

Schejok on the south burrows deeper and deeper in amongst the mountains of the peripheral region so also does the north-going river, the Raskan-darja or upper Jarkent, which, there can be no doubt, has carved for itself quite as wild and fantastic a passage through the border-ranges in the absolutely inaccessible glens by which it breaks through them. Indeed in this regard the characteristics of the peripheral region are even more emphatically reproduced. Down its glen there exists no road to Jarkent; the traveller has therefore to quit the glens and make his way down to the lowlands over the border-chains, crossing them by lofty passes.

Meanwhile we followed the *thalweg*, near which a small rocky pinnacle, called Näsir-tasch, rises like a pyramid from the level ground. The road is everywhere distinct, except where it runs along the bottom of the *thalweg*, and there it is washed away every summer. What helps especially to mark the road is the skeletons; in fact, it could hardly be staked out in a more conspicuous manner. For a couple of hours we rode down this watercourse, which is about 200 m. broad and fenced in by scarp-ed erosion terraces, 10 to 15 m. high. These form the limit of our field of vision; the whirling snow prevented us from seeing what lay beyond them.

We now approached an important point. From the east enter a couple of tributaries, and the united stream then runs north-west towards the region of Ak-tasch. Here we were then at the common confluence of three of the head-feeders of the Raskan-darja. There were large sheets of ice in the broad flat bed below the confluence, and also open water from springs. In the middle bed there was even a tiny rivulet. Its glen debouches from the right upon the before-mentioned route from Jan-tschenmo.

Upon reaching that point, the lowest that we touched (alt. 4847 m.) during the course of the day, we turned away from the united glen and rode up the side-glen on the right. That led us to the north-east and north, the ascent being noticeable without being in any way a strain. In the bottom of the glen there was neither water nor ice. For hours we kept along its left-hand terrace; the right terrace we could not see for the blinding snow. Hitherto the ground had been practically bare, except for an occasional strip of snow; but in the afternoon it began to snow more violently than it had done for a long time past, and very soon the entire country was again white, except for a few black dots showing here and there. On the recent horse skeletons the snow settled as softly and as lightly as cotton-wool. We were then travelling along the right erosion terrace of the glen called Tschibra, which leads up to the Suget-davan. For hours we rode through the thickly falling snow, unable to distinguish any other features of the landscape except the terrace we were moving on, the only thing which told us we were on the right road. High up the snow was a foot deep, and we advanced more and more slowly; fortunately there was no wind. When it grew dusk, we halted at the foot of the erosion terrace, with nothing around us except snow, snow, snow, not a blade of grass, no fuel, no water! It snowed throughout the evening, coming down thick and fast, until even the few black specks disappeared. The unbroken coverlet of snow shrouded like a pall of purest white the desolate, silent, uninhabitable country, hiding from sight its harrowing evidences of suffering and misery. The altitude of our camp in the Tschibra valley was 5130 m.