

July 31st. After crossing the river once more, we finally turned our backs upon it. Its volume here was very appreciably less than at the first fording; I dare say it oscillated even during the course of the day, a circumstance pointing to the near proximity of its sources. Otherwise the river presented the same features as lower down; its bottom was every bit as treacherous, so that we had to try several places before we dared risk the camels. Here too the right bank was the higher. I was told that the river goes west round the peak which I have designated V, this being the extreme westerly summit of the larger dome-shaped peaks, powdered with snow, which overtop the range we were then approaching at an acute angle. This range, which appeared to be a north-western offshoot of the Arka-tagh, screened entirely the mountainous country from which the river issues, and it was not until we had proceeded a couple of days farther south that I was able to get an insight into the hydrographical relations of the region. Westwards the country appeared to be open, there being no mountains to obstruct the view in that direction. A long way off in the east we saw the continuation of the drift-sand area; it appeared to advance right up to the foot of the range.

Not far south of the river we crossed over another eroded watercourse, containing a small brook; it issues from the nearest parts of the nearest range on the south and soon runs into the Pitelik-darja. The watercourses which we subsequently touched, all dry, run towards the north-north-west and north-west, and they all likewise join the main stream just mentioned. We often travelled along the bottom of these, for we were proceeding south-south-east. We frequently found in them, at one side or the other, peculiar pits, or round excavations with vertical sides, and perfectly dry at bottom; how they were formed is a puzzle to me. The surface consisted of soft soil. The grazing was very good, and there were orongo antelopes everywhere. Besides these we saw a single kulan, hares, *teschikans* — a species of small rodent living in burrows — and lizards.

Immediately east of our line of march ran a chain of hills. We then struck into a rather large eroded watercourse, which seemed likely to bring us up to a pass over the range in front of us. There was no water in it, but a little bit higher up a small spring gushed out of the slope on the left side of the glen, and kept alive a patch of grass, but the rivulet it gave rise to disappeared at once amongst the gravel. There was here any quantity of yak-dung. The altitude above sea-level was 4386 m.

The first hard rock we came to, on the right side of the glen, was granite or pegmatite of a very coarse grain. The same variety appeared also on the left side of the glen. Somewhat higher up there was a granite of moderate-sized grain. By this we had climbed above the misty haze which still hung over the basin of Kum-köl, and were able to see again, clearly and distinctly, the crest of the Kalta-alaghan; the two peaks S and T were easily recognisable.

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