

On December 6th, the day after I had returned from the excursion up the Yarkand River, I crossed the pass, which was clear of snow. The ascent from the Mariong valley was not particularly dangerous, but, on account of its steepness, the animals had to rest at short intervals. Having made a short halt at the top, we began the descent into the V-shaped valley, at the head of which lies Pichanyart. The caravan had to proceed in straggling fashion, down countless zigzags, many of which were very short and steep, though sometimes the longer and easier ones proved dangerous also. On the slope lay numberless stones which, being set in motion by the men and animals in the rear, rolled and bounded down dangerously near those in the front of the caravan. Some of the yak were very troublesome, at times standing stock-still, and at other times rushing from the track for no apparent reason except to loosen showers of stones on the men and animals below. At one part of the descent the risk of injury from this cause was so serious that those above were made to halt till those below had gained a place of safety.

Yak are, as I have already had occasion to observe, very sure-footed, and this valuable quality they retain even when heavily laden and in difficult positions.

The Pichanyart valley was much narrower than the Mariong valley we had just left, and its bottom was covered with jungle, through which the Pichanyart stream forced its way. The village of the same name, where we halted for the first night after leaving Nosh Tung, consisted of a few houses surrounded by some cultivated ground. From inquiries here I learned that there was a direct route from Nosh Tung to the west end of Raskam, practicable for laden animals, and that there was also a mountain track, which only men and goats could use, from a point near Camp 126 to the Pil valley.