

was, therefore, all the more worth conquering, and as it would be the final and greatest obstacle on my long journey from Peking, I set out to tackle it with the determination to overcome it at almost any cost. Every other difficulty had been successfully negotiated, and this last remaining obstacle, though the most severe of all, was not to be permitted at the climax of my journey to keep me from my goal.

These were my feelings as I advanced up the valley, at the head of which lay the Mustagh Pass. But I had little idea of the magnitude of the difficulties which in reality lay before me, and these were soon to commence.

Scarcely a mile from our bivouac of the previous night we came to a point where the valley was blocked by what appeared to be enormous heaps of broken stones and fragments of rock. These heaps were between two and three hundred feet in height, and stretched completely across the valley. I had gone on ahead by myself, and when I saw these mounds of *débris*, I thought we might have trouble in taking ponies over such rough obstacles; but I was altogether taken aback when, on coming