



Islam Pau

THROUGH ASIA

BY

SVEN HEDIN

WITH NEARLY THREE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SKETCHES
AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

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TO
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE OF WALES
THIS RECORD OF
NEARLY FOUR YEARS' TRAVELS
IS
BY HIS PERMISSION
RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY
DEDICATED

CONTENTS

A SUMMER-TRIP TO THE SOUTHERN PAMIRS

	CHAPTER LIII	PAGE
OVER THE ULLUG-ART PASS		667
	CHAPTER LIV	
WITH THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION		684
	CHAPTER LV	
FESTIVITIES ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD		694
	CHAPTER LVI	
OVER THE MOUNTAINS TO THE YARKAND-DARIA		701
	CHAPTER LVII	
DOWN THE YARKAND-DARIA AND TO KASHGAR		710

ACROSS THE DESERT OF GOBI TO LOP-NOR

	CHAPTER LVIII	
FROM KASHGAR TO KARGALIK		721
	CHAPTER LIX.	
ALONGSIDE THE DESERT TO KHOTAN		731
	CHAPTER LX	
CITY AND OASIS OF KHOTAN		748
	CHAPTER LXI	
BORASAN AND ITS ARCHÆOLOGICAL REMAINS		759
	CHAPTER LXII	
HISTORY OF KHOTAN		776

CONTENTS

vii

CHAPTER LXIII

THE BURIED CITY OF FAKA MAKAN

PAGE
788

CHAPTER LXIV

A CURIOUS SHEPHERD RACE

806

CHAPTER LXV

DOWN THE KUI-YA-DARIA

812

CHAPTER LXVI

WHERE THE WILD CAMEL LIVES

825

CHAPTER LXVII

WHERE IS THE TARIM?

836

CHAPTER LXVIII

THROUGH THE FOLKLANDS OF THE TARIM

844

CHAPTER LXIX

AT KOKIA AND KAKA-SHAHR

855

CHAPTER LXX

THE LOP-NOR PROBLEM

864

CHAPTER LXXI

A BOAT EXCURSION ON THE NORTHERN LOP-NOR

885

CHAPTER LXXII

ALONG PRZHEVANSKY'S LOP-NOR BY BOAT

900

CHAPTER LXXIII

THE RETURN TO KHOTAN

914

CHAPTER LXXIV

THE SEQUEL OF MY DESERT JOURNEY

924

THROUGH NORTHERN TIBET AND TSAIDAM

CHAPTER LXXV

OVER THE KWEN-LUN PASSES

941

CHAPTER LXXVI

MY CARAVAN ITS SEVERAL MEMBERS

953

CHAPTER LXXVII			
WE ENTER UNINHABITED REGIONS			950
CHAPTER LXXVIII			
AMONGST THE SPURS OF THE AREA-TAGH			974
CHAPTER LXXIX			
SEARCHING FOR A PASS			982
CHAPTER LXXX			
THE DECEITFUL TAGHLIKS			991
CHAPTER LXXXI			
OVER THE AREA-TAGH AT LAST			1002
CHAPTER LXXXII			
THE WILD ASS			1019
CHAPTER LXXXIII			
HUNTING THE WILD YAK	.	.	1030
CHAPTER LXXXIV			
LAKES WITHOUT END	.	.	1039
CHAPTER LXXXV			
TIBETAN STORMS	.	.	1050
CHAPTER LXXXVI			
DISCOVERIES OF INSCRIBED STONES	.	.	1069
CHAPTER LXXXVII			
INHABITED REGIONS AGAIN			1079
CHAPTER LXXXVIII			
AMONG THE MONGOLS OF TSAIDAM	.	.	1090
CHAPTER LXXXIX			
THROUGH THE DESERT OF TSAIDAM	.	.	1105
CHAPTER XC			
AMONG THE MONGOLIAN LAKES			1119
CHAPTER XCI			
AN ENCOUNTER WITH TANGUT ROBBERS	.	.	1129

CONTENTS

IX

FROM TSAIDAM TO PEKING

CHAPTER XCII

PAGE

THROUGH THE COUNTRY OF THE LANGUTS 1143

CHAPTER XCIII

KOKO NOR 1155

CHAPTER XCIV

FROM KOKO NOR TO TEN-KAK 1168

CHAPTER XCV

THE TEMPLE OF TEN THOUSAND IMAGES 1177

CHAPTER XCVI

SI-NING FU AND THE DUNGAN REVOLT 1199

CHAPTER XCVII

FROM SI-NING FU TO LIANG-CHOW FU 1210

CHAPTER XCVIII

THROUGH THE DESERT OF ALA SHAN 1229

CHAPTER XCIX

WANG-YIH-FU AND NING SHA 1239

CHAPTER C

TO PEKING AND HOME 1249

INDEX 1263

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Portrait of Isan Ba	657
Portrait of another	659
a shop in a caravan	671
a mercant of East Turkestan	673
a Karguz gun	677
The pass of Uung an	679
a Karguz and its tent on a slope	681
Karguz and near Mus-agra-a	685
Part of the Hindu-uran near Uprav	687
End of a game at Uprav	689
Chamalchen-zul, looking west	691
Group of Karguz from the eastern Pamirs	703
M. Dana, the commandant of Tash-mungan	705
A Ta-lu-kan of the Tagik-mongol Pamirs	713
Crossing the Ras-an-ara	723
a desert being a river	727
Street in a Central Asian town	729
Bazars	733
L. Davit, the amban (governor) of Karguz	735
The village of Guma	737
a pile of "m. s. stone" on the roof of Kholan	741
a scene in Guma	743
Street and irrigation canal in Guma	751
Crown in "m. s."	755
The Bazaar, or market-place, of Kholan	761
Chinese silver and bronze coins (new and old)	764
Terra-cotta objects from Borasan (camels and horses)	769
Terra-cotta heads from Borasan	772
Terra-cotta lions' heads from Borasan	773
Grotesques from Borasan	775
Bronze bodhisattvas from Borasan	779
Bronze Buddhas from Borasan	783
Gems from Borasan	785
Copper vase found at Wasp-shahn	790
Medals found at Kholan	795
Old copper spoons and iron arrow-head from Tash-ke	799
The first ancient coin discovered in the desert east of the Kerkiz-kan	799
Plaster Buddhas (from the first ancient city west of Kerkiz-kan)	799

	PAGE
Mural painting from the first ancient town east of the Keriya darra	<i>Face page</i> 800
Mural painting from the first ancient town east of the Keriya darra	" " 810
Shepherd family at Tonbur lasste (Keriyā darra)	<i>By G Lundberg</i> 813
Sub structure of a house (in the second ancient town of the desert west of the Keriyā darra)	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 817
Mohammed Pa	820
Mohammed Bays reed hut (sattma)	821
Head of a wild camel	828
Head of a tame camel	829
Crossing the Konech darra	865
Crossing a branch of the Konech darra coming from Maltak toll	" 869
A refractory camel, crossing the Konech darra	<i>By G Lundberg</i> 873
Lop men on the Laram, near Kum chappgan	" 879
The reeds of Kara toll on fire	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 887
The Author in a canoe on the Kara koshun	<i>By I Nyblom</i> 891
A little Lop boy from Saddi toll	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 895
A Lop man in his canoe	901
Kunchellān Pē, of Abdal	904
The daughter in law of Kunchellān Beg	905
Boys from Kum chappgan Lop nor	908
Boating among the reeds of the southern Lop nor	<i>By D Jungdahl</i> 911
Village near Khotan (a bazaar day)	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 917
Iu Darin, amban of Khotan	" 927
A bazaar street in Khotan	<i>By P Larsson Palm</i> 933
The chapp or ravine of Tollan khoja	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 943
Togdā Mohammed Beg, of Kopa	946
Our camp in the Sarik lol valley, looking south	949
One of our Taghlik s	966
Arka tagh, seen from the Tibetan plateau (south)	971
Scene of Littlede's camp, not far from my camp No VIII in Northern Tibet	" 989
Trial of the Taghlik runaways	<i>By M Adlercreutz</i> 995
The Arka tagh where we crossed it, seen from our first camp to the south of it	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1004
A part of the Arka tagh, seen from the south	" 1013
A wounded khulan (wild ass)	1021
A gull (harghait) from North Tibet	1023
Sunset at camp No XV	" 1025
The great salt lake of camp No XV (view from its eastern shore)	" 1026
View, looking west, from camp No XVIII	" 1028
The dead wild yak cow	" 1031
The wild yak bull	1034
The wild yak bull (front view)	" 1037
King Oscar Mountain, seen from the north	" 1041
The salt lake at camp No XXV	" 1045
Our caravan in a hailstorm, Northern Tibet	<i>By M Adlercreutz</i> 1053

	PAGE
Lake No 20, looking east	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1056
Lake No 20, looking north east	" 1057
Lake No 20, looking north west	" 1059
A hailstorm approaching the western gulf of Lake No 20, looking east south east	" 1062
The "kitchen" at camp No XXXII	<i>By M Adlerscutz</i> 1065
"The yak was on the point of tossing horse and rider on his horns"	" 1071
The "obo"	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1077
Sketch map of Northern China and Mongolia, showing Dr Hedin's itinerary	<i>Face page</i> 1079
Two Mongol men and a boy (<i>Dorchch at the top</i>)	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1083
Rocks at Harato, in the valley of the Yikch tsohan gol	" 1091
The Author arriving at the first Mongol camp at Yikch tsohan gol	<i>By L Nyblom</i> 1095
Terra cotta burkhans from Lhasa	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1099
Gavos, or cases, for burkhans (silver and copper)	" 1101
Mongol camp in Tsaidam	<i>By G Lundberg</i> 1107
A "tanka," or temple banner	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1111
A Mongol beggar	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1116
My Mongol guide, Loppsen	" 1121
Offerings at the "obo" of Ilakimto	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1125
"Tangut robbers! Tangut robbers!"	<i>By M Adlerscutz</i> 1131
"We maintained a vigilant watch against the Tanguts"	" 1137
A Tangut tent at Duln yung	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1145
A Tangut boy	" 1151
A Tangut	" 1156
The north western corner of Lake Koko nor	" 1161
A Tangut boy	" 1165
Cup, prayer drum, and prayer-wheels	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1174
A lama	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1179
Tibetan temple banner	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1183
Temple of Tsung Kaba in Kum bum	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1186
Temple banner, showing Lhasa, Kum bum, Tsung Kaba, etc.	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1187
A temple building and a group of lamas in Kum bum	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1191
A temple banner	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1194
The main street and market place in Luser	<i>Sketch by Author</i> 1197
One of the gates of Si ning fu	" 1201
An ornamental gate in the interior of Si ning fu	" 1205
Ping fan	" 1215
One of the gates of Liang chow fu	" 1219
The interior of a temple outside Liang chow fu	" 1222
The god of war at Liang chow fu	" 1224
Temple outside one of the gates of Liang-chow-fu	" 1225
Pagoda outside Liang-chow-fu	" 1231
Gate at Ning sha	" 1243
The Great Wall between Kalgan and Peking	" 1255
Mongol daggers from Kalgan	<i>Photograph by Dahllof</i> 1259

A SUMMER TRIP TO THE SOUTHERN
PAMIRS



1893

DR. SVEN HEDIN

CHAPTER LIII

OVER THE ULLUG-ART PASS

ON July 10th 1895, I left Kashgar with Islam Bai, two servants, and six horses, and did a short stage to the village of Tokkuz-ak (the Nine Whites). My other man, Kasim, remained behind in Kashgar as watchman of the courtyard of the consulate. One of the six horses, a little piebald stallion, was one of those I bought at the forest-hut, beside the Khotan-daria. It was a splendid animal, always full of go, and yet as tame as a lamb. For my own use I bought a big, but excellent riding-horse, and rode him over the mountains and through the deserts of Central Asia for more than a year. Horses are cheap in Kashgar. The five I bought there cost altogether only 124 roubles, or between £12 and £13.

The next day, July 11th, we continued our journey towards the south-west, to the town of Upal (2000 houses), which is also a fortress manned by two hundred men, and the place of residence of two mandarins of inferior rank. It poured and pelted with rain the whole day long, so that the ground, which was a reddish yellow loess, was greasy and slippery. Thoroughly wet to the skin, we took up our quarters in a house near the bazaar, and made a big fire at which to dry our wet clothes. The gardens, and rice and other fields, were irrigated by water drawn from a little stream, which flowed through the town after racing down the valley of Ullug-art on the west, and which was partly maintained from fresh springs. The current has scooped out for itself a deep and tolerably broad trench through the loess deposits. But in the

town its banks were not so precipitous, they rose gradually by a series of terraces, leaving room close down by the water's edge for the houses, which were built of sun-dried clay and covered in with flat wooden roofs. The opposite banks were connected by a wooden bridge.

A short time after we arrived at Upal, I witnessed an occurrence which I had never witnessed before, but which takes place every year in these regions. After a heavy, continuous rain the water which drains off the adjacent mountain-sides gathers into a *sil* (sudden flood or inundation), which in a few hours completely fills the river-bed, and may work very great destruction. In these sudden floods we see the agent which in the course of time has eroded the clay terraces so deeply.

About seven o'clock we heard a distant booming. It came rapidly nearer, at the same time increasing to a deafening roar. Down came the flood, a stupendous mass of water, rushing on with inconceivable violence, seething, foaming, and swiftly filling the river to the brim. The inhabitants ran down to the river-bank, uttering cries of alarm and gesticulating wildly. I and Islam Bai took our station on a protected roof. The next moment the avenues of willows and poplars, which lined both banks of the river, were covered by the flood. The ground seemed to shake under the impact of such a mass of unrestrained water. Clots of dirty foam tossed about on the tumbling waves. The spray smoked along the flood like a moving shower of mist. Tree-trunks, any amount of loose branches, haycocks, and other movable objects danced along the tossing current, drove against the banks, swung free, got caught in an eddy and plunged down out of sight, rolled up to the surface again, and once more became the sport of the irresistible flood. The bridge was broken down at the first onrush, and swept away, swaying from side to side, whilst its timbers creaked and groaned as it rolled over and over in the water.

The flood bore towards the right bank, and inundated

the principal street of the town. It poured into the lower-lying houses, and kept on rising and rising. The people who lived next the river came rushing out of their dwellings, shouting excitedly and dragging their household possessions after them, and sought safety upon the higher terraces. Some, bolder of heart, began to "cradge" or throw up temporary ridges of clay, to keep the water from entering their houses, and so washing away or destroying their property. In a couple of



A SHOP IN A BAZAAR

minutes the whole of the lower portion of the bazaar was muddy water. The air trembled with the awe-inspiring roar of the torrent. Women were wading up to the waist in water, carrying little children in their arms. Every house-roof was crowded with people. Those who had nothing to lose were able to give themselves up without qualm of conscience to the enjoyment of what was truly a magnificent spectacle. Fortunately the house in which we were lodged was a long way from the river, and never for a moment came in jeopardy.

As soon as everything was carried away to places of safety that could be so carried, the general attention was directed to the melon-gardens, on the slopes going down to the river. The gardens were trenched all over, and the water ran up the trenches with great speed. All the men of the town rushed off to the melon-gardens, caught up big armfuls of melons—ripe or not was all one—and ran with them to the foot of the terraces, where they threw the melons up to other men, who piled them up in heaps. In spite of that however a large portion of the crop was washed away by the flood. Meanwhile fifteen houses had entirely disappeared.

But no doubt the inhabitants of the place would profit from the disaster? Not in the least. The same thing happens every year. For no sooner is the flood past and gone than the people set to work and build up their houses on the very same sites where they stood before. The flood had already begun to subside by nine o'clock, and it fell so rapidly that by the forenoon of the next day, July 12th, the river had dropped back to its normal condition and was little more than a rivulet trickling along the bottom of its deeply eroded channel. Communication had been re-established between the opposite banks, but the scene presented was one of havoc and desolation. As a matter of precaution we stayed in Upal the rest of the day.

In the latitude in which we then were four passes led over the Mus-tagh or Kashgar Mountains, the eastern border-range of the Pamirs, namely Ayag-art (the Foot Pass), and Kazıg-art (named from a Kirghız sept?), which we had already left on our right as we journeyed to Upal, Buru-koss-davan (Wolf's Eye Pass), which was on the left of the road we had come, and lastly, Ullug-art (the Great Pass), the pass we chose. The last two are drained through the same glen, which issues upon the plains at a place called Orugumah, where the Chinese maintain a Kirghız karaol (post of observation). The Kirghız in that district belong to the Tavor sept. The most difficult of the four passes is Buru-koss, it is only used

when the other three are snowed up Ullug-art also is dangerous, and is not used unless the Ghez-dania is in flood and impassable Under the most favourable circumstances it is only practicable during two months in the year from the middle of June to the middle of August And throughout the entire twelve-month enormous masses of snow lie heaped up in the pass

Upon leaving Upal we crossed a desolate steppe country, which rose by a slow and gradual incline towards



A MERCHANT OF EAST TURKESIAN

the entrance of the glen that gave access to the pass But although the steppe was barren, it was trenched by several deep and wide ravines, the bottoms of which were green with fertile meadows, where sheep were grazing in large numbers Having traversed the steppe, we rode in between the grandiose columns of black and grey clay-slate which mark the entrance to the glen The ordinary poplar was common up to the end of our first day's journey, though we only saw one solitary willow, but after that tree vegetation ceased The features of the glen were sharply marked, a little brook of crystal water

ran down it in a bed eroded out of thick deposits of conglomerate. A short distance up, the glen was joined on the right by a little side-glen called Yamen-sara (the Paltry House)

On the afternoon of July 14th the atmosphere suddenly darkened in the higher regions of the mountains above us. It began to thunder and lighten, and the west wind drove the big dark clouds before it like sheep down the glen, and we were soon journeying through a pelting rain, which was both raw and cold. We put on our furs, and pushed on despite the rain. The path grew steeper and steeper the nearer we approached to the aul of Ullug-art. We could see it ahead of us, crowning a lofty conglomerate terrace high up on the right-hand side, and commanding an extensive bird's-eye view of the glen. The brook, now greatly swollen after the rain, raced down the glen, tinkling a metallic song. In the afternoon it came on to snow fast, and the ground was soon covered. The big feathery flakes drifted softly, softly down, like a flock of birds hovering on wing before settling, and great sullen clouds, heavy with snow, brooded over the mountains and the glen. I could easily have imagined it was the depth of winter, not the middle of July, the warmest month of the year. It was the general opinion of the Kirghiz that after this snowfall the pass would be impassable for three days, and if the storm continued it would possibly be closed altogether for that year. For it was no unusual thing for horses to be lost on the Ullug-art pass even in fine weather.

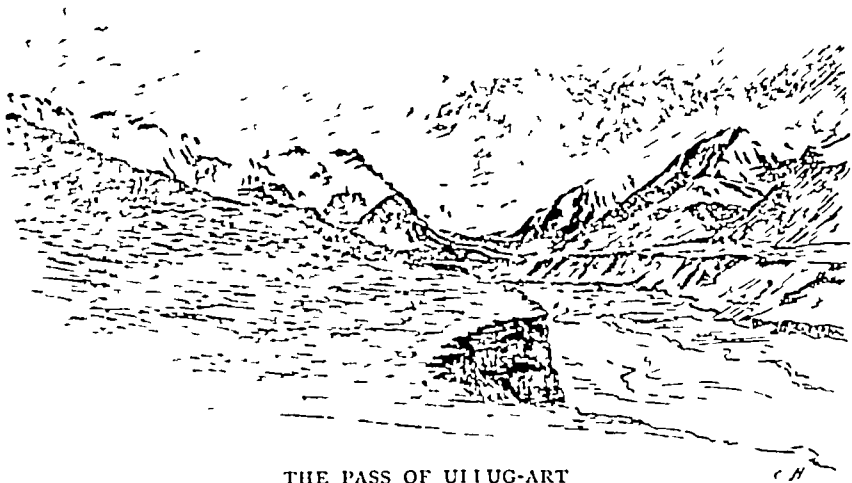
There was nothing for it, therefore, but to wait patiently until the weather improved, and fortunately we were well situated for waiting. The aul contained two first-class uy (tents), one occupied by Kipchak Kirghiz, the other by Naiman Kirghiz. There was plenty of pasture close by for our horses, and we bought a sheep from our hosts. The people, as well as the occupiers of another aul, lying still higher up the glen, only spend the summers in these elevated regions. In the winter they go down to the plains at the entrance of the glen.



A KIRGHIZ GIRL

S. H. T.

formidable precipice from which rocks of fantastic shape jutted out through snow. Down between these cliffy projections we had literally to slide and clamber on our hands and feet, now with our faces to the rock, now with our backs to it. The snow was two feet deep, and the Kirghiz were obliged to hew steps in it with the axe, before they could get the horses down. Then each horse was cleverly piloted down by two men, one leading the animal, the other holding on by its tail, so as to act as a sort of brake if the horse should lose its foothold. They managed to get them all safely down the first and most



THE PASS OF ULLUG-ART

difficult part of the precipitous slope, then it was the boxes' turn. A long rope was tied round each, and two men holding the rope, the box was let slide gently down the face of the precipice by its own weight. Then came a talus slope at an angle of thirty-five and a half degrees, littered with loose *débris*. Down this the horses were left to make their way by themselves. My piebald stallion from the Khotan-daria stumbled, rolled some thousand feet down into an abyss, broke his spine, and died on the spot. Ullug-art is a perilous pass, the worst I have ever crossed in any part of Asia.

The weather was abominable. The wind, from the south-west, drove the snow about us in blinding clouds. It was only by snatches, when the snowstorm momentarily

lifted, that I was able to get a glimpse of the magnificent panorama which lay spread out far down below our feet. On the left I got a bird's-eye view of a stupendous glacier, its surface shrouded in snow. Near its right-hand or upper edge there was a triangular moraine lake, fed by a stream which issued between two black, rugged cliffs from a secondary glacier above. The whole of the slope between the base of the secondary glacier and the moraine lake was strewn with pebbly *débris*, which, in consequence of the heavy rain and snowfall of the last few days, had become unsafe. In fact, the upper layer had already slipped, completely blotting out the track. For across that treacherous slope lay our path. Time after time whilst crossing it we slipped, and had great difficulty in avoiding a fall into the moraine lake some 160 feet below. It was a highly dangerous place, especially so if some of the large blocks of stone, which lay higher up, had started rolling down upon us. Here again therefore we unloaded the horses, and the Kirghiz carried their loads for about half a mile.

The gigantic glacier of Ullug-art overhung the upper end of the glen, presenting a slightly convex front between its enclosing cliffs. Our path ran down the slope between the ice and the right-hand side of the glen. We came to a second lake, immediately underneath the vertical glacier wall, which was reflected on its surface as on a piece of transparent glass. Several icebergs were floating on the lake, and its water kept changing from one shade of light green to another. The surface of the glacier inclined at a general angle of four degrees. Both the upper side-moraine, which we had already passed, and the terminal moraine were clearly distinguishable. A little further on we came to a third lake, the largest of the three, and some two miles wide. At that point we were again overtaken by a thick, blinding snowstorm so that we could scarcely see where we were going to. This lasted an hour, until we were clear of the steep slopes. Then it cleared, although the snowstorm continued to rage in the higher regions of the mountains.

After that we made rapid progress down the glen on the western side of the Ullug-art, the glen growing wider at every mile, and the snow on the mountains around us diminishing at the same time in quantity. At length, after fourteen hours in the saddle, we halted between two conglomerate hills, near the junction of the glen with the broad deep valley of Sarik-kol. Where we camped there was not a blade of grass, and we only got water by melting snow from a drift which lay in a sheltered crevice. We were now left to our own devices, for as soon as the Kirghiz had got us safely across the dangerous places they went back over the pass.



A KIRGHIZ AUL, OR TENT-VILLAGE

The next day, July 18th, we rode as far as the yeylau (summer camp) of Muji, consisting of sixty yurts, inhabited by Naiman Kirghiz. They spend the summer there, grazing their sheep, goats, yaks, horses, and camels. On the 20th we reached the aul of Chakker-aghil, with six yurts, and there we rested beside a little lake of the same name a couple of days, a period which I utilized in making observations. The name Chakker-aghil (the Shouting Tent-Village) probably owes its derivation to the fact, that the auls thereabouts stand so closely together that you can shout from the one to the other. The water in the little lake was the same colour as the water of Kara-kul, a beautiful blue-green. It was in part bordered

by detritus and sand, in part by reeds and seaweed (algæ), and on the west by rich meadows and marshes. The lake lay, as it were, wedged in the throat of the valley of Kamelah, and gathered into itself all the drainage-water of the valley.

I pass over our itinerary of the next few days only mentioning, that the route took us through Bulun-kul, Kara-kul, Su-bashi, and Gedyack—all of them districts that I had already visited. It was not until the 26th that I broke new ground, in that we crossed over the river basin of Tagharma, a stream which effects a confluence with the Kara-su, the river that drains the southern versant of Mus-tagh-ata. The conjoint stream then forces its way through the mountains in a narrow gorge called Tenghi. We travelled through the defile, which was only short. Further on the united Tagharma-Kara-su, known however by the latter name, Kara-su, poured itself into the Taghdumbash-daria, a stream which with almost incredible energy has cleft its way through the massive meridional mountain-chains that form, so to speak, the projecting rim of the Pamir plateau. That transverse valley, known as Shindeh-yilga, is, as might be supposed, close, confined, and wildly picturesque. The flood occupies it entirely so that it is only in cold winters, when the river is ice-bound, that it is possible to reach Yarkand by that route.

Previous to the confluence of the rivers, we had been going down the stream. After the confluence we left the defile of Shindeh-yilga on the left, and ascended the upper part of the Taghdumbash-daria, the track leading towards the south on the west side of the upper stream. The road was level and firm, and frequently led across rich grassy meadows. Ahead of us we could see the fortress of Tash-kurgan, the goal of that day's march. After passing through the villages of Chushman (45 houses) and Tisnab (200 houses), we entered the lower valley of the Taghdumbash. It was broad and open, and wore a prosperous look, with its cultivated fields and pasture-grounds, on which innumerable herds of sheep,

goats, and horned cattle were industriously grazing. On our right was a high platform of conglomerate formation, and on the top of it stood the town and fortress walls of Tash-kurgan (the Stone Fortress). The situation of the place put me forcibly in mind of Fort Pamir. The latter, like Tash-kurgan, stands on a conglomerate terrace, in a wide valley, and with a large river flowing past it, and it also commands an equally extensive view of its own neighbourhood.

Here an extremely joyful surprise awaited me. I fell in with my friend Mr Macartney, who had been suddenly ordered to report himself to the head of the English Commission, appointed to act with a Russian Commission



KIRGHIZ AUL NEAR MUS TAGH-VTA

of military officers for the delimitation of the frontier-line of the two empires on the southern Pamirs. I pitched my tent beside his, and we spent a right pleasant afternoon together.

On July 27th, along with Mr Macartney, I paid a visit to the village of Tash-kurgan. Both village and fortress presented a melancholy appearance. The whole neighbourhood had been violently shaken by earthquakes lasting from July 5th to July 20th, and every house in the place was utterly ruined, the few which still stood had gaping cracks in the walls, reaching from roof to foundations. But then they were constructed of materials little calculated to withstand earthquake shocks, namely rubble and coggles, plastered with clay. There were also several cracks in the earth, stretching from south-south-

THROUGH ASIA

west to north-north-east The inhabitants as well as the Chinese garrison were living partly in yurts, partly in temporary tents During the time the seismic disturbances lasted some eighty distinct shocks were counted

The most violent was the first; it was the shock which destroyed the town The last happened this morning at ten minutes past eight o'clock I was sleeping on the ground as I always did, and distinctly felt the impact at right angles to the longitudinal axis of the valley in other words it moved along an east-west line. The shock awakened in the mind an unpleasant sensation of anxiety like a distant peal of thunder was plainly distinguishable But everything was over in about a couple of seconds

After looking at the damage done by the earthquake I paid my respects to the commandant, Mi Darin and two or three other mandarins, all of whom received me with great politeness They had equipped their yurt with a table, chairs, and opium couches and offered me all sorts of nice things I took two or three whiffs at an opium-pipe but failed to detect wherem lies its fascination

In the early part of this work I have dwelt with considerable detail upon different parts of the Pamirs The length to which this book is growing precludes me from describing this present expedition with anything approaching the same circumstantial minuteness Perhaps I may be permitted on another occasion to relate the results of my 1895 journey in the southern regions of the Pamirs I have still a long distance to travel before I reach Peking If the reader has the patience to follow me, I hope to take him over the old caravan-road to Khotan which Marco Polo travelled over so many generations ago We shall then once more cross the great sandy desert, and discover cities buried in the sand, and evidences of an ancient and extinct Buddhist culture. We shall pay a visit to the desolate home of the wild

camel, and discover the relic of the Lop-nor of the Chinese cartographers. Thence we shall make a forced march of some hundreds of miles back to Khotan. After that we shall cross the highlands and plateaus of Northern Tibet to the lake-basins of Tsaidam and make the acquaintance of Mongols, Tanguts, and Tibetans, then proceed through Kan-su, Ala-shan, Ordos, and Northern China, and finally, after travelling for three and a half years, reach the goal I had all along in view—namely Peking.

With all these vast vistas before me, I feel I must quicken my pace. But I cannot pass on without pausing for a little to describe one very important episode of my 1895 journey over the Pamirs. But it must have a chapter or two to itself.

CHAPTER LIV

WITH THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION

MR. MACARTNEY was on his way to Victoria Lake (Zor-kul), to join the Boundary Commission, and tried to persuade me to go with him. But as I was desirous of visiting the sources of the Yarkand-daria, I was obliged to decline his invitation. Nevertheless we travelled some days in company separating on July 30th at Khojet-bai, as we then believed for ever for Mr Macartney was under orders to return to India with the Boundary Commission. Hence his road lay towards the west up the valley of the Taghdumbash-daria mine towards the south up the valley of the Khunser-ab.

Two days more brought me to the northern foot of the Hindu-kush Mountains. There I stayed twelve days making short excursions exploring the valleys of the more important head-streams of the Khunser-ab, and climbing the pass of Khunser-ab (15 780 feet) whence I looked down upon the valley of Kanjut. From the summit of the pass to the highest village in Kanjut was only two days-journey. There I observed that the streams from one of the glaciers on the pass flowed partly towards the Indian Ocean and partly towards the Yarkand-daria and Lop-nor.

From the same place I endeavoured, but endeavoured in vain, to find a practicable path to the upper Yarkand-daria, over the passes of Uprang, Kara-su, and Ilik-su. The upper part of the Yarkand-daria is likewise known as the Serafshan or Raskan-daria. In every quarter I inquired, I was given the self-same answer: I could readily enough reach the river in the course of a few days, but

there was no place where it could be crossed during the summer. The deep narrow gorge of the Ilik-su had in places been so terribly convulsed by the recent violent earthquakes that it was impossible for any animal, even for yaks, to traverse it: it was only practicable to men on foot. Thus I had got myself into a sort of mountain *cul-de-sac*. The only accessible districts which I had not yet explored were towards the west. Hence I resolved to seek those portions of the Pamirs which lay around the sources of the Amu-daria.



PART OF THE HINDU-KUSH, NEAR UPANG

Accordingly we rode up over Taghdumbash-Pamir (the Mountain's Head or Roof of the World), and on 15th August surmounted the pass of Wakjir (16,190 feet), an important hydrographical centre. For from it rivers flow in three different directions—the Panj, also called the Wakhan-daria, a head-stream of the Amu-daria, goes towards the west, the Taghdumbash-daria flows east, and on the other side of the Hindu-kush several feeders of the Indus descend towards the south.

On August 17th we reached Chakmakden-kul (the Lake of the Fire-steel), in which the Ak-su or Murghab has its origin.

Knowing that the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission were working at Mehman-yolli (the Guest Road), a small transverse valley situated only a day's journey towards the north-east, I could not resist the temptation to pay them a visit. But I did not like to come down suddenly and without warning upon the Commissioners whilst in the midst of their delicate labour of defining the boundary from Victoria Lake to the Chinese frontier, so I wrote to the head of each Commission, asking if they had any objection to receiving visitors. My jight (courier) brought back a cordial and pressing invitation from both chiefs. Accordingly on the evening of the 19th I pitched my tent at Mehman-yolli, on neutral ground between the Russian camp and the English camp.

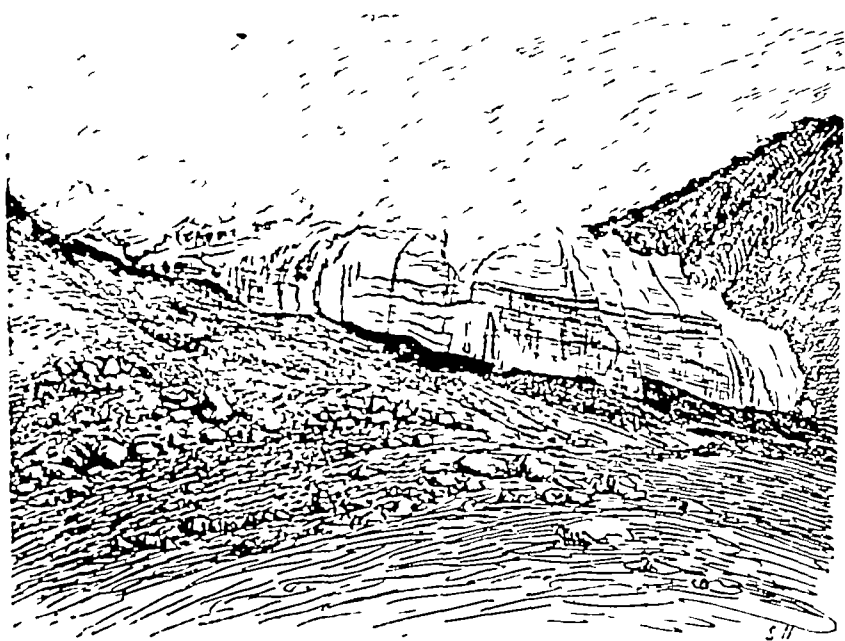
I was already acquainted with the head of the Russian Commission, it was General Pavalo-Shveikovsky, governor of Fergana, my friend and benefactor. I held myself bound therefore to pay my respects to him first. But I could not get to his quarters without passing through the English camp. Mr Macartney caught sight of me as I was on my way, and eagerly intercepted me with an invitation to dine with General Gerard, head of the English Commission.

There I was then, in a pretty dilemma. The only way out of it, the only way to preserve my neutrality, that I could see, was to plead my old acquaintance with General Pavalo-Shveikovsky, and to emphasize the unsuitability of my attire.

General Pavalo-Shveikovsky welcomed me with open arms. We sat talking until a late hour of the night, and notwithstanding my energetic protests and my hints of wishing to keep to neutral territory, he ordered an excellent yurt to be got ready for me at once, with a bed in it, a luxury which I had almost forgotten the enjoyment of.

The following morning I paid a visit to General Gerard, and met with a similar kind and friendly reception from him. I was immediately introduced to the several members of the English Commission. The second officer

in command was Colonel Holdich, a recipient of the large gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society for his admirable trigonometrical and astronomical work in the frontier districts of India. The rest of the staff included Colonel Wahab, the topographer, Captain McSwiney, who spoke Russian fluently, Dr Alcock, director of the Imperial Museum at Calcutta, and professor of the Calcutta University, and my friend Mr Macartney, agent for Chinese affairs in Kashgar. In addition



END OF A GLACIER AT UPRANG

there were three pundits, or educated Hindus, for the topographical field-work.

Amongst the Russian staff I found several acquaintances from West Turkestan—Colonel Salessky, the astronomer, Captain Skersky, the new commandant of Fort Pamir, and the famous topographer Bendersky, who has travelled in every part of Western Asia, and who was one of the Russian embassy which visited Kabul in the time of Emir Shir Ali Khan. General Pavalo-Shveikovsky's principal assistants were however Mr Panafidin, formerly

Russian consul in Bagdad, where he and I had several mutual friends and acquaintances, and Colonel Galkin, who had travelled in East Turkestan and Ili. Finally, I may mention Dr Wellmann and four younger officers.

The Russian escort consisted of some forty Cossacks, with a military band of eighteen performers, besides a crowd of native jighits and caravan grooms. The English train consisted of about two hundred Indian soldiers, Hindus, Afridis, and Kanjutis.

It would manifestly be out of place for me to say a word touching the momentous labours of the Boundary Commission. Besides, they did not directly concern me. I will merely observe that, considering the opposing interests which the two camps represented, it was astonishing upon what a friendly and confidential footing they were. Both sides were animated by a frank and cheerful spirit. Englishmen and Russians were like comrades together. Had I not known the fact beforehand, I should never for one moment have dreamed that they were rivals engaged in delimitating and fixing a common frontier-line. For of course it was the object of the Russians to draw the line as far to the south as they could possibly force it, whereas the Englishmen wanted it as far north as it could be got.

The Russian officers' mess was located in a large, tastefully decorated yurt, the Englishmen had theirs in an immense, yet elegant, tent. Invitations to dinner from the one party or the other were an almost everyday occurrence. As for me, I spent one day in the English camp and the next in the Russian, and so on alternately and was on very good terms with everybody in both camps. Most of the officers, Russian and English spoke French, and if I may be permitted to say so, the gentlemen selected to serve on this important and delicate mission were a credit to the two Governments which appointed them. As for me, after my two years of lonely wandering through the desert regions of Central Asia, it was almost like a rising from the dead, to associate with such notable men, men distinguished alike for their

knowledge their scientific attainments, their high general culture

Shortly after my arrival amongst them, General Pavalo-Shveikovsky gave a grand evening entertainment. At nine o'clock the Englishmen came over wearing their handsome, yet serviceable, full-dress uniforms. In front of each of the Russian yurts was stationed a guard of Cossacks, holding lighted torches, which shed a wild and tremulous flood of light across the bank of the Ak-su



CHAKMAK DEN-KUL, LOOKING WEST

The guests assembled in the large reception yurt of white felt. The interior was draped with Oriental cloth and variegated carpets from Kashgar. The table glittered with bottles and decanters of European wines and liqueurs, whilst dotted about amongst them were dishes of solid silver, heaped with grapes, apples, and duchesse pears from the governor's own garden in Margelan. We took our seats in light and comfortable tent chairs, lined with rugs and so forth. Whilst some of the company played cards, the majority kept up an animated conversation in different

languages. Meanwhile the military band went through a long programme of Russian melodies, well-known marches, and "God Save the Queen", and heard under such circumstances, at such a lofty altitude on the Roof of the World, the music was especially charming. After supper, the Russian general accompanied his guests by torchlight to their own quarters.

The 29th and 30th August were proclaimed holidays, and the officers got up a *tamashah* (spectacle, *i.e.* sports) for the entertainment of the men of their escorts and the Kirghiz of the neighbourhood. The first item on the programme was a shooting competition at 250 paces. In this some of the officers took part, and the first prize was carried off by Colonel Wahab, upon whom after that I bestowed the title of Champion of the Roof of the World. The scene around the firing-point was gay in the extreme, owing to the variety and magnificence of the various uniforms. The 1st Lancers, Hyderabad Contingent, made unquestionably the bravest show. Their uniform was a light brown, decorated with gold braid, yellow leather bandolier and sword-belt, tight-fitting breeches, and a tall, gold-embroidered turban, with blue points hanging loosely down. The uniform of the 20th Punjab Infantry was very similar, except that the turban was adorned with a black bushy plume, and had a gold-embroidered, upstanding centre-piece. The Afridis, natives of the districts around Peshawar, were tall handsome fellows, with a martial bearing. A vendetta of a more than usually stringent character obtains amongst their tribes. A murder is sometimes avenged, not only upon the nearest blood-relatives of the delinquent, but also upon his distant kin.

Amongst the onlookers I observed Gulam Moheddin Khan, the Afghan Boundary Commissioner, accompanied by his suite. The Emir Abdurrahman Khan's representative, whom I was nearly forgetting, wore a uniform that was resplendent with gold-lace and ornaments.

At the end of the shooting competition, the two generals distributed the prizes, consisting of a silver cup, cases

containing knife, fork, and spoon, khalats, Asiatic cloth, and money (roubles and rupees) Hereupon General Pavalo-Shvcikovsky invited us all, including the Afghan Commissioner, to a splendid *déjeuner*. Champagne flowed like water, and healths were drunk to all the world, even to the Crustaceans of the Indian Ocean, the special favourites of Dr Alcock.

After *déjeuner* we went out to witness the second half of the programme, which was of a more lively and varied



GROUP OF KIRGHIZ FROM THE EASTERN PAMIRS

character. It began with a tug-of-war, a team of Cossacks being pitted against a team of Afridis, and then a team of Kirghiz against a team of Kanjutis. In each case the first-named won, although the struggle between the Kirghiz and Kanjutis was both tough and long. The excitement amongst the onlookers grew intense, even some of the officers were infected by it, as well as myself, though I of course preserved a strict neutrality. After that came foot-races, partly on the flat, partly in sacks, in which the winners hopped or rather turned summer-saults over the tape at the winning-post. There were

also three-legged races. The Kanjutis gave us a sword-dance, with mimic fights, and combats with the naked sword, a spectacle which put me in mind of similar games practised by the Chinese. At intervals the English offered various refreshments, amongst the beverages being punch.

The 30th August was Derby Day on the Pamirs. Some three hundred horsemen assembled on a piece of level ground at Kızıl-rabat near by. The course was a trifle under a mile. The Cossacks, being matched against the Indian cavalymen, easily beat them, with a good two minutes to spare. But Her Majesty's soldiers had their revenge in the next event, lemon-slicing, although potatoes perforce did duty instead of lemons. The next contest, tilting at the ring, was opened by General Gerard himself. He carried off two out of the three rings, and proved to be the victor.

Then came a comic interlude, namely, races between camels and yaks. The camels, unaccustomed to the rules of sport, burst away in a wild gallop, and screaming lustily dashed in amongst the spectators, creating a mild panic. The yaks on the contrary took matters with imperturbable placidity, the spirit of emulation could not be driven into them by any provocation. Two remained stock-still, notwithstanding that the cudgels of the Kirghiz played a lively tune upon their ribs. One turned to the rightabout and marched off in the opposite direction. Some progressed sideways at a jog-trot. Only two went straight down the course, walking with their accustomed grave philosophic calm.

The last event was not pleasant to watch, and must have been still more unpleasant to take part in. Two bands of Kirghiz horsemen, twenty in each, took up positions facing one another at 250 paces apart. At a pre-arranged signal they dashed towards each other at full gallop. Some few came through the shock unmoved, but the greater part went headlong to the ground, men and horses rolling over one another in indescribable confusion. Yet strange to say, only one horse suffered

any injury. It took all day till twilight to get through the whole of the programme, and just as the gay throng of riders started for their respective camps, the race-course was swept by an icy buran.

The combined camp of the Commissioners made a striking picture. It stood on a patch of level ground, at the foot of a conglomerate terrace, on the left bank of the Ak-su or Murghab. The Russians were quartered in a dozen large, handsome Kirghiz yurts, the Englishmen and Indian soldiers in some fifty or sixty white army tents. Round about the outskirts of the camp were the yurts of the Afghans, Kirghiz, Wakhanlik (men of Wakhan), and karakeshes (caravan attendants) of different nationalities. The camp thus presented a kind of epitome of various types of Oriental life, side by side with the highest civilization of the West. A painter would have found never-ending subjects for his brush. The pencil of a dilettante like myself was kept hard at work all day long, for unfortunately I had lost my photographic apparatus in the desert.

Both the Russian and the English generals were perfect patterns and ensamples to their officers and men. Both had gone through many a stiff brush with the enemy. General Pavalo-Shveikovsky had an inexhaustible fund of stories and anecdotes from the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. General Gerard was famous throughout all India as one of the most daring spirits that ever tracked a tiger. With his own hand he had accounted for no fewer than 216 of the kings of the jungle, a number which, considering the relative scarcity of tigers now in India, must be accounted worthy of the most passionate lover of the chase. To General Gerard the tracking of a tiger was what the coursing of a hare is to ordinary sportsmen, a mere harmless pastime, combining exercise with pleasure, all the same, he had had many adventures and hairbreadth escapes, which it was very interesting to listen to.

CHAPTER LV

FESTIVITIES ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

EVERY evening at eight o'clock the Cossacks had religious service. Then there echoed through the thin mountain-air the moving melodies of the solemn *malitva* (chant) and the Russian national hymn. Huge fires blazed all round the camp, both close in and at a distance, for the various Asiatic races to cook their suppers at, but all fires were extinguished long before the lights were out in the officers' quarters. The moon gleamed out at intervals between the rapidly scudding clouds, and lit up the broad, open valley of the Ak-su. A chain of mountains, the Emperor Nicholas II's Range, the highest summit of which is Salisbury Peak, shut in the valley on the north, another range, the Mus-tagh chain, bordered it on the south. The effect was enchanting in the extreme when a cloud came between the moon and the camp, so that the tents were in the shade, whilst the eternal snowfields of the distant mountains glittered as though silvered over.

These desolate plateaus, uninhabited save by a few half-civilized nomad Kirghiz, had never witnessed such a gathering as that which I have just described, and are hardly likely to witness anything similar to it again. I imagined the shy tekkes (wild goats) and wild sheep (*Ovis Poli*) gazing in stupefied amazement from their lofty pasture-grounds beside the glaciers over the bustling scenes below, rudely violating the century-long peace and tranquillity of the Ak-su valley. Where the frontier-line between the possessions of England and the possessions of Russia should fall was to them a matter of

perfect unconcern. The jarring interests of men never invade the solitude of their sublime abodes. They are the subjects of none, they share their empire with the eternal snows alone.

Meanwhile the days flew past like hours, and I was amazed when September came, and I still found myself amongst that bright circle of officers of the two most powerful nations of the world. Several times I spoke of breaking camp for the little-known mountainous regions which tower up like fierce, snow-crowned giants around the head-waters of the Yarkand-daria. But every time I sounded that note, both of the generous generals, whose personal friend I am proud to say I gradually became, urged that I should remain a few days longer.

But finding nothing else would do, and as there were important matters calling me back to Kashgar, I determined to try a little *ruse de guerre*. One fine day I bade Islam Bai have the caravan all ready for a start, and went to General Pavalo-Shveikovsky to take my leave of him, telling him my caravan was ready and waiting for me. With a twinkle of mystery in his eye, the general answered that, if I would wait just one day longer, I should witness a remarkable event. Thus my little plot was nipped in the bud. I stayed on, not one day longer, but several.

The remarkable event, which, rightly enough, did happen on the following day, was the arrival of a telegram sent by Lord Salisbury to the telegraph-station which lay nearest the northern frontier of India, conveying the important announcement, that the British Government accepted the frontier which the Russians proposed to them.

This intelligence occasioned the greatest rejoicing in both camps. At every step I met happy, contented faces. The younger officers even danced for joy. During the following days the frontier pillars Nos IX to XII were erected, thus finishing the labours of the Commission. They had defined and marked the frontier between England's and Russia's possessions on the Pamirs, and

had nothing more to do except to strike camp and return home.

Stay, I am wrong, there was still one thing to be done. The two Commissions had been at work together some three months in all. It was inconceivable that they should separate, perhaps never to meet again, without dining together in each camp in turn. To these high and solemn functions I, although strictly maintaining my neutrality, was cordially invited, and as public dinners are something of a rarity in exploration journeys in Central Asia, I did not scruple to sacrifice two more days to the pleasure of taking part in them.

The dinner in the Russian camp took place on September 11th. General Gerard and I were given the places of honour on the right and left respectively of our host. My more than plain travelling-suit, which was moreover woefully threadbare, and which had never at any time been guilty of possessing such superfluities as collar and cuffs, presented a glaring contrast to the full-dress uniforms of all the generals, colonels, captains, and diplomatic agents—laces of the general staff, scarlet facings, gold braids, orders and medals for valour from the campaign in Turkestan, the Russo-Turkish War, Burma, Chitral, Afghanistan. But then, when I left Kashgar, I had not the remotest idea that that summer excursion was to bring me into contact with such distinguished company, and therefore had brought no suitable clothes with me. However, I kept up my courage, and the warriors flattered me by saying that my journey across the desert was a stiffer piece of work than many a hard campaign.

And then the surprises that were in store for us, real paradoxes of circumstance, when you call to mind that all this happened at the foot of the Hindu-kush in the centre of Asia! The *sakuska*, or ante-table of Russian usage, consisted of caviar, preserved meats, Swiss cheese, *pâté-de-fois-gras*, and almost every conceivable delicacy, whilst for dinner we were served, amongst other courses, with crayfish soup, lobster mayonnaise, asparagus, and

so forth. The only thing which failed to make a due impression upon me was the *glacés*. I had been completely spoiled for *glacés* by the glaciers on the Roof of the World.

The wines were not from Turkestan, but from the choice vintages of France. What! Champagne on the Pamirs? Yes, even so. The first time it was handed round, our host asked for silence and then proposed a conjoint toast to Queen Victoria and the Emperor Nicholas II. The next toast was drunk in honour of Abdurrahman Khan, Emir of Afghanistan, who was represented at the table by his general Gulam Moheddin Khan and a *mufti* (Mohammedan doctor of laws). With the third toast was coupled the name of Oscar, king of Sweden and Norway, who also had one subject present at the banquet. At midnight the official part of the proceedings came to an end, with the Englishmen charing their host. Their arms were strong, and so it was "up to the roof on the Roof of the World." Then, whilst the spirit of festivity was still in the ascendant, we had several humorous speeches and songs, each and every one followed by a rousing cheer, and last of all, sung with tremendous dash and "go," the stirring English refrain, "For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny."

The next day General Gerard gave an equally excellent banquet, over which the same spirit of jollification reigned, and at which there was an equally long series of toasts. With a happy inspiration Captain McSwiney proposed a toast to the Ladies, and somebody suggested the extraordinary idea, that I was a fit and proper person to reply on the ladies' behalf. Being a devoted admirer of the sex, I was of course proud to speak for them. After various more or less apposite remarks, I came to my peroration, which ran to this effect: that if the ladies in the distant lands of Russia and England were as hospitable and as cultivated as their husbands and lovers, whose acquaintance I had had the pleasure of making, they must assuredly be no ordinary ladies, but angels from heaven, and their society an earthly paradise.

At the close of dinner yet another surprise awaited us. Immediately outside the bounds of the camp a huge pile of faggots and other inflammable materials had been built up, —curiously enough, the fuel had all been fetched for the purpose from Kanjut on the other side of the Hindu-kush. As soon as dinner was over, the bonfire was lighted, and its leaping flames lit up with weird effect the barren steppe and white tents which dotted it. Then representatives of the different races comprised in the English escort came forward one after the other and gave an exhibition of their several national dances. Amongst these perhaps the most striking was a sword-dance, which produced a somewhat startling effect in the red light of the bonfire. We watched the spectacle from a semicircle of camp-chairs, whilst turbaned servants handed round punch and other refreshments.

Early on the morning of September 13th we were all photographed together in one big group by the Indian pundits. After that came the hand-shaking and the "good-byes." The Englishmen went off towards the south, intending to travel to Kashmir and India *via* the Darkot pass, whilst the Russians turned their steps towards the north. General Gerard, who was going to England across Russia, accompanied his Russian colleague. Lieutenant Miles, who was stationed in Gilgit, was likewise given permission to go with the Russian Commissioners as far as Fort Pamir. That day we only travelled $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles, as far as the Kirghiz aul of Ak-tash. Here we pitched our tents, and spent another right pleasant afternoon together.

General Pavalo-Shveikovsky pressed me to accompany him all the way to Margelan. But that I could not do, it would have taken me too far away from the scene of my labours. Not that it would not have been especially interesting to travel for a whole month across the Pamirs under such unique circumstances, as well as to witness the great reception which I knew awaited the English general in Margelan. He was to be met outside the town by a bevy of maidens, clad in white, who would scatter flowers

under his horse's hoofs, and was to be fêted, and honoured with a military concert and display of fireworks. But I withstood the temptation, steeled by the thought that I had not come to Asia for the sake of pleasure, besides, I already knew the route to be travelled over.

General Gerard also had his temptation for me. He cordially invited me to go with Colonel Holdich and the rest of the English Boundary Commissioners to India. Which drew me with the strongest fascination—that distant land of fable and mystic dream, or the society of Colonel Holdich I cannot say, but this I can say, I have seldom met a nobler-minded, pleasanter gentleman than Colonel Holdich, and I left him with the desire strong in my heart that we might soon meet again.

But my sense of duty got the upper hand at last. My road lay towards the east. There was still much exploring work to be done in the deserts around Lop-nor and in Northern Tibet. Moreover there was another powerful attraction in Kashgar, namely the post from Sweden, which should be in again by this. I therefore on 14th September bade farewell to the two generals and other officers, and watched them trot out of sight, then, accompanied by my own attendants, I turned my face towards the silent, solitary mountains which border the Pamir plateaus on the east.

The doings of the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission belong henceforth to history, their labours fill a permanent niche in the story of the political relations of England and Russia in Central Asia. The territories of the two great powers on the Pamirs now touch one another, there are no ownerless districts, no buffer zone, between them to afford a handle for political intrigues. Kirghiz and Afghans are not now allowed to cross the new frontier-line unless they are provided with a proper pass.

Will that be the last boundary commission appointed by England and Russia in Asia? It might well be supposed so, and yet—the destiny of Persia is not yet decided. Besides, who knows what the future shall bring

forth? Be that however as it may, it is certain that the members of the Boundary Commission of 1895 carried away home with them many a pleasant memory of their stay on the cold, inhospitable plateaus, the which plateaus no doubt, had they possessed the capability, would have been amazed at finding themselves the object of so much interest

I am very proud of having been so fortunate as to have witnessed such a signal episode in the political history of Central Asia, and that not only because of the importance of the event itself, but also because of the real pleasure vouchsafed me in making the acquaintance of such an excellent set of officers and gentlemen

CHAPTER LVI

OVER THE MOUNTAINS TO THE YARKAND-DARIA

FROM Ak-tash we travelled eastwards, and the same day crossed the Sarik-kol range by the pass of Lakshak (15,240 feet high), and encamped on the other side at Keng-shevar, a place garrisoned by eight Tajiks and two Chinese. As far as a point a little beyond our camp the rocks bordering the route had been black clay-slates, but after that they consisted of a number of varieties of gneiss, some of them exceedingly beautiful in appearance. Consonant with the change in the rock formation, a marked change took place also in the landscape. The very name of the district we had just quitted, Kara-korunning-bashi (the Head of the Black, Stony Country), indicated a different region. The track we were following, which wound for the most part amongst gigantic fragments of rock which had crashed down from the mountains above, led north-eastwards through the deep transverse gorge of Shindeh, which cut through the eastern declivity of the Sarik-kol range. Beyond Yartteck (the Boot Terrace), a small side-glen on the left, the cliffs frowned upon each other at close quarters, there being nothing more than a narrow chasm between their perpendicular walls. The gorge was almost entirely obstructed by huge blocks of gneiss, whose sharp angles and fresh, clean-looking fractures revealed that they had been hurled down during the recent earthquake shocks. It was anything but pleasant travelling. We frequently rode under ponderous arches of overhanging rock, full of cracks and crevices, which threatened every moment to come crashing down upon our heads. Time after time

we crossed the little mountain-stream, whose blue, limpid water gurgled along between the boulders of gneiss. At length we came to the end of the gneiss. It was succeeded by granite. The gorge of Shindeh opened out like a trumpet upon the broad trough-like valley of Taghdumbash. The mountain-stream was divided into several branches so that its water might be led off to irrigate the cultivated fields. We again pitched our tent a short distance from the fortress of Tash-kurgan.

We had now crossed the first of the great meridional mountain-ranges, which like bastions fence in the Pamir plateaus on the east. On September 16th we crossed the second by the pass of Sarghak. We had considerable difficulty in procuring a guide. The Tajiks excused themselves on the plea, that they must look after their fields, but the truth was they dreaded the wrath of Mi Darin, if it should become known that they had guided a European through such a strategically important pass. At last we discovered a man who agreed to go with us on foot, but before we reached the summit of the pass he lagged behind and we never saw anything more of him.

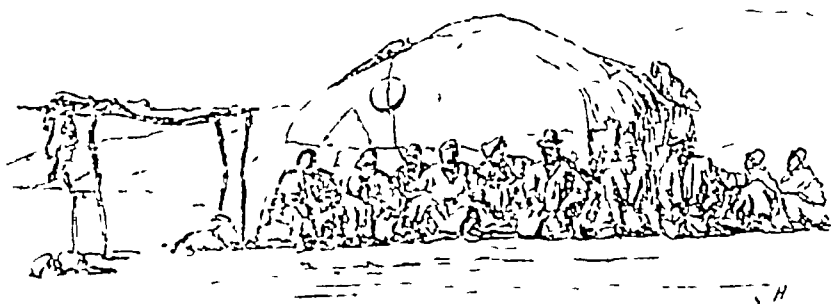
We crossed over the valley of Taghdumbash between the scattered fields and houses. The river possessed only one-third the volume it had when I measured it some six weeks earlier, and the water had become perfectly clear. On the east side of the valley we struck into a narrow gorge, which rose steeply and was dry along the bottom. The predominating rock throughout the whole of that day's journey was micaceous schist. We climbed up the mountain-side along a steep, narrow ribbon of a path which was exceedingly trying to both men and horses. In some places the rocks were so smooth we were obliged to roughen them with the pick-axe to enable the horses to get a proper foothold. Upon reaching the top of the spur—an undulating series of rounded eminences—we saw the valley of Taghdumbash with its winding river and its green and yellow fields, far, far below our feet. Once more the landscape underwent a complete change. All



MI DARIN, THE COMMANDANT OF TASH-KURGAN



round us the predominating feature was low hills, with easy slopes, covered with hard silt, sand, and gravel *débris*, partly the results of weathering of the clay-slate, which in this part of the range cropped out but seldom. These undulating hilly uplands were intersected by several zigzag cañon-like ravines. Not a drop of water was to be seen, though there were plenty of dry watercourses, showing where the rains ran down. Our road was not difficult but went up and down, up and down as though it never meant to end, and we crossed several secondary passes



A TAJIK TENT IN THE TAGHDUMBASH PAMIRS

before we attained the culminating point of the range (13,230 feet)

From that spot I obtained a broad general view of the surrounding regions. The range on which we stood was continued towards the south in several great snow-covered mountains, then curved round by the south-east towards Tibet, and finally became merged in the Kwen-lun mountain-system. Northwards the range we had just climbed stretched to Mus-tagh-ata, and thus formed a direct continuation of the Mus-tagh or Kashgar range. Deep down on the east lay the glen of the Utchek, which flows into the Taghdumbash-daria.

Our road ran down into that glen, sometimes winding amongst the fantastic spurs and buttresses of the eastern slopes of the range, sometimes running steeply down an eroded ravine, and occasionally crossing a minor pass or saddle. The last part of the descent, just before we reached the glen, was inconceivably steep. We encamped

in the little village of Beldir, which consisted of a single household. Its *yuz-bashi* (chief) was however chieftain over some fifty households scattered throughout the glen. They were Tajiks graziers and agriculturists, and spent the summers in the upper part of the glen, but for the winter moved lower down nearer the confluence of the Utcheh, a fair-sized stream, with the Taghdumbash-daria. After the confluence the river turned sharply to the east, and flowed directly into the Yarkand-daria. Close beside the confluence stood the large village of Beldir, which gives a second name, the Beldir-daria, to the Utcheh. The transverse defile by which the Taghdumbash breaks through the range is, as I have already said, called Shindeh. It is impassable because of the perpendicular cliffs which hem it in. Thus Beldir lies, as it were, at the end of a mountain *cul-de-sac*.

September 17th. We ascended the glen towards the south-east. It was sometimes squeezed between the conglomerate cliffs, then widened out considerably, so as to make room for patches of cultivated ground, upon which wheat, barley, and clover were grown, and finally opened out into a spacious cauldron-shaped valley, with an almost level floor and shut in on all sides by mountains.

This expansion of the glen, called Tang-ab (Persian Narrow Water), was planted with several small villages, all inhabited by Tajiks. But the great altitude of the region, and its harsh climate, compel the people to adopt a mode of life which in some respects resembles that of the Kirghiz. Most of them own large flocks of sheep, goats, and yaks, besides numerous horses and donkeys. Some dwell in yurts and tents, some—more especially those who live by agriculture—dwell in houses constructed of sun-dried clay and stones, and covered in with flat wooden roofs. As the Tajiks themselves are Aryans, and speak Persian, so their houses are very similar to the Persian houses, even possessing in some cases a *bala-khaneh* or “upper house,” reached by a flight of stairs.

September 18th. We continued our road along the

broad expansion of the valley till we came to the point where it bifurcated into the two secondary valleys of Lengher and Shuydun. A road through the former led to the large Tajik village of Marian, and thence to the Raskan-daria (i.e. the upper Yarkand-daria). Through the latter ran the road we took. Crossing the luxuriant pastures we reached at length a rabat (rest-house or inn) at the foot of the Kandahar pass, and there we spent the night.

The next morning we awoke to a perfect winter scene. During the night it had snowed heavily, and the ground was covered a couple of inches deep. From the rabat the path ascended the mountain-side pretty steeply, but the snow levelled up the spaces between the stones and made it easier going. The summit or ridge of the pass (16,610 feet altitude) was as sharp as a knife, for the broken edges of the green clay-slates jutted out almost vertically. The descent on the other side was very difficult, so difficult in fact that the horses would scarcely have been able to get down loaded. But, having been warned of this beforehand, we had hired a party of Tajiks with three yaks, and with their help we got the boxes safely down. At the outset the path went straight down between nasty projecting buttresses of rock, down these we simply slid long distances over the deep snow. But lower down the descent was less precipitous. The quantity of snow on the ground was everywhere much less than on the western versant of the pass. The sky, which was clear in the morning to start with, clouded over again, and it snowed hard all the way to the little rabat of Kotchkor-Beg-Bai, in the bottom of the confined valley of Kandahar. Two or three Tajik families dwelt in the neighbourhood.

During the summer and autumn the flocks graze on both sides of the pass, but for the winter they move down to the district of Tong, whither we now directed our steps. In winter too the pass of Kandahar is generally preferred, if only it is at all practicable. As a rule, it is deeply buried in snow, and the Tajiks trample down a path by

driving yaks on before them. If the pass is absolutely impassable, there is no other way of reaching Tashkurgan except by going right round through Yarkand and Tagharma.

The snow continued to fall in big feathery flakes all the evening, and drifted together in loose snowdrifts. The air was cold, moist, and raw, and the darkness a darkness that could almost be felt. Our Tajik neighbours made first-class wheat bread, and some of the young girls came to my tent unveiled and offered me a few pieces. I accepted it and rewarded them with some strips of cloth from Kashgar.

September 20th. When we awoke in the morning it was still snowing, and it snowed right on till eleven o'clock in the morning. The weight of the snow pressed so heavily upon my tent that the men frequently had to sweep it off, till I became literally encompassed by walls of snow. When we started again we were joined by two young women, riding yaks. They were going a short distance down the glen to fetch fuel. They were uncommonly pretty and merry, and their hair being black and their eyebrows conspicuously marked, they put me in mind of gipsy lasses. They helped us with our caravan-animals, as though it were a perfectly natural thing to do, and their silvery voices, as they cried to them and urged them on, echoed musically against the steep mountain-walls. Their clothes hung about them in scanty rags; it made me shiver to see the thickly falling snow melting on their coppery brown bare necks and bosoms.

A short distance below our camp the glen contracted into a defile, which, owing to the fallen stones and huge fragments of rock, and the torrents of clear cool water which brawled amongst them, made the road both narrow and difficult. We repeatedly crossed and re-crossed the stream, in many places not without imminent risk of a bath. But just as often the path skirted the edge of the conglomerate terraces, the clay matrix of which had become softened by the melting snow, so that the ground threatened to slip away from under our feet.

Eventually the glen widened out every now and again, making room for groups of birches. At one of these places, called Tasek, our guide said, there were no trees lower down, and if we wanted fuel for a night-fire, we must stay where we were. The tent was therefore pitched underneath some fine hanging birches, whose foliage had already turned yellow. It was a particularly nice place for a night's camping—the only drawbacks were the gloomy frowning sky and the thick veils of mist which wreathed the summit of the mountains. The two young women and our guide gathered up their bundles of fuel, loaded it on the backs of the yaks, and returned to their lonely cabins up the glen.

September 21st. We still continued our descent, the path being excessively steep, stony, and uncomfortable. Shortly after leaving our night's quarters we came upon a gigantic fragment of granite, bearing a curious resemblance to a colossal mushroom or petrified poplar. It had tumbled down from the mountain above and stood in the middle of the glen, which was for the most part shut in by mountains that turned their transversely fractured faces towards it. Clumps of birches, wild briars, and junipers were dotted about here and there.

CHAPTER LVII

DOWN THE YARKAND-DARIA AND TO KASHGAR

WE made our next camp in the village of Lengher, amongst fields of wheat, barley, and clover. The population were Tajiks, but curiously enough, most of the geographical names in that district were Jagatai (Turki). The pass of Arpa-tallak, which we were to cross in a day or two, serves as a religious boundary between a predominatingly Sunnite population on the east and a predominatingly Shiite population on the west of it. Both sects however live on the best of terms with one another, there is nothing of the enmity between them which keeps the (Sunnite) Turks and the (Shiite) Persians at such deadly variance. They intermarry with one another, and are in constant communication backwards and forwards. The only tribute they pay to the Chinese is certain quantities of fuel and forage, but when Yakub Beg was master of Kashgar, the fiscal imposts laid upon them were almost oppressive. Nevertheless they are said to have preferred his rule to that of the Chinese, he was a Mohammedan like themselves, and he was their own *padshah* (king).

The rainy season in this valley coincides with the summer, and the quantity of rain that falls is often so plenteous that the river cannot be forded.

The recent earthquakes had brought most of the houses to the ground. One man who lay ill in bed died of terror, another, who was riding along the glen, was crushed by a fragment of rock which crashed down the mountain-side upon him. The glen was both wild and picturesque, the mountain scenery being on an imposing

scale consequently the people who inhabit it were frank, cheerful, and liberal-minded.

September 22nd We rode through a string of eight villages, each consisting of several houses, with courtyards, surrounded by cultivated fields and gardens, in which walnuts, apricots, peaches, apples, melons, and other fruits were grown. After the barren mountain regions which we had left behind us, it was pleasant to catch the scent of freshly cut corn. We saw neither vaks nor camels in that district, only cattle, donkeys, horses, sheep, and goats.

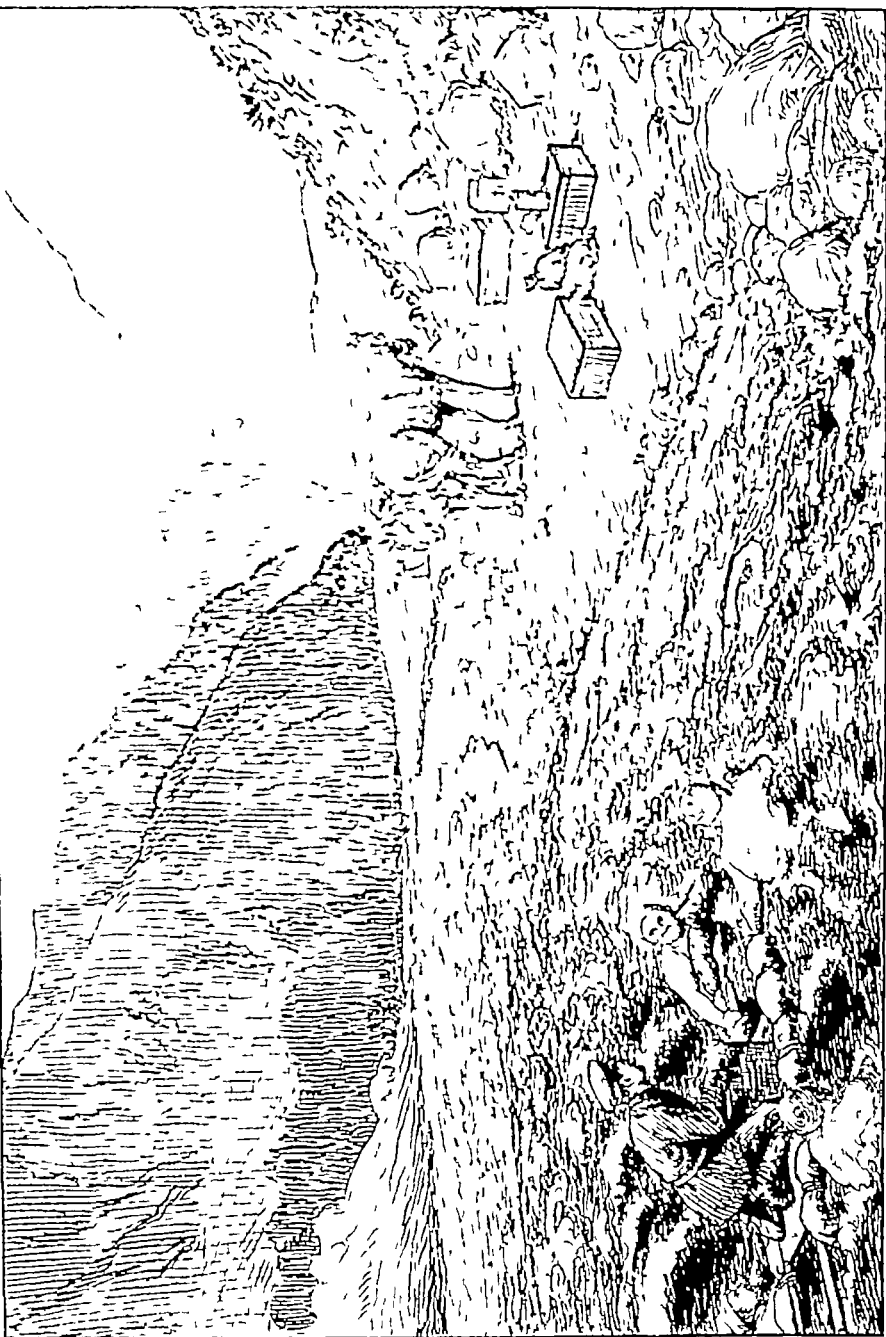
The prettiest village was Tong, its luxuriant orchards and picturesque houses contrasting agreeably with the naked mountain-walls of the background behind it. The chief of the village, Hassan Beg, was a typical old man, he reminded me of a worn-out professor, being extraordinarily absent-minded, and yet constantly talking away in half-tones to himself. At Kandalaksh, a village a short distance lower down, we put up at the *min-bashi's* (chief-tan of a thousand men), and established ourselves on his balcony, where all the dignitaries of the place came to pay us their respects.

Tong lies only a mile or a little more from the Yarkand-daria. The river is known there simply as Daria (the River), or also as Tongning-dariası (the Tong River). The names Raskan and Serafshan are only applied to the upper portion of the stream. In summer the river is so swollen that it cannot be crossed by any means whatever. Hence the inhabitants only travel to Yarkand in the autumn and winter. The journey takes a man on horseback about three days. Traders from Yarkand visit the valley with clothes, sugar, tea, and other commodities. Hassan Beg and the villagers thought we might possibly get across the river, but the old man begged me to remain with him that night, so that everything might be prepared for ferrying us across in the morning.

September 23rd When we came down to the river, I was astonished to find that the side-valley of Tong was broader than the principal valley upon which it debouched.

The enormous volumes of water which pour off the mountains towards that quarter have cleft their way irresistibly through the massive mountain-chains, and present views of signal grandeur both up and down the defile by which they break their way through. From the marks on the cliff-side I observed that the river was at that time $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet lower than its highest level during the summer. All the same, a hollow roar echoed against the mountain-walls as the flood still of considerable volume rolled its greenish muddy waters along its deeply eroded channel.

The river stopped our way. We must get across it somehow. On the river bank we found half-a-dozen *suchis* (water men) waiting for us, in wide swimming-drawers, each man having a *tulum* (inflated goat-skin) tied round his chest. They had lashed together a *sal* (ferry-boat), which looked anything but trustworthy, seeing that it consisted of an ordinary stretcher supported by a dozen *tulums*. The horses were unloaded. Some of the provision-boxes were placed on the "ferry-boat". One of our horses was yoked to it. Then one of the *suchis* led him carefully down the polished rounded stones immediately under the bank, whilst his comrades balanced the boat. The horse soon lost his foothold, and disappeared all except his head. The *suchi* then threw his right arm round the animal's neck, whilst with his left arm he swam and steered. The whole party were speedily caught in the current, and went swirling down at a giddy pace the *suchis* swimming with all their might. The right bank immediately opposite to us presented a face of vertical cliffs. Towards these the swimmers pressed with desperate energy striving to make a little sheltered bay immediately below them, in which an eddy circled over a shallow sandy bottom. At that spot the ferrymen cautiously landed their charges. Half a mile below the ferry the river made a bend, and the current swept over towards the left bank, forming a series of boiling rapids. Hence the anxiety of the *suchis* to get across the river before they were caught in and drawn down by the suction of the cascade, for once in the rapids, it would



CROSSING THE RASKAN-DARIA

be impossible to escape being dashed to pieces amongst the rocks and crags

After the baggage was all taken over, in four separate journeys, it came to my turn. I had waited impatiently, with something of the same feeling a youth has who wants to bathe and yet cannot swim. The raft oscillated unceasingly on its inflated skins, and every moment threatened to capsize, especially when it got amongst the tossing eddies, but that the suchis were on the alert and maintained its balance. I preferred to dispense with the horse, and bade four of the men take hold of the four corners of the "ferry-boat." The next moment we were in the grip of the torrent, and away went the raft like a mad thing. I was not accustomed to that mode of travelling, and everything seemed to be turned the contrary way on. The opposite cliffs seemed to be racing *up* the stream, and the perspective appeared to be constantly changing, like the views you get from the windows of an express train. Plying their arms and legs with well-practised skill, the swimming ferrymen forced the raft out of the sweep of the current, and at length we made the comparatively smooth water of the bay, and landed.

On the return journey, back to the left bank, the "ferry-boat" was driven some distance down the stream, and had to be dragged back to the point of embarkation by a horse. The other horses that still remained were swum across, each with a suchi to help him. Islam Bai preferred to cross in the same way, but he turned giddy and confused, lost his bearings, spun round two or three times in the middle of the river, and forgot which way he was going, and very nearly drowned his horse through forcing his head down too low in the water. He drifted down the river, and I was on tenter-hooks lest he should be swept amongst the rapids. But luckily he managed to reach the bank. I was thankful to have all the caravan, horse and man, safe and sound on the right bank of the Yarkand-daria! I paid the suchi one hundred tengeh (22s 6d), besides a present of a cap

and a knife to their leader, and they were more than satisfied

The river usually freezes towards the end of December, and in those places in which the current is not too strong, the ice is wont to be thick. It is then possible to ride along the ice up the valley to the village of Kichick-tong and the side-valley of Chepp, which leads to the pass of Korum-art (the Stone Pass), in the mountain-chain that overlooks the river on the right. The summer flood begins in the end of May and lasts three months.

Having safely crossed the Yarkand-daria, we reloaded and continued our journey down the stream by its right bank. But we had not advanced far before the road appeared to be blocked by a projecting spur, which shot perpendicularly down to the water's edge. But the Tajiks have hewn out a ledge or sort of cornice-path round the face of the spur—a work which probably dates from a remote antiquity, but the outside edge had crumbled away, so that the path sloped towards the abyss, at the bottom of which the river foamed. The path had been mended with stakes and branches and slabs of rock, but the boxes with which the horses were laden constantly scraped against the rocky wall. Besides, in some places the path was so narrow that the horses were quite unable to get along with their loads. One of them only escaped going over by the merest shave, he stumbled in one of the narrowest parts, and would unfailingly have been precipitated into the river, had not Islam Bai flung himself upon him in the very nick of time and so preserved his balance, while the rest of us hastily freed him from his boxes. After that I had all the baggage carried over the dangerous places.

We halted at Kurruk-lengher (the Dry Rest-house), situated in the entrance of the valley of the same name. It was a charming village, being encircled on all sides by gigantic cliff-walls, whilst itself embowered in parks and groves of leafy trees, amongst which the poplar, with its tall straight stem and spreading crown of foliage,

was the most conspicuous. The gardens and fields were dependent for water upon the rainfall in the mountains around, so that the crops were not seldom a failure.

September 24th We rode up the glen of Arpa-tallak, and in a violent hailstorm pitched our camp in a field near the village of Sughetlik (Willow Village), and on the following day crossed the pass of Arpa-tallak (12,590 feet). The path wound zigzag up the declivity, which was pretty steep and diversified by gently rounded knolls overgrown with grass. Patches of snow still lay on the slopes facing north, everywhere else the ground was sopping wet from rain and snow. The horses constantly slipped and slid on the slippery clay, so that we had anything but a pleasant ride, especially as there was a deep precipice on one side of us.

From the summit of the pass I perceived, to the west, the range which we crossed by means of the Kandahar pass. Eastwards was a panorama of mountain-crests, which died away into a yellowish haze in the far, far distance, where the desolate desert plains of East Turkestan began. On the east side of the range we were crossing there was no snow. Every village we passed after that was inhabited by Jagatai Turks, so that the Arpa-tallak pass forms a religious, as well as a climatic and ethnographic boundary. The track led east-north-east as far as the village of Unkurluk (the Ravines), where the people were engaged in thrashing their harvest. It was a very simple operation. The corn was spread out on the ground, and ten oxen, harnessed abreast, went round and round a pole in the middle, and so trod out the grain. Maize, wheat, and barley are the crops principally grown, and the fields are only sown every other year.

September 26th We rested in the well-cultivated, well-inhabited district of Utch-beldir. The next day we emerged from the mountain labyrinth, and at the village of Kuserab once more crossed the Yarkand-daria, which was 85 yards wide, and had a maximum depth of $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The current did not flow at the rate of more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in the second, so that we had no difficulty in

crossing by a large ferry, which took the whole caravan over in a single trip, and that without our having to unload the horses. We encamped in the village of Kachung, a place of 200 households. There, in addition to the ordinary cereals, rice was grown.

The next day's journey took us through the village of Yar-arik, which is supplied with water from a large canal, fed by the river, and thence north-eastwards to the village of Lengher. On our right stretched the boundless plains and the desert, on our left were the outermost ramifications of the mountains, dimly outlined in the dust-laden atmosphere. It was a landscape which reminded me of the sea at home, as soon as you have left the outermost rocks of the Skargård.

In our last day's march we passed through the villages of Kok-rabat, Kızıl, Yanghi-hissar, and Yappchan, and on 3rd October once more reached Kashgar, where I was welcomed by Consul-General Petrovsky with the same hospitable friendship as before.

Down in the plains it was still warm and close, and the sudden change of temperature laid me low with a violent fever, from which I did not recover until the middle of November.

The losses I had sustained during that unlucky desert journey were now replaced. I found awaiting me from Fuess in Berlin a case containing a set of first-class aneroids, hypsometers, psychrometers, and thermometers, all in excellent order, thanks to the care with which they had been packed in Berlin, and afterwards looked after by the Swedish consul in Batum. Besides, three loads of supplies had arrived from Tashkend, embracing several needful things, such as clothes, tinned foods, tobacco, etc., so that I was quite as well equipped as when I first started my series of Central Asian explorations.

ACROSS THE DESERT OF GOBI
TO LOP-NOR

