

CHAPTER XXI

FROM ROSHAN TO SAMARKAND

FOR progress to Roshan, the mountain tract adjoining Shughnan on the north, it would have been easier to descend the Ghund valley to the Oxus below Khoruk and then from opposite Kala-Bar-Panja on the opposite side to have followed the right bank of the river by the newly made Russian bridle-path down to Kala-i-Wamar, the chief place of Roshan. But I was anxious to see something of the high snowy range, dividing Shughnan from Roshan and the drainage of the Bartang river, which I had first reached more than a month before at Saunab. So I preferred to make my way to Roshan by the high pass which leads across the range from above the small village of Shitam. Light as our baggage was, it proved impossible to take it on laden ponies beyond a point about 12,600 feet above sea-level.

On the ascent made next day with load-carrying men, it was necessary alternately to advance over a much-crevassed glacier and to climb steep rock *coulours* before, after six miles of such trying progress, the narrow arête of rock forming the pass was reached at an elevation of some 16,100 feet. The magnificent views opening from this height were a fit reward for our toil (Fig. 140). To the west and north-west they extended over the heads of fine glaciers uniting below