre for climbing and walks,
but as there is only a footpath from Gunderbal to Sonamarg, four coolie
stages, and there are now motor roads to Gulmarg and Pahlgam, one can
understand why they have developed. I have met old ladies, officers' wives,
who have asked, was it the same still; it was forty years ago they were
there; and I was able to say, "Yes, I am sure it is just the same."

The snowy peaks to the west were all rosy in the morning light before
we left our camp next morning. We saw the little hut where we had taken
shelter under the gables and hurriedly eaten our lunch during a snowstorm.
Three and a half months before no stream had been visible, but now a river
as big as the Indus at Leh in May was tearing past us with such force and
noise we could not hear each other speak at all. There was still snow by
the river but nowhere near our path. Everywhere here there was a heavy
undergrowth of some weed which has a flower like Queen of the Meadow; its smell is somewhat similar too, very sweet but heavy.

A large caravan of over 300 ponies and mules passed up the road on its way to Leh while we were resting. A large Hindu family was with it, women and children all being well mounted on sturdy ponies. We were glad to be off the road while it passed as the dust was considerable.

We rested at midday, and had tiffin under a big pine tree about a mile from Kulan, where we camped for the night. We had planned to cross from the Sind valley to the Lidar. There were good hunting grounds for red bear off the higher waters of the West Lidar and R. wished me to see the Lidar valley. The path to the pass at Khemhar branches off the Sind at Kulan, so we hoped to start next day. The shikari had great arguments with the local coolies that night, who said the pass was not open yet, and they could not be forced to go, and so could demand what rates they liked. They brought us chits from a man who had crossed by an easier route, they said, ten days before. He had been obliged to give them double the usual rate. Our shikari argued that the weather was better now, while they argued that the weather was the same, and this was a more difficult route. At last arrangements were made for 25 men at a little less than double the usual rate, which was almost £10, to take our kit to Pahlgam, a distance of 5½ marches. It seemed a lot at the time, but I didn’t think so later when I had seen the pass. The shikari suggested a pony for me for the first stage of seven miles; after that I must walk as the road beyond was impossible for ponies.

XXVIII.—ZAIWAN. A PERFECT CAMPING GROUND.

July 9th. If we had been trying to find a change from the camping grounds of the last two months we could not have found a more complete one than up at Zaiwan. From Kulan, after crossing the stream, the path, a very rough one, wound up and up. We climbed at least 2,000 feet in the deep shadow of a thick pine forest all the way, then suddenly emerged into sunshine on the comparatively flat grazing ground called Zaiwan, where we camped. The pines were very tall and the forest thick to the north, but there were vistas across the hills above Sonamarg across the valley, and to Haramokh away to the north west.

After settling in to camp we tramped for about three hours to see if there were any marmots in the near neighbourhood but did not even see any holes. There were sheep, and sheep, and sheep, everywhere. A flock of a few hundreds had their temporary home about 500 yards from us. The shepherds and their families cooked their food and slept and ate under a large pine tree. They had no other shelter. We could only get sheep’s milk, but it was very rich and very good—the best cream we had since we got yak’s milk. The sheep went abroad grazing in the early morning and in the afternoon. During the heat of the day they were herded together
under the trees, and the servants said they ate salt. I certainly saw rock salt lying about. The camp smelt even stronger than on a big sheep farm in Scotland the day before the dipping when the sheep are collected in pens.

Garry watched them, and I had to keep an eye on him. Kelpie was so wearied with chasing wasps that he lay in the tent. I had never been stung by a wasp or a bee in my life, but these wasps were most aggressive; no buzzing about or giving warning; they stung you before you had time to see them. My legs were covered with stings.

The shikari said there were bears near at hand. We met a man who had seen two red bears five days before five miles away, so R. was planning another early morning expedition. Not so long ago I would have wondered at there being so many sheep when bear were about. I did not know that bear are strict vegetarians.

Having had no fresh meat for some time the shikari suggested that we should buy a lamb from the shepherds and it would give the whole camp a change of diet. I sent him off to inquire the price, and he came back and said, "He want three rupees four annas, Memsahib," so I agreed. One doesn't buy a whole lamb for about five shillings every day, even although it was not very large. We had plenty of time to read our Sunday Observer and noticed with satisfaction that lamb was 1/10\$ a pound in London!

We were reduced by now to our last bar of Sunlight soap. Toilet soap was finished before we left Kargil, where I had hoped to buy some. R. had rather overestimated his requirements in the way of shaving soap and we had two or three sticks in hand. Travellers on the road sometimes exchange superfluous stores. We thought of offering to exchange the shaving soap for toilet soap, but on thinking it over we did not quite like to ask some of the bearded boys we met if they wanted any shaving soap; the inference was too obvious.

We arrived at Zaiwan on a Friday morning. That evening R. got word again that red bear had been seen, so on the Saturday he was out from half past three in the morning until five in the afternoon. They came back tired and disappointed, not having seen any tracks. The shikari said there were so many sheep and shepherd folk about that the bear had to go much higher up the hills to be undisturbed.

I was thoroughly lazy while R. was away that day. I carried a rug and books about fifty yards above the camp and sat under a pine tree where I could get a view of the Sind valley. The dogs were quite content to be lazy too.

If we reached our camping ground after the transport and servants had arrived, we usually found the tents had been pitched looking straight into a wall or facing up a hill, and this time was no exception. We could see nothing but pine trunks from the tents. There were beautiful camping grounds a hundred yards further up, with a magnificent view, and a spring of clear water beside them.

Next day broke cloudy and sultry--such a change from the climate of
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Ladakh; then the rain came down and we were storm-stayed for three days. When the rain ceased the air was so damp, nothing would dry, so there was no chance of being able to move the soaking tents until we had either a strong wind or some sunshine. The cuckoo called all day even in the rain, and we heard wood pigeon too, so took out the gun and went for a stroll in the mist and R. brought one down.

The flowers and green things had such a wonderful smell that morning. The forest was full of plants with dainty leaves like columbine, thalictrum and maidenhair fern. There was white columbine at this level, and the deep purple variety is found higher up. There were tiny yellow pansies all over the open grazing ground, and little purple violets under the trees quite near.

The rain was very depressing. We heard it in the night and knew there was no hope of getting away next morning. I did all possible mending and sorted out the yakdans. We both wrote so many letters that our writing paper was nearly finished.

Milk was very cheap, about twopence a quart, and when meat was scarce we gave the dogs milk, so we used two quarts a day. The cream was so rich we took it off and put it in a lime-juice bottle. In twenty minutes there was such a large lump of butter that it could hardly be coaxed out of the narrow neck of the bottle. After eating tinned butter for three weeks, it tasted specially good. Khansamah played up very well; with a little help from me in suggesting dishes he managed to give us a good variety with the few stores we had left. These wet days we dined at half past six and went to bed immediately after. We had a brazier brought inside the tent with red charcoal in it as everything, our bedding included, was heavy with damp and we ourselves were not too warm.

Garry caught a mouse in the lunch basket, and that night he snuffed and snuffed and went outside once or twice to investigate. I wondered what he was doing; he would certainly have given the alarm if any men had been about, but we understood when the shikari told us in the morning that a Barra Singh (a Kashmiri stag) had come to their tent door in the night. Our neighbours the shepherds had moved the day before with their flocks to other pastures. The sheep left the ground quite bare; they ate even the leaves of the dockens, leaving the stalks bare.

(To be continued.)