

miles, *i.e.*, three miles in a north-east direction across several low projections of a spur running south, then four miles of steady ascent up a ravine to the north, followed by a sharp pull of two miles in a direction 35° east of north, brought us to the Belowti Pass, the goal for which we had been striving. From the pass itself, which is about 11,500 feet above the sea, no view was to be had, but by ascending a hill to the west, some 300 feet above it, I got a very fine view of a portion of the snowy range on the opposite side of the Kokshál river; one peak, nearly due north, stood out conspicuously, of no very great height however, its elevation being only $2\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ from where I stood. The range appeared to run nearly due east. Parallel to it at its base lay the deep valley of the Kokshál, apparently about eight miles to the north of where I stood. The road from the pass leads down a steep ravine, at first nearly north-east, and then with a north-westerly course to the river. The position of the next camp, Ák-chai, on the big river, was pointed out to me, bearing 10° east of north, but the man who was with me could not give me a good idea of the direction of Úsh Túrfán or Áksú.

Ak-chi, the first halting-place to the north of the pass, is a Kirghiz camp close to the point where the road from the pass strikes the river. About five miles below it is Kokshál, a large Kirghiz village, between which and Úsh Túrfán, a distance of about 90 miles as far as I could learn, are numerous Kirghiz encampments, all under the orders of the Hakim of Úsh Túrfán. It was a party of these Kirghiz whom we had had the good fortune to encounter on the south of the Belowti Pass.* Near Kokshál, the alternative road from Jai Túpa, before alluded to, joins the river which takes its name from the village. The road is said to be shorter and easier than the one we had followed, but for two days there is no fire-wood. One march above Kokshál (or three marches according to another account) is the fort of Kára Bulák, above which the Kirghiz subjects of the Amír are not allowed to pass, the ground above being held by the Russian Kirghiz, who in their turn are not allowed to cross the frontier eastward. All these Kirghiz are, I believe, of the same tribe, but being under different rulers are to a certain extent hostile; at all events they are not allowed to communicate with each other.

From Safr Bai, about 38 miles to the west of Úsh, is a road leading to Issigh-kul, by the Bedal and Zaikí Passes. The former of these is on the boundary between Russia and Káshgharia.

There are said to be about 500 Kirghiz families in the Kokshál valley, and about 350 in the valleys north and north-east of Artysh. The Kokshál valley is exceedingly rich in pasture. Its upper waters (the Aksai) were first occupied by the Russians about 10 years ago.

On the range on which I stood there were no high peaks visible, probably none more than 1,000 feet above the pass; the ground on both sides was undulating and grassy, very much resembling that to the east of the Turgat Bela Pass in the same range. It was evident that this range had, as it advanced eastward, become considerably lower, both with regard to its peaks and its water-shed. Like the smaller ranges at its base and parallel to it, I believe it to get lower still, as it goes further east, and at last to be lost in the plains near Áksú.

The sun set while I was at the top of the pass; the thermometer stood at 5° F. with a cold wind blowing, so I was glad to go back to the Kirghiz camp at Tigarek, which we reached at 9 P.M., having made good use of the only fine day we had during our trip. As it was, snow began to fall immediately after we reached the camp. The next day we returned to our standing camp at Ui Bulák; the road was three inches deep in snow, and more falling, accompanied by a bitterly cold wind; next day back to Jigda, 22 miles; weather much the same; next day 25 miles to Kyr Bulák, to which place akooes and supplies had been brought for us from the village of Karghíl, 15 miles off. The following day we marched 29 miles to the village of Kalti Ailák.

The ground we had been traversing is marked on our maps "the Syrt," and is represented as a high table-land. I took some pains to ascertain the limits of the district bearing this name, but could not arrive at very satisfactory conclusions. "Syrt" in Turki means "the back," and is therefore necessarily applied to somewhat elevated lands. The Hakim (Governor) of Artysh included under this designation the whole of the highland districts about Sonkul and

* From them we obtained both food and shelter.