

the Chow-Kuan, who, nevertheless, took the will for the deed, and, on the whole, seemed to appreciate my efforts to give him a proper reception.

To take Utam Singh into the mountains with me was out of the question, and as he begged for leave to return to Kashmir, I granted his request. I was very doubtful whether he would survive the journey, but he was keen on going, and I made things as smooth for him as I could. Besides funds for expenses by the way, I gave him money to buy a good riding pony and to purchase a share of another pony which would carry his baggage and that of Dalbir Rai. Utam Singh had been very energetic and cheerful while in good health, and had served me faithfully since April, 1896, so that it was with great regret that I parted with him, as he and Dalbir set out together on the route by the Taghdumbash Pamir and Gilgit.

I was now free to set out towards the unknown stretch of the Yarkand River, and the adjacent region between the west end of Raskam and Kosarab. After much consideration I decided to travel by Takla, the Arpatalak Pass, Langar, and the Khandar Pass to the upper part of the Wacha, or Uchi valley. One of my men had crossed the Khandar Pass the preceding winter, and he assured me that from a point in its neighbourhood the Tagh Ata could be seen. I was anxious to observe this peak again, as Colonel Wahab, R.E., had informed me that, having observed the vertical angle in very bad weather, he was doubtful of the height of the mountain. It was the hope of being able to settle all doubt on this question that induced me to choose the Khandar Pass route.

My new assistant had not reached me by the time I was ready to set out, and to save time and trouble I despatched Islam direct to Tashkurghan to meet him, and bring him to my camp in the Wacha valley. This order