

the whole district, which consists of several small townships scattered over the valley, in one of which, Besák, some five miles beyond where we crossed the river, we put up for the night.

From Besák our road lay for a few miles over fields lying in the broad Artysh valley, but we soon entered that of the Toyanda River, which flows from the Turgat Pass. This stream divides into two branches at the place where it debouches into the Artysh plain—the upper one flows nearly due east, and is extensively used in irrigating the fertile valley; the south or main branch flows into the River Artysh,* which passes along the south side of the valley, and after being joined by the Toyanda stream, cuts through the hills to the south at the gap alluded to in the preceding paragraph. On entering the Toyanda valley, here about two miles wide, we may be said to have fairly entered the Thien Shán mountains, the hills we had traversed on our previous day's journey being an isolated ridge. In marching up this open valley we had in view on our left the sharp serrated edges of the Ming-yol Hill, a prominent object in the panoramic view from the roof of the Embassy buildings in Káshghar; in front of us lay a range of snow-covered peaks also visible from Káshghar; these formed part of a small range running parallel to the main chain (east to west). We passed the old Chinese outpost of Teshek Tásh, or Khitai Karáwal, and a little beyond it the village of Tupa, (or Tapú) near which place through a large ravine on the left, is a road said to come from Kizil-boya, a fort near the head of the Káshngar River. A little further on through a broad open valley we reached the picturesque camping ground of Chung Terek, a Kirghiz village, where were a number of akooes pitched for our reception. From this place the scenery gets much bolder and the road passes between precipitous hills rising to a height of some 3,000 feet above the valley, through which a march of 20 miles brought us to the Chakmák Forts; the road goes steadily up hill, a gentle and regular ascent which continues all the way up to the Turgat Pass, and is passable by laden camels even in "mid-winter." Eight miles short of Chakmák we came across the "Mirza Terek," "Past Kurghán," or "lower fort," a carefully constructed work, which would prove a serious obstacle to an advancing foe. Here as is the case at Chakmák, the overhanging heights are so precipitous and inaccessible that it would be almost impossible for an enemy to effect a lodgment.

The road across the Russian frontier by the Turgat Pass is good, and the slope easy. The road right up to the crest of the Pass was entirely free from snow.† On the slopes near the Pass is an almost inexhaustible supply of grass.

There are two roads over this range of hills converging on a point a few miles north of the Chakmák forts—one from the Suyok Pass, two days' journey in a north-west direction, is little more than a path, and cannot be traversed by horsemen; but the other from the Turgat Pass, about 30 miles to the north of the junction (Suyok Karáwal), is now the main caravan road between Kashghar and the Russian settlement of Almáti (Fort Vernoye), and may be said to be practicable all the year round, although somewhat more difficult perhaps in summer, when there is much more water in the River Toyanda, which has to be crossed some forty times in the course of the journey.

The Suyok Pass is stated on Russian authority to be 12,800 feet above sea level. A fort called Yagachak, covers some road in the direction of the Pass, west of Chakmák, but the accounts of its position were so vague and discordant, that I was unable to fix its position even approximately. A road along a ravine about half-way between Chakmák and the Past Kúrghán was said to lead to it.

Along a ravine lying to the south of the Chakmák forts a road runs across the hills, connecting them with the Terekty Fort, nearly due north of Kashghar. It lies on the shortest road between the Náryn Fort (Russian) and Káshghar *via* the Bogushta and the Terekty Passes.

For 25 miles above Chakmák, the road took us along the course of the frozen stream, passing through volcanic rocks, to Turgat Bela, a little short of which the nature of the country alters, and the precipitous hills are replaced by gently undulating grassy slopes abounding

* The Artysh River is said to rise near the Terek Diwan, on the road between Kashghar and Khokand.

† In January.