

general and his force of ten thousand, after starting from Kashgar and crossing the Pamirs, had led over the Baroghil and Darkot passes. The former has to be crossed on the way from the uppermost Oxus valley to the headwaters of the Mastuj river, while the difficult glacier pass of the Darkot forms the only practicable approach from them to the Yasin valley.

I was naturally very anxious to trace on the actual ground the route of this remarkable exploit; for it is the only recorded instance of an organized force of comparatively large size having ever surmounted the formidable natural barrier which the Pamirs and Hindukush present to military operations. How such a force could be maintained in that elevated mountain region bare of all resources is by itself a problem that might baffle any modern general staff.

The ascent of the Darkot pass, about 15,400 feet above sea-level, undertaken with that object on May 17, proved a very trying affair; for the miles of magnificent glacier over which the ascent led from the north (Fig. 14) were still covered by deep masses of snow. Only after nine hours of toil in deep snow, concealing ice full of crevasses, did we reach the top of the pass. Even my hardy Mastuji and Wakhi guides had held it to be inaccessible at this early season. The observations gathered there and subsequently on our marches across the Baroghil saddle to the Oxus, fully bore out the exactness of every topographical detail furnished by the official account of that remarkable Chinese expedition.

As I stood on the glittering expanse of snow which marks the top of the pass and looked down the precipitous slopes which lead some 6000 feet below to the head of the Yasin