

on its first visit should climb as many peaks and explore as many valleys as it can. It will not have time or inclination to tackle the countless difficult rock-problems and ridge-traverses elaborated by the Continental climbers. I do not know if the bacillus of the 6th Grade delirium has infected the local experts: perhaps there are no vertical faces of sufficient horror to attract it: but it is a pity that ironmongery is so plentiful on the easy routes wherever a step occurs that would puzzle an active cow.

The Tatra is far away, and distant travel is expensive. For this reason alone it is unlikely that its undeniable attractions will ever compete with the still greater merits of nearer ranges in the affections of Britons. But those who do go there will find plenty to interest and amuse them, and may be sure of a very friendly reception among a charming people.

PASSES—NORTHERN YASIN.

BY REGINALD SCHOMBERG.

THE following paper gives an account of two passes in Yasin (Gilgit Agency) which were crossed in July 1933. There would appear to be no record of previous visits, and the natives of the place were quite positive that no European had ever traversed these passes. Darkot, which lies in the centre of the routes, besides being the most northerly village in Yasin, is the scene of the murder of George Hayward on July 18, 1870.

The people of Yasin are very fair mountaineers. They are not so good as the Hunza men, who are conspicuously the best for pluck, activity and endurance of any of the tribes in the N.-W. Himalaya, nor are they as active as their neighbours of Punyal. They are, however, a good third; moreover, we found that they improved very much on further acquaintance. As I had Hunza men with me, the behaviour of the Yasin men was judged rather critically.

The mountains behind Darkot, that is the range between Chitral and Yasin, are described as the Hindu Raj, which as a name for a subordinate mountain system is satisfactory enough, but I do not see how they can escape classification as part of the Hindu Kush. The narrow gorge of the Yarkhun river (identical with the Mastuj and Chitral river) divides the Hindu Kush and the Hindu Raj, the valley slope on the right belonging to the former, while on the left it is the latter's property. As a handy label, the name may therefore stand.

Our journeys were made in July under favourable conditions, but the flowers were disappointing. We were too late for most alpines at lower levels, but even in the higher ones we failed to find any. I certainly expected to meet with primulae near the top of the passes, but failed to notice a trace.

The Daspur Valley, Yasin, Gilgit Agency.

A well-known route leads from the Yasin to Chitral by the Thui valley and the Thui Pass. Our route to Darkot led up this Thui valley as far as the village of Harf, but as the whole of the lower valley is a series of small adjacent hamlets, it is immaterial where one halts. The last village is the Thui, it is the last habitation until Darkot is reached, and the only point to bear in mind is to make the necessary arrangements.

We accordingly camped in a pleasant orchard one march from Yasin town, on the next day crossed the Thui river and entered the mouth of the Daspur nala. The word Daspur means uninhabitable, but the new *Survey of India* map gives the name Chainter (I have seen it spelt Ghainter, which is a clerical error).

In spite of its name, we found several patches of cultivation, and even a few huts, but in the fields destroyed by flood and moraine there was ample evidence to justify the name. There was no sign of a track anywhere, after the first two or three miles, and even our local coolies had to make several casts before they were able to settle on a right route.

A feature of the Daspur nala was its high and precipitous sides with very few lateral openings. We passed a number of small glaciers high above these cliffs which sent down pleasant waterfalls, though the glaciers themselves were out of sight. There was, however, on the left of the valley, one fairly wide but short glen, the Chelish Bar, with a glacier at its head.

The main valley was broad and indeed would be level were it not for the moraines, which make the track trying, and destroy the valley bed. The growth of the trees and brushwood was remarkable: poplars, willows, birch, pencil cedar and smaller bushes grew densely and luxuriantly. At Tashish (marked Hakal on the map) were some poor houses and cultivation, but the fields were only sown in alternate years. The wild roses were abundant and very beautiful, generally a deep rich, pink colour with nothing anæmic about them. The upper part of the Daspur is known as Chapardan, and we camped $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles below the snout of the glacier which flows from the E., blocks the valley completely and endeavours to climb up the right side. During the night, July 22, 1933, a heavy thunder storm struck us, but the next day the weather which had hitherto been dull and threatening became brilliantly fine.

Less than 2 miles above our camp the valley divided, sending arms at right angles to E. and W. The latter, although short and but little longer than the eastern arm, was the main one; at its head was a superb cirque of snow and glacier, a scene that alone repaid us for our trouble. We now set out to climb to the pass at the head of the eastern affluent, the entire valley being filled with the glacier flowing from the Ghamubar massif. This imposing name merely

means 'ice valley,' a disappointing one and of no value for identification.

The comparison between the two arms of the Daspur was interesting. The eastern arm was little exposed to the sun and was filled with a fine glacier; the western, facing E. and S., and in spite of the enormous deposits of snow and ice at its head, was an open grassy area with shale sides. We climbed up the right shaly bank of the valley, with the glacier beside us a yard or two on our right and, as we advanced, saw close and clear immediately opposite to us the wonderful gleaming Ghamu Bar Glacier itself, in reality not one but a series of glaciers descending parallel to one another but just failing to connect. The icefall was magnificent, and as we groaned, panted and sweated up the steep, yielding slopes of shale, we were rewarded a thousandfold for our effort.

I do not suppose, however, that the porters gave a thought to the scenery, for they were much too intent on choosing the easiest way up and looking out for wild rhubarb roots to bother about so commonplace a feature in their daily lives as a glacier. Besides this rhubarb we passed some wild onions, columbines and anemones and, after 5 hours' hard work, reached the top of the pass. I had, by a stupid accident, mislaid my instruments, but I judged the crest to be about 13,000 ft. high. Darkot itself lies at 9000 ft., and we were about 4000 ft. above it. The view before us was distinctly disappointing, for at our feet, 6 or 7 miles away, were the fields and houses of Darkot with its very broad river bed covered with abundant trees. Mountain pinnacles, black and thinly coated with snow, surrounded us. A good view, perhaps, but it was a very different one that met our eyes as we turned and looked behind us for, as we gazed, we saw before us a perfect panorama, extending from the extreme W. to the extreme E. of the horizon.

The top of the pass was free from snow, save for a few strips, and we sat in the sun and enjoyed the prospect. At last we were obliged to descend, which we did at a great pace down a soft shale slope, as steep as the side of a house, and a heart-breaking climb in the reverse direction. Half-way down we found a quantity of rhubarb, tender, juicy and sweet, and we stayed to eat it. Raw rhubarb can be very good at times—we all enjoyed it.

We were now in the valley of which the three Darkot glaciers are the chief feature. Passing the first or upper one on our right, which though a lovely green is the least important, we camped close to the central and largest glacier. This flowed first across and then turned down the main valley, leaving room for a small stream from the upper glacier between its moraine and the left of the valley. By this time it was too far to go on to Darkot that night, and the porters were exhausted. The Yasin people seldom accomplish coolie work; nevertheless, they were decent, willing creatures and gave us no trouble. The Yasini is a great eater, feeding six times a day if he can.



Photo, R. Schomberg.]

GHAMU BAR GLACIER, FROM NEAR TOP OF THE PASS, LOOKING S.E.



Photo, R. Schomberg.]

PEAKS OF DASPUR. LOOKING W. FROM BELOW THE GHAMU BAR PASS.

[To face p. 318.]



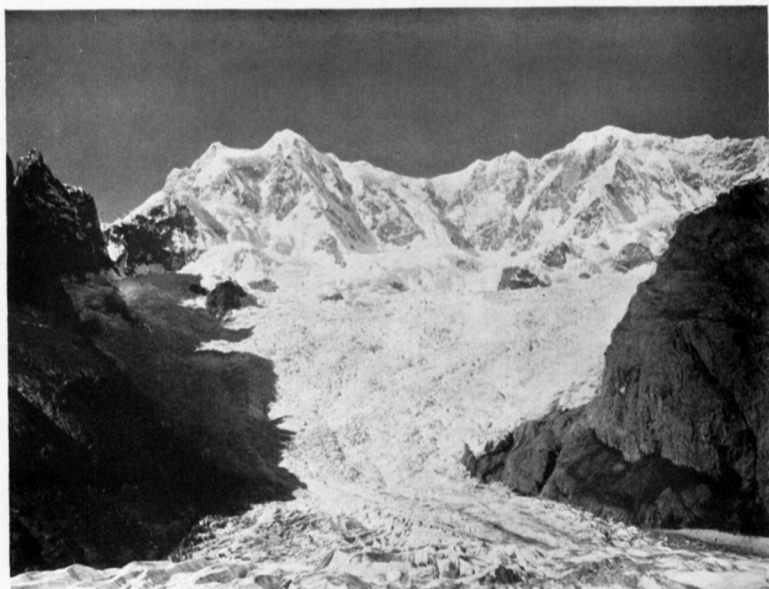
Photo, R. Schomberg.]

PANORAMA OF DASPUR VALLEY FROM TOP OF GHAMU BAR PASS.



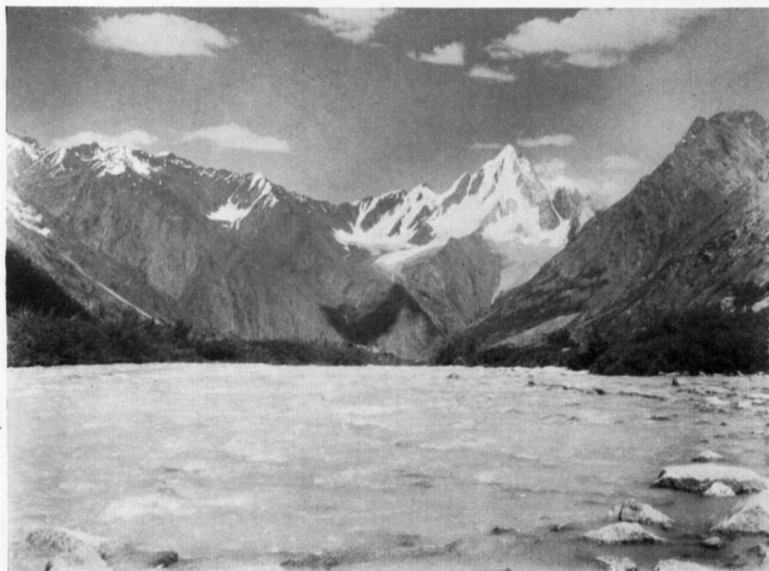
Photo, R. Schomberg.]

PANORAMA OF DASPUR FROM TOP OF GHAMU BAR LOOKING W.



Photo, R. Schomberg.]

DARKOT GLACIERS.



Photo, R. Schomberg.]

**THE KHAMPAR PEAKS, MATANTER VALLEY, LOOKING E. FROM JUST BELOW
THE E. END OF THE ATRO SAR LAKE, ISHKOMAN.**

[To face p. 319.

The next day we continued our way to Darkot, obtaining a good and close view of the glaciers on our right. I walked for nearly 2 miles on the ridge of moraine along the left side of the main glacier. On my right was a perpendicular drop of 40 ft. on to the ice, on my left a steep slope (45°) hard as a brick and with no foothold. As we had only six inches to walk on I hated every inch of that promenade, but my men made light of it. I was compensated by the view of the great glacier with its triple and imposing icefall. The colour of these Darkot glaciers, clear and green, was a joy in itself; and, as I have already mentioned, the course of the central and biggest glacier, first across and then down the valley, was remarkable, proving how flexible, how verily a river of ice, a glacier is. It continued its course till it came to the wide stony flood bed of the river and to the trees that covered it. There it stopped, throwing up séracs and pinnacles covered with black moraine. Darkot was close beyond. We had only to traverse the trees and brushwood, ford the river and reach the village.

The impressiveness of the Darkot glaciers is due less perhaps to their size than to the way in which they begin as high remote hanging glaciers, continue as striking icefalls and then slide neatly into the valley. The best view of these was on the way down to Darkot from the Darkot pass (4300 ft.), leading to Chitral, as we were too close to enjoy the whole unimpeded view. On the way from this pass, however, down the break-neck, headlong path, the whole of the Darkot massif is seen wrapped in its green and white cloak of glaciers. The eye embraces the whole prospect; the drapery of the mountains, the sweep of the icefalls, the harmony of the setting, snow and glaciers with the dark forest beside—all combining to form an incomparable view.

The Atar Pass and Lake, Yasin, Gilgit Agency.

The most northerly village in Yasin is Darkot and from it there are two routes to the next valley and state, Ishkoman. The usual way is by the Ishkoman Pass and the uplands of Holojut and thence to the village of Ishkoman on the route of the same name. This village is now rather a mournful little place, and from being the one village in the state has, thanks to recent development, become side-tracked and ignored. The Rajah does not live here, indeed few people have ever visited it. The Holojut route is frequented by travellers from Wakhan and Northern Chitral, who cross the Darkot Pass to visit their friends in local, upper Ishkoman where Wakhis are numerous. There is a drawback to this route, however, in the glacier a mile long on the Yasin side—not a great hindrance, but still one worth considering. On the Ishkoman side of the pass there is no snow or ice and, the glacier once achieved, the rest of the route is easy and direct. Thus we were told, but not quite accurately.

The alternative and quite unknown way is over the Atar or Atro

Pass. It is very little longer and has the great merit of being ice-free. The real drawback is that as no one uses it there is no path, the route is not known and everything has to be improvised. Actually, it turned out to be simple enough. European travellers in remote mountain regions forget that passes, difficult for them with their luggage and other complications, are simple enough to the sure-footed, lightly-laden and local travellers. Thus it is that the glacier on the Ishkoman Pass meant nothing to these folk, but alarmed us considerably.

For the first 8 miles after leaving Ishkoman the route to both passes is the same, up the valley and stream irrigating Darkot, known variously as the Nia Gahgah or Tsil-i-Harang. The routes then diverge, that by the Ishkoman Pass turns right (E.), crosses the stream and vanishes up a side valley. The other continues up the right of the main valley till it bifurcates and then turns E. up a side nala. The main valley—for this part of the N.-W. Karakoram—is well wooded with much low brushwood, chiefly willow. The grazing is ample, the water good and, considering the height, the valley is sheltered.

Continuing up the eastern arm of the valley, the track turns left and ignores a branch to the S.E. This last valley of Yasin was an attractive place with good camping sites, plenty of grass and wood, amenities usually rare in the Karakoram. There were numerous yaks, but the inhabitants do not know how to tend them, an art seemingly reserved for Wakhis. I have often failed to understand why in Yasin, Punyal and neighbouring states yaks are kept, yet allowed to roam about in a wild state. Their valuable products are lost and, except for occasionally being slaughtered for food, the beasts do not benefit their owners. The Wakhis ride them, use them as pack animals, make rope of their hair and milk them; but not even the sight of these many advantages will induce their neighbours to follow their example.

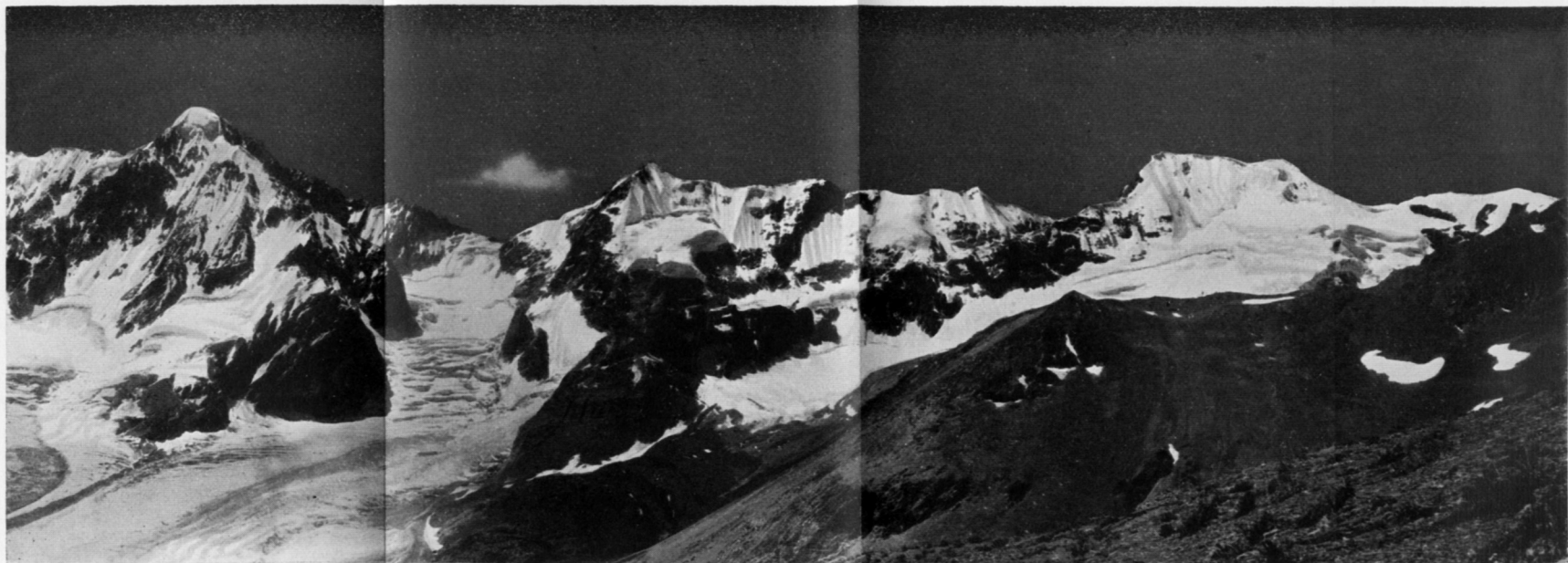
Although we had been told that there was no ice or snow on the Atar Pass, we had to cross some. Continuing up the side valley over shale, we proceeded to the W. on to a glacier covered with small stones and shale. In 1933 we found this glacier gave us no trouble at all until we were within two hundred yards of the sky-line. There the snow was too deep and the gradient too steep for the ponies, although I am afraid we did not take the trouble to make the necessary zigzags in the slope before us. Accordingly, we man-handled the kit to the top, leaving the ponies below. The glacier could have been avoided by skirting the right (N.) side of the nala, but it meant an unnecessary détour, there being no real difficulties.

It is the custom of the country, one rarely departed from, that no transport leaves its own territory, so that on reaching the summit of the pass, the frontier between Ishkoman and Yasin, we found the people of the former place squatting amiably on the top. We were disappointed. Our Yasin men had done well, were keen and



Photo, R. Schomberg.]

PANORAMA OVER ISHKOMAN LOOKING E. FROM TOP OF ATAR PASS.



Photo, R. Schomberg.]

VIEW EAST. View of Cirque from 1 mile below the summit of the Atar or Atro Pass on the Ishkoman side.

intelligent, while the spectacle of the Ishkoman folk, small and feeble, looking more like newly hatched chickens than coolies, depressed us very greatly. Poor little things, it was not perhaps their fault that they were so unsatisfactory.

We were again well recompensed for our trouble by the magnificent view. Behind us, to the W., was the Darkot massif, a noble feature, but not seen to advantage from this point since looking curiously dwarfed. In front of us, however, on the Ishkoman side, was an immense amphitheatre surrounded by a circle of snowy peaks and hanging glaciers which combined to send down a large but dirty glacier. Beyond was a medley of all the peaks of Hunza and Ishkoman, together with those on the remote borders of Afghanistan and Chitral marching with these two states. It was a beautiful day and the distant summits swam in a pale azure haze, very slight it is true, but just perceptible, faint and softening. Sweeping from E. to W., nearer us, on our right, was an almost perpendicular wall of rock, with glaciers clinging to its black sides, prominent against the background of snow.

We paid off the Yasinis, bade them good-bye, and then began the descent. Porters can easily manage to descend the steep slope, but animals would always have to take the southern slope of the valley head, cross the glacier and then continue down the glen between glacier and hillside. We were right in our pessimistic views about the Ishkoman coolies; they were indeed poor creatures. All they had to do was to pick up the loads and let their legs go; but not at all—they screamed, chattered and wailed; every hundred yards they stopped to talk and grumble, yet no laden porter could have wished for an easier path or lighter loads. Unfortunately, as we found later, the inhabitants of Ishkoman are invariably feeble and feckless—as useless a lot as can be found anywhere.

We at last, after many aggravating delays, reached the bottom of the valley and came to that singular feature of the route, the Atar (or Atro) Sar, a curious sage-green glacier lake about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long. Its colour was so strange that we did not realize at first that we were looking at a sheet of water. Owing to the cliffs along the northern side, we had to follow the path along the right or southern bank of the lake and the going was abominable. The stretches of moraine and of stone-shoots were tedious and laborious, delaying us so much that our rate was less than one mile an hour on what was the flat, in theory at least.

The eastern or exit end of the lake was agreeable and, after crossing the stream, we camped on a delightful alluvial grassy plain with abundant wood and grass. The people say that the lake is three-quarters to one mile less than it used to be. The glacier streams that fill the lake were quite hideous, black and full of silt, so that it is remarkable that the lake is not dingier and drabber than it is. A large moraine came down from the right or S. side of the lake, while immediately opposite, from a nala with a fine glacier,

came a moraine of a rather different nature ending in a plain of detritus and of soft deposit, stretching for 600 yards across the top of the lake, forming in fact the pleasant site on which we were encamped. It seemed to me that this soft deposit was not only slowly subsiding, but was also being washed away. For this reason the lake appeared to be losing its volume. Much of the level was swampy; seepage and underground drainage also drew away much of the water. The head of the lake showed that a good deal of water had been lost as there was a stretch of level, marshy land with grass and a little undergrowth. Below the end of the lake, the ground fell away rapidly and, as the stream was the natural outlet of the lake, the former drained away most of the water. It was the subsidence of the moraine and its failure to hold up the water supply that reduced the area of the Atar Sar.

We descended very rapidly down a valley becoming abundantly wooded as we reached lower levels; we then turned S. joining the main Ishkoman river and the customary route over the Ishkoman Pass and by the Holojut uplands.

There was nothing difficult about this journey, and we were able to see unknown valleys which, undoubtedly, would repay further exploration. It is true that the Atro Sar has been surveyed by an Indian surveyor for the new map of the country, but it will be realized how much more there is to do beyond what comes within a surveyor's province. In summer shepherds and their families live close to the mouth of the lake and numerous animals are left to graze near by. It is not an ideal pasture, however, as the moraines are dangerous for horses and cattle and there is much swampy terrain. None of these considerations struck the Ishkomans, although some mention of damage to their animals was made.

AVALANCHE DAYS IN THE OBERSULTAL.

BY P. J. H. UNNA AND N. S. FINZI.

THE Gross Venediger is probably the finest of the more popular ski tours in the Eastern Alps, the traverse from Vent to Sölden by way of the Wildspitze, perhaps excepted. It is said that there is no reasonably safe approach to the former from the S. by the Frosnitzal, and it is more ordinarily reached from the Oberpinzgau, the Obersulztal and Kürsinger hut providing the most direct route. Willy Koller, however, suggests in his *Ski Guide* that the longer way round by the Krimmlertal and Warnsdorfer hut, and so over the Krimmlertörl, may be safer. In any case, the latter route includes a pass, and so increases the interest of the trip by enabling one to return down a different valley; and it must be well worth taking if the Krimml falls, and the almost tediously flat valley above, are as beautiful in winter as in summer. Incidentally, the Krimmler Tauernhaus is