

with pleasure that we heard that the ice was now sufficiently strong to bear the weight of the caravan, and we made preparation to resume our journey. On the day before we set out the boy who had guided Islam across the Karamut Pass came to me and asked me to cure his feet, which he now, for the first time, told me were frost-bitten. At the moment I could do nothing for him, but I offered to take him with me and attend to his toes as soon as possible, assuring him that if any operation were necessary it would be painless, and offering to feed and clothe him till the cure should be complete. The boy was disappointed; the very suggestion of the amputation of lifeless toes terrified him, and he ran away. Another unsatisfactory affair required to be dealt with. I had come to the conclusion that the ex-Yuz Bashi of Tir had received hard usage in purse and person for misdirecting me the year before. My proceedings against him had originated in the statements, mostly lies, of the people of Asgan Sal, and, though his instructions might have been more explicit, I was convinced from my examination of the ground that he had not wilfully done me wrong. I frankly told him so, and in acknowledgment of my mistake gave him a present of 10 sarrs (27 rupees), which so pleased him that he expressed his willingness to be beaten again on similar terms.

On leaving Tir we crossed the Yarkand River and, re-entering Sarikol, made our way to the small village of Burangsal inhabited by Tajiks. The place had a snug appearance, without the poverty-stricken look common to most villages in this region, and I was quartered in a cosy, well-built house, the owner of which presented me with some partially dried grapes of local production. This valley was small but fertile, evidently yielding crops in excess of local requirements, for Mohammed Joo received many offers of supplies of barley.