

SOME REMARKS ON THE SUFFAID KOH RANGE AND THE JELLALABAD REGION, AFGHANISTAN. By WILLIAM SIMPSON, F.R.G.S.

AT the meeting of the Alpine Club on March 2, I exhibited a number of sketches of the Jellalabad region, made during the late war. The editor of the 'Alpine Journal' asks me to put on paper the substance of the descriptive remarks I gave at the same time.

I need not recapitulate the communication to the 'Alpine Journal' which appeared in August of last year, dated 'Suffaid Sung, Gundumuck, June 1, 1879,' and which gave an account of the first ascent of Sikaram by a European, Mr. G. B. Scott, of the Indian Survey Department.* But I may again express my opinion that the cairn or Ziaret, on the summit of Sikaram, cannot be the tomb of Sayid Karram, but is most probably the result of the continuation by the Mahomedans of the ancient custom of raising heaps of stones, which is still to be found in the Himalayas and the Caucasus. Most of the old names of places have been lost since the Mahomedan Conquest, but we have yet some of the previous Hindoo or Sanscrit names left, these being principally connected with the mountains of the region, such as the 'Ram Koond' and the 'Hiudoo Kush.' Our future relations with the country will open up a most interesting field of inquiry as to how far the present names may be only modifications of the former ones. From Professor Palmer I learned the other day that *Spin*, of 'Spin Ghar,' the Puchtoo equivalent for Suffaid Koh, is also a Persian word meaning white.

The first glimpse of the Suffaid Koh was got by the Peshawur Field Force during a reconnaissance made from Dakka, after passing through the Koord Khyber, whence we saw the eastern extremity of the range. At this end there is a very high-crested mass called 'Moorgha,' which by an ear

* Sikaram was ascended a few weeks after Mr. Scott's visit, on June 26, 1879, by Captain Gerald Martin, Bengal Staff Corps, who went up from the Kurram side, with a party of officers. He gives the height of the peak as 15,600 feet, and fixes its position as being in lat. $34^{\circ} 2' 21''$ and long. $69^{\circ} 56' 35''$. There is a very pointed peak seen over Kurram, called Keraira, which Captain Martin was inclined to think higher than Sikaram, but after the ascent of the latter this notion was given up. He also made an attempt to clear up the origin of the name 'Sikaram,' but without any satisfactory result. (*New Proceedings of Royal Geographical Society*, 1879, p. 634.)

accustomed to Hindostanee would most probably be rendered as the 'Cock,' but the natives say it means 'Ridge,' and afterwards, on our arrival at Gundumuck, it presented the appearance of a bold ridge, seemingly placed at something like right angles to the general direction of the range. This eastern termination is high, and on our first arrival had a covering of snow all over its summit, and we could see patches of snow on the range away to the westward, but at that season, the end of November, the summer sun had done its work, and no winter snow had then fallen. It was not till January that the tops of the less elevated peaks began to whiten. Although we had no rain in the valleys, yet clouds often gathered in masses along the mountain tops during the winter, and left a deposit of snow. This process went on all January and February, and even into March. Once or twice the clouds and mist enveloped the whole range of the Suffaid Koh as low as its base, and on clearing off the snow was visible very far down, but it soon melted away from the lower spurs. This range was opposite my tent door in the Jellalabad Valley, where I remained for three months and a half. The Moorgha was away on the extreme distance on the left, and the peaks about Sikaram, beyond Gundumuck, terminated the view on the right. After the whole range had got well covered with its winter whiteness, it was a most beautiful sight, and excited longings for a nearer acquaintance; but, owing to the unsettled condition of the country and the excited state of the tribes, it was impossible to make excursions of any distance from the camp.

On the other side of Jellalabad Valley is the Ram Koond. This is not a range, but a single grand mass towering above the hills around to over 14,000 feet high. On our first arrival at Jellalabad, in December, this peak had no snow on it, but the mists gathered also round its summits during the winter, and it gradually whitened till it became a very splendid object, particularly when the rays of the setting sun struck upon it.

There is a small koond or lake near the top of this mountain, from which it derives its name, which means the 'Fountain of Ram.'* It is also called the 'Umrit Koond,' or Fountain of Immortality. These names are purely Hindoo, and to the followers of that faith the summit is peculiarly sacred, and

* In printing my former communication, in the number for August, 1879, there is a typographical error on p. 291, where this is rendered the 'Fountain of Rain,' instead of the 'Fountain of Ram.'

pilgrimages are made to it. The followers of the Prophet seem to have accepted the sanctity of many spots from the Hindoos, and the sacredness of this mountain top they have accepted, for they also make pilgrimages to the summit. Somehow or another they seem to have developed traditions of their own, which it is rather difficult to account for. They believe that the ark of Noah rested on this peak after the deluge, and that the ark can yet be seen there, but only on Fridays, which is the Mahomedan Sunday. A valley comes from the Ram Koond into the Kunar Valley at Islampoor, which is known as the Durra Nooh, or 'Valley of Noah,' down which the patriarch with his family and all the beasts came. The Mahomedans have a similar tradition about the central peak of the Suliman Range on the Indus, which is called the Tukht-i-Suliman, or Throne of Solomon. Here also, I have been told, it is believed that a part of the ark is still visible, and may be touched by those visiting the spot, which is a place of pilgrimage. From these instances it will be seen that Ararat has rivals in the field. In the Lughman district, which is next on the north-west to Jellalabad, is a celebrated shrine, supposed to be the tomb of Lamech, the father of Noah. Mahomedans are noted for their worship at tombs, but in Afghanistan this form of devotion is perhaps followed more than in any other part of the East. Every village has its *ziaret* or tomb of some holy man, and those of particular sanctity bring pilgrims from all quarters to it. Among these tombs are some which are known as 'Nau Guz Wallahs,' or Nine Yard Fellows, but there are some also known as 'Chalis Guz Wallahs,' which implies Forty Yards; but in point of fact any tomb over nine yards is classed among the Chalis Guz, and Lamech's tomb belongs to this number. It is nearly fifty feet long, and about seven feet wide. Over it there is a structure which is said to date back to the time of Mahmud of Ghuznee. The origin of these large graves has long been a puzzle, but the following suggestion may perhaps explain the matter. In the Buddhist period colossal figures of the Sleeping Buddha were common, and we know from the Chinese pilgrim Hiouen Tshang that early in the seventh century there was a statue of this kind at Bamian 1,000 feet long. Such figures brought pilgrims, and the shrines were no doubt preserved, on account of the revenue they produced, after Buddhism had disappeared, and it would not be difficult to change the sleeping figures, formed of mud and plaster, into long mounds, which thus became tombs or *ziarets*, as they now call such monuments; the previous Buddhist name being

changed at the same time into one belonging to some Mahomedan saint of repute.

I now turn to make some remarks on Kafirstan, a perfectly unknown mountain region, which yet awaits a Grant to walk over, or a Burnaby to ride through it. The early notion that the inhabitants of Kafirstan were the remains of Greek colonies left by Alexander is now completely exploded. Some one wrote a letter to the *Times* the other day, and repeated all the old nonsense on the subject. The author must have confined his reading to the books of forty years ago. Kafirstan is on the southern slopes of the Hindoo Koosh; there is one route to Central Asia from Cabul, and there is another *viâ* Cashmere and Yarkund, but there is no beaten track between. The Hindoo Koosh may be crossed in many places, but there is no trade route, and no line by which conquest came through Kafirstan, hence the region is isolated. It was owing to its mountain strength that the Mahomedans have never conquered the country, and even Buddhism, with all its persevering energy of proselytising, never seems to have converted it. Hence it is supposed that the people have remained with their ideas, customs, and religions unchanged from a very early period, as early as, if not before, the date when the whole of Afghanistan was Hindoo. From this it will be understood how important it will be to have accurate knowledge of the condition and civilisation of such very primitive tribes as the Kafirs. Efforts have been made to enter the country, but, owing to the jealousy which has resulted from the efforts at invasion made by the Mahomedans, no one has yet succeeded. Major Tanner, of the Survey Department, made friends with some of the Chuginis, a tribe on the slopes of the Ram Koond, and acquired a few words of their language. Under the protection of these people he started on an attempt to get into Kafirstan, but he found that the language he was learning would become an unknown tongue after crossing a couple of valleys beyond that of the Chuginis. From this and other causes Major Tanner found that the effort would be useless, so he wisely returned. From people belonging to the surrounding tribes, and more particularly from Nimchas, a name applied to those who have been born Kafirs,* but become Mahomedans, some slight knowledge has been collected regarding Kafirstan. It is a country of the grape, and wine is

* *Kafir* is the same word we hear of in Africa, and in Mahomedan countries. It might be rendered as 'unbeliever,' or 'infidel,' in relation to the faith of Islam.

made and used. It was the sight of vines and ivy, somewhere not far from the present Jellalabad, which confirmed the Greeks with Alexander in their belief that it was from that part of the world Dionysos came, and they held high festival in honour of the god while passing through on their way to India.* The houses are constructed principally of wood, and elaborately carved. Chairs are used, which is a marked distinction from the habits of the people of India, where we have the remarkable fact of a population of 200,000,000 who manage to exist without seats. The Kafirs bury their dead, placing the bodies in a box, which is laid on a shelf of rock on the top of a hill. Their custom is to put a stick over the body, with a notch upon it for every Mahomedan the individual had killed. They have temples which contain images of their gods, generally carved in wood, and the walls are ornamented with the antlers of deer. Among their gods they have the name of Mahadeo, showing a Brahminical connection in their faith, but their principal deity, of which they consider all the other gods to be merely fractional parts or incarnations, is Dogan, a name almost identical with the fish god of the Euphrates Valley and Syria in ancient times. The kings of this region are called Oda and Odashooh. One of their customs presents another difficulty which an explorer will have to encounter, and that is, the first woman he might chance to meet—or party of women, for polygamy is allowed—would propose to him on the spot, and the answer he gives will be of but small consequence so far as the final result is concerned; while once in the bonds of matrimony in Kafirstan the fair creatures are said to take great care in preventing the only means of getting a divorce in that land—that is, by making a bolt of it.

I shall next give some account of the explorations I carried out among the Buddhist remains of the Jellalabad Valley under the auspices of the late Sir Louis Cavagnari. The remains of the Buddhist monasteries and monuments are so numerous that they would imply the existence at a former date of a population of monks two or three times as great as the whole population of the valley at the present moment.

* Alexander's people identified a city 'between the two rivers Coppenes and Indus,' which they supposed was named after their god, and they called it *Dionysopolis*. At the west end of the Valley of Jellalabad the town of Adinapur is referred to by Vivian de Saint-Martin as the remains of the name. He explains the original word to have been the Sanscrit *Oudyandpouira*, 'la Ville du Jardin,' and thinks that the Greeks supposed it was derived from *Dionysos*.

thus showing that the country has gone backward in civilisation since the Buddhist period. It cannot now be said that either art or architecture exists. Houses are constructed of mud. Jellalabad is only a large village formed out of this material; its walls are of the same, and its streets are filled with dust and filth. The name Jellalabad means 'City of Splendour.' Our soldiers, not seeing any splendour, and not caring much about questions of etymology, gave it what they thought to be the nearest English equivalent, and called it 'Jolly-be-dad.' In the days of Buddhism both art and architecture flourished, and the remains show that there must have been great wealth in the region. The Chinese pilgrim Hiouen Tshang states that at a monastery at Hido—now Hada, in which was preserved a celebrated relic, the skull-bone of Buddha—the buildings were covered with gold, and he describes other buildings which were decorated with gold and precious substances, as well as with sculpture and paintings. One of the results of archæological research in India has been the discovery that a Greek influence in art and architecture had penetrated as far as the Indus and into the Punjab. This influence is assumed to have come by way of Bactria at some period after the date of Alexander. This point was for some time doubted, but it is no longer a subject of dispute, and during my stay in the Jellalabad Valley I collected sufficient amount of data to extend our knowledge on this interesting branch of study as far as that locality is concerned. In one of the explored Topes I was fortunate enough to reach its central cell, where I found a gold relic-holder, about four inches long, and set with stones; along with it were twenty gold coins, each being about the size of an English sovereign. Seventeen of these were Indo-Scythian, dating from about the end of the last century B.C. and the beginning of the first century of the Christian era. The three other coins were Roman, and belonged to the reigns of Domitian, Trajan, and the empress of Hadrian. Thus we have evidence that coins came as well as art from the West at that period, and these would indicate a commercial connection reaching as far as the Mediterranean, which gives us another glimpse of the civilisation of the time. Major Cavagnari sent all these objects to Lord Lytton, and they will form part of the very fine collection of coins from that part of the world in the India House.

Once only at Gundumuck had I a chance of going up the sides of the Suffaid Koh, and on this occasion it was but a short distance. The ascent was made in company with the late Sir Louis Cavagnari, a name you are now familiar with,

owing to his sad but heroic end. I can speak of him as a friend; for six months we were in camp together, and during that time I was brought into close relations with him. He supplied the working party of natives for my explorations at Jellalabad, and the success which attended them gave him great satisfaction, and he was highly pleased at being able to send the results to the Viceroy. I can speak in the highest terms of him as a man, and I know well of the great ability he brought to bear on the department to which he belonged. Had he returned to Cabul with Yakoob Khan after the Peace of Gundumuck was signed, I have no doubt that I should have gone with him, for my desire was strong to reach that place, in order to get to Bamian, a spot about 100 miles still farther to the north, on the road to Balkh, where there exists a remarkable group of caves and colossal figures cut out of the rock, which have never been properly drawn. He knew of this desire on my part, and from our relationship I have no doubt but he would have permitted me to have accompanied him. When the peace was signed he had not received his appointment, and he was ordered back to Simla. I confess to having left Gundumuck with feelings of great disappointment at the non-realisation of my hopes, but since the unfortunate events at Cabul have taken place I look upon it now as probably lucky that I did not succeed in my efforts to penetrate further into Afghanistan. I also knew the other officers, Jenkyns, Hamilton, and Kelly, who fell so gallantly together in the Residency at Cabul. To know people, and to have been intimate with them, adds much to one's feelings on hearing of such a fate as befell these men. I never think of Cavagnari's death and the struggle with his assailants but our visit to the Suffaid Koh comes back to my recollection, and from what I am going to relate you will see how the events are linked together.

It was on April 21 last year that we left the camp at Suffaid Sung. Tanner and Scott, of the Survey Department, went with us; Colonel Jenkins, of the Guides, and Rose and Bellew, of the 10th Hussars, were also of the party. We rode in the direction of the Murkhi Kheyl Gorge, and numbers of the Murkhi Kheyls joined us at the foot of the hills, where we left our horses. We climbed up the rocky side of a spur overlooking the valley by which the stream flows out from the mountains. We reached a commanding point about 8,000 feet above the sea, and as it gave me a good view of the Jugdul-luck Pass in the distance, as well as a peep of the snowy peaks of the Hindoo Kush beyond, I sat down to sketch. The

two survey men went up higher, hoping to be able to fix some of the more distant points, and all our party went up with them except Cavagnari, who sat down where I was sketching. It threatened rain, and a few flakes of snow fell. This, at the height we were, made it cold, and Cavagnari's chuprassie, with some of the Murkhi Kheyls, gathered some wood and lighted a fire, round which they sat. Among the Murkhi Kheyls I noticed an old man, whose face struck me, and I made him sit to take a sketch of him, and this led to Cavagnari asking his name and age, as well as other particulars. He was called Mullick Meer Alum, and on being asked if he remembered when the Sahib log were there before, forty years ago, he said yes, and that he was a 'juwan' or young man then, and that he was out with the others when the fighting took place. The hill near Gundumuck, where the last remnant of the 44th Regiment and the few officers and men, being all that remained after the massacre of our army, made their final stand, was visible from where we sat, and the man was led into giving a description of what he remembered of the event. The interest Cavagnari took in the old man's story was very marked. He was evidently anxious to get every possible detail from this eye-witness of the scene, and cross-questioned him on many of the points related. His account agreed perfectly with what we know from other sources. He said the Afghans would not make an attack on the hill while the ammunition of the soldiers lasted—they kept firing from a long distance; but as soon as they found out that the powder and shot were finished, the Afghans closed in, and a hand-to-hand fight began. For a short time the struggle was desperate; our soldiers, the old man said, fought like 'shaitans,' or devils, before they gave in. To all this I saw Cavagnari listening so eagerly that I am sure it went deeply into his memory, and the story has such a striking resemblance to what took place with himself and his companions, only a month or two afterwards, that I feel sure that on the day when they were defending the Residency, and surrounded by overpowering numbers, the memory of this old man telling his tale on the side of the Suffaid Koh must have come back to Cavagnari's thoughts, in the same way as the account of the events brought him back to mine.