

range of the Pamirs, which stood before us like a wall. We headed straight towards that glorious mountain, the Mustagh-ata, which rose twenty-one thousand feet above the plains on which we stood, and, three days' march from Kashgar, we entered the Gez defile, the road up which was rough and difficult and almost impractical for ponies. When the river, which runs through the defile, is low, ponies can be led up the bed; but now, in the summer-time, when it is in full flood, they have to be taken two and three thousand feet higher up, over a spur, then down again for a mile or two, along the valley bottom again, then once more over a hill, and so on for the whole way up. On the hillside there was seldom any path, and the ponies had to scramble about amongst the rocks and boulders, and up and down places not much less steep than the roof of a house. But, once through this defile, we found ourselves on an open plain, surrounded on all sides by mountains, but itself quite flat. To the left, as we emerged from the defile, was a large lake. This was not marked on any of my maps, though the district has been well surveyed, and I was further puzzled to see quantities of sand-drift covering the lower parts of the low, rounded mountains on the opposite bank. As the water of the lake came right up to the mountain-side, it was difficult to see where the sand could come from; but I found that the lake was only a few feet deep, and when the melting of the snows has finished, it dwindles to a mere marsh, exposing, at the same time, large deposits of sand, which the wind blows on to the mountain-sides. This lake was an extension of the Balun-kul.

The scenery now changed completely. Up the course of the Gez River, the valleys had all been deep and narrow, with precipitous sides, and at the head of the defile, on the left-hand side, the great mountain mass of the Mustagh-ata looked as if it had but just been rudely thrust upward, and the shattered sides of the mountain were exposed fresh from the upheaval.