

me to believe that at about one *kos* (2 miles) from Gulbáshem, by turning up a lateral ravine on the south, a journey of 3 *kos* would bring me to a very low and easy pass, with an almost imperceptible ascent, from the top of which we were to look down upon the Kárátágh plains; and the evening we were at Gulbáshem he pointed out a neighbouring spur, beyond which, he said, the road turned off. What then was my annoyance when the next day we did not reach the turning until after a long and difficult march of 13 miles up the Kárakásh River, and even then, according to his account, the pass was further off than he had stated it to be the day before. I was extremely vexed at thus partially losing a day, for my camp was so far behind (I having arranged for a short march hoping to get up to the pass and back before night) that there was no time to move it much further on that day, and I had to halt at the entrance of the valley leading to the pass. I had now only two days left in which to visit the pass and return to Sháhídúla, as it had been arranged that I should have to be there on the 20th so as to be ready to leave with Colonel Gordon on the 21st.

Starting early in the morning of the following day and quitting the Kárakásh River (at a point 12,500 feet above the sea), we went up a broad open ravine, running south for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles, to a point where it divides into two branches of which we followed the eastern for about half a mile up a steepish ascent to a point where this also divides into two smaller ravines with a steep spur running down between them. These two ravines were bounded externally by precipitous banks several hundreds of feet in almost perpendicular height. There was apparently no practicable path along the lower portion of these defiles, but the road zigzags up the spur running down between them, and then follows the left hand one. The top of this first ascent was about 2,500 higher than our camp on the Kárakásh River.

From the top of the zigzag, the road up which, though steep, was good and practicable for laden ponies, we reached a more open country and the road now followed a broad grassy ravine with a gentle but steady rise. I followed this for seven or eight miles rising to about 16,800 feet, and there was still a stretch apparently of several miles, of gently undulating ground in front. As it was getting late in the day, and there was no time for me to go further, I climbed up a hill from which I obtained a view of the water-shed. I sent on the Pundit (the one who had been accompanying Captain Biddulph, and whom I had brought back from Gulbáshem) with instructions to follow the ravine to the water-shed, and to go beyond and fix by intersection either the Kárátágh Lake or the hill at Tamba camping ground between Kárátágh and Áktágh, and, if possible, to return by Áktágh and rejoin the Head-Quarters camp at Sháhídúla. He succeeded the following day in passing the crest which turned out to be not more than a couple of miles from where I had left him, and in fixing by intersections from a distance the position of the hill before alluded to; but the guide having become seriously ill and no one else knowing the country, and the whole of the Kárátágh plain being several inches deep in snow, the Pundit was obliged to return *viá* Gulbáshem rejoining the camp after I had left with Colonel Gordon. I returned myself that same evening to my camp at Fotásh in the Kárakásh River, not reaching it, however, till late at night and getting two or three falls on the road, which, although tolerably good by daylight, was in certain places, especially at the foot of the steep zigzag, by no means easy in the dark.

I do not think that this route is likely ever to come into general use, for although it is perhaps a better road than that between Sháhídúla and Kárakorum Brangsa (*viá* the Sugét Pass), yet it is much longer. From Sháhídúla to Brangsa the road *viá* the Kárakásh is at least 15 miles longer than the one by the Suget Pass. Should, however, the road *viá* Kizil-jilga and Kárátágh come into frequent use, I believe the Fotásh route might be employed with advantage, as there is very little difference in length of road, and grass and fire-wood are to be found in abundance all the way from Sháhídúla up the Kárakásh River, and for *two* miles up the (Fotásh) ravine, after which there is plenty of grass all the way to the pass as well as any amount of *Boortsee*.\* There were numerous tracks, on the higher

---

\* *Boortsee* is a small plant with large woody roots which grows wild in large quantities, and is in many places the only fuel obtainable by travellers.