

junction with the valley of the Yarkand, the route lay along the bottom of the valley. Mountains, utterly barren and too precipitous to be climbed, except at one place near Yagzi, rose to a great height on either side. At some places the river was frozen over and we could cross on the ice, but between Issok Bulok Agzi and Yagzi, the current was so rapid that the stream was only partially bridged in this fashion. From a point a little above Yagzi down to the Yarkand River, there are numerous patches of cultivation with apricot trees scattered about. In fact, wherever cultivation is possible it is carried on.

There were two direct routes from Tir to Yarkand, one over the Karamut Dawan, which was said to be execrable owing to the steepness of the rocky sides of the valley; the other by Sandal Dawan, which, in accordance with the advice of the Yuz Bashi (Head of a Hundred Men) of Tir, I resolved to follow. The only difficulty of which I was told in this route, was a slide of bare rock where animals had to be unloaded and hauled up. This obstacle we reached early in the day, and being supplied with a party of villagers for haulage, we set vigorously to work. The task was laborious and tedious, some of the animals were hurt in their struggles, and it was not till dark that we succeeded in reaching a fairly open space, some few hundred yards above. This was a cheerless spot, called Keshna, at an altitude of 10,000 feet, where we found little grass for the animals, but a sufficiency of fuel and water. The Yuz Bashi having assured us that there was no other serious obstacle on the route, he and his men went back to their homes. Their representations proved much fairer than the truth, for, when we had gone half-way from Keshna to the top of the Sandal Dawan, which is 16,000 feet high, we came upon so steep a slope that the animals had to be unloaded and the baggage carried up by the men. We had here few hands to do the work, and