

thousands of years they have climbed and crawled over the frowning mountains. Religion too has cast its spell over the minds of men, to send them across these uplifted sands and snows, some uttering the battle-cry of Mohammed, some chanting Buddha's peaceful name. And after the fever of it all reigns Icy Death.

It was the chill hand of night which drew us into the unwonted life of Camp Sasar, the bourne to which our Kirghiz led us, the term of their travel, the limit of the camel's usefulness. Here were enclosures, unroofed walls of stone, mute prophecies of return to the world of man. The lune, the demi-lune of brooding nature's refuge were now taken; it remained to storm the citadel's self,—the bleak heights of snow and ice which put a cruel crown on Sasar's head. It had been hard to understand Achbar's report of this strange sentinel-post of commerce. We had learned that it was a point of exchange and of deposit for goods of all kinds, but that, save for the passing caravan men, it was still "Adam Yok." How can precious bales be left, guarded only by the untenanted rocks? Yet so it is—opium lies here in many two-hundred-pound masses—left by Kirghiz or Turkestan's caravans which turn backward to the north, taking with them bales of silk or cotton, which, perhaps a month before, were here deposited by some yak caravan, shuttling between Leh and Sasar. Meanwhile caravans have come and have gone, "through" caravans of ponies paying tribute of dead to the mountain spirits, and "shuttle" caravans of camels working between Sasar and the north.