

## CHAPTER IV.

### VISIT TO THE THIAN-SHÁN PLATEAU, THE CHÁDIRKÚL LAKE, AND THE CHAKMÁK FORTS.

*By Lieutenant-Colonel T. E. Gordon.*

DR. STOLICZKA, Captain Trotter, and I left Yangi-Shahr, Káshghar, on the last day of the old year. Having been asked to take as little baggage as possible, the local authorities undertaking to provide us with lodging and food, we started with the limited following of six servants and six baggage ponies. The first day's journey was to Bezákh (26 miles), a village in Upper Artush. The road lay in a northerly direction, past the city of Káshghar, then through about three miles of cultivation, to a stony desert, rising gently towards a depression in the low range of hills which shuts in the valley of the Artush, a broad and far extending fertile plain, studded with villages showing signs of thriving population and careful farming. This well irrigated valley, watered by never-failing streams flowing from the Thian-Shán and Alái Mountains, must produce wonderfully rich and regular harvests. Two large camel caravans were passed, going from Almáti (Vernoé) to Káshghar with Russian goods, of which cast iron cooking pots formed a considerable portion.

The second day's journey was to Chung Terek (the big poplars), or Ák-Chirgh (white reeds), 20 miles; a Kirghiz village of mud huts and felt tents. We proceeded in a general N. N. W. direction, three miles across the Artush valley, to the mouth of the Toyun valley, up which the road lay the whole way. At nine miles we passed the Khitai, or Tessiktásh Karawal (post), a small square fort used as a customs post, and occupied by a few of the Káshghar Dádkhwah's men. This was the most advanced position held by the Chinese during their occupation of the country. We saw Kirghiz scattered over the whole valley, located wherever grazing was available for their flocks and herds. Many of their felt tent hamlets show signs of settled habitation in patches of cultivated and irrigated ground, probably attended to by the elders of the families, when the summer move to the mountain pasture lands takes place. The scenery at Chung Terek must be singularly beautiful in summer.

On the third day, January 2nd, 1874, we reached Chakmák, 21 miles further up the Toyun valley. The frozen Toyun was crossed and recrossed repeatedly as on the previous day. The hills close in a short distance above Chung Terek, and at a commanding spot, 12 miles beyond, the Mirza (also called Terek and Pust) fort is placed. The valley opens out again above the Mirza fort, but to no great extent. It affords good grazing ground to Kirghiz scattered all over it in tent clumps. Nine miles higher up is the Chakmák fort. Mahmúd Beg, the Tiksobai (Chief of the Standard) in command, welcomed us warmly, and treated us most hospitably, accommodating and entertaining us in excellent quarters inside the fort.

We continued in the same general direction on the fourth day, passing the Suyúk Karawal, eight miles up the Toyun, where it is joined by the Suyúk stream, flowing from the Suyúk Pass, distant about two days' journey, and said to be impracticable for horses in winter. The valley opens out a few miles above Chakmák, and near Suyúk the hills become rounded and low. We proceeded up the Toyun almost due north from Suyúk and halted at Gúlja-báshi (the ovis poli ground), also called Búlghúm-báshi (the Myricaria wood), 10 miles from Chakmák, a sheltered valley with abundant pasturage. We were accommodated in a capital felt tent furnished by the Commandant of Chakmák. Our accompanying party of Káshghar officials, of whom the Mírákhor Inám Khoja was the principal, was joined at Chakmák by the Yúzbáshis, Mahomed Alum and Alum Kúl, and by the Kirghiz Yúzbáshi, Mahomed Saleh, with ten of his men. Mahomed Saleh is an Andijáni Kirghiz, with 100 Chirik, Alái, and Andijáni Kirghiz under him.