

stream for about five miles more to Tár báshi, passing through a narrow and dangerous defile. The road was execrable, and we experienced great difficulty and delay in getting our baggage through. This defile would be quite impassable for field-guns, and a few determined men might in places defend it against an army. The road often runs along the bed of the stream, which contains large boulders and deep holes of water. In the winter it is probably easier to traverse, but at the time of our passage we had the double difficulties of ice and water to contend with. As far as I could learn the river is never entirely frozen over, on account of the numerous hot springs which issue from the limestone rocks forming its side walls. One of these had a temperature of 125° , and the vegetation in its immediate neighbourhood was much in advance of that lower down the stream, and showed signs of approaching spring. In the summer this road is said to be rendered quite impassable by the floods from melting snow; the alternative route lies up the Yámbulák River.

On the eighth day our road lay alongside the Tangitár stream, which, from Tár báshi, ascends a gentle slope, bounded on both sides by undulating snow covered hills. The valley rises very gradually for about nine miles, up to an almost imperceptible water-shed (14,480 feet high), by which we reached the Chichiklik plateau, a broad elevated valley whose drainage passes south, through a somewhat narrow defile, to the Táshkurghán river. On the plateau close to the water-shed were two small frozen lakes. The summer road before alluded to which goes up the Yambulak stream enters the Chichiklik plain by the Yámbulák Pass about four miles to the north of where we crossed the water-shed. On the opposite side of the valley, which was between four and five miles wide, in a south-west direction from where we entered it, is the Pass of Kok Mainák, on high spur running down from the Kizilart mountains. By this pass is the shortest road to Táshkurghán, but on our outward journey it was so deep in snow that we were obliged to take the alternative route down the Shindí valley. It is the Kok Mainák Pass that is called "Chichiklik" by the "Mirza," "Fyz Bux," and other travellers, but the correct name as given by the Kirghiz who lived in the neighbourhood is, I believe, as I have given it. Our road lay down the stream. After the first two or three miles, where the slope was very easy, the valley narrowed, and the road became exceedingly steep and difficult, passing for several miles through a succession of rocks and boulders. At 10 miles below the lakes we came to our camp at Balghun, shortly before reaching which the valley had opened considerably although surrounded on both sides by lofty mountains.

The following day (29th), we descended four miles to the junction of the Shindí with the Táshkurghán (or Sarikol or Taghdumbash) River,* just above the Sarikoli village of Shindí, inhabited by Tajiks, and containing about 15 houses, situated in a small well cultivated valley, about two miles long by one broad. Our road now lay up the Sarikol river, but I descended it for about four miles to fix the direction in which it flowed away (south-east by east)†; returning to the junction I crossed the main stream with some difficulty owing to the rapidity of the current, and continued along its right bank, where the road passes through a very wild defile of crystalline rocks, forming almost perpendicular banks about 2,000 feet in height, through which the river winds its way with a most tortuous course. At about 10 miles above the junction we emerged on the north-east corner of the Táshkurghan or Sarikol plain. The road by which we travelled is only open in winter, as in summer the large mass of water in the Sarikol River makes it impassable. The route by the Yámbulák and Kok Mainák Passes is then used.

On entering the Sarikol valley we strike the junction of the Tagharma stream with the main river. The former comes from the plain of the same name on the north-west, and has been incorrectly described by a former traveller as the main source of the Sarikol River. When we saw it there was but little water coming down (temperature 38°), although in summer there is considerably more, but the small size of the water-course, and the evidence of

* Sometimes also called Yárkand River.

† From Shindi a path goes down the river, but is only practicable during two or three months in winter.