

imagine that they must often long, also, to push on down to more hospitable regions *in front* of them. An officer shut up in these dreary quarters, with nothing whatever to do—week after week and month after month passing by in dull monotony only the same barren hills to look at, the same stroll about the fort to be taken—must long to *go on*. “What’s the good of staying here?” one can imagine his saying. “Why don’t Government send us on to a proper place, a place worth having?” It is only human nature that he should wish so, and when he is in this frame of mind it obviously requires a very little inducement to move him on, and a pretty tight rein from behind to keep him still.

However, at the time of my visit to Murghabi, no Russian soldier had yet suffered exile in that spot. We only found a few Kirghiz, and after spending a night there, we pushed on up the course of the Ak-baital (White Mare) River to Rang-kul. The Ak-baital now, at the end of October, had no water in it. The valley was two or three miles broad and very barren. No water was to be found nearer than Rang-kul, so we had to make a long march of it to that place. We kept along the shores of the lake for several miles, and on the way passed an interesting rock called the Chiragh-tash, or Lamp Rock. It stands out over the lake at the end of a spur, and at its summit is a cave with what the native thought was a perpetual light burning in it. This light was variously reported to come from either the eye of a dragon, or from a jewel placed in its forehead. On coming up to this rock I asked to be shown the light, and there, sure enough, was a cave, in the roof of which was a faint white light, which had the appearance of being caused by some phosphorescent substance. I asked if any one had ever been up to the cave to see what was inside in it, but the Kirghiz said that no one would dare to do so. I fancy, however, that laziness and indifference, quite as much as fear, was the cause of their never having ascended