

the highest village in Khingab. The first cultivation was passed at an elevation of about 9500 feet and traces of abandoned fields already three miles higher up. I knew that the considerable Garmo stream we had to ford is fed by the glaciers which clad the western face of the great Muztagh massif (Fig. 128) which had so much impressed me when approaching it early in August from the north. There was no time available now for getting within sight of it. Instead, I had to descend the main valley of Wakhia-bala by two marches in order to gain access to Kara-tegin in time before early snowfall might block the last high pass remaining to be crossed.

These marches led us past a succession of picturesque villages all ensconced among orchards and arbours. But the effects of maladministration as carried on from Bukhara manifested themselves only too clearly in much good land remaining untilled and in other signs also. The gorgeous silk robes usually combining all the colours of the rainbow in which the headmen even of small places paraded to greet me could scarcely deceive as a mark of prosperity. For I learned soon that the presentation of these 'Khillats' was a traditional method of exaction starting from the Amir's court. Favourites of the ruler or else officials whose salaries were overdue would be sent from Bukhara to carry such robes of honour to governors of provinces as tokens of the ruler's special satisfaction. Custom required the person bringing them on behalf of the Amir to be richly rewarded in silver by the recipient. Then the governor would reimburse himself by passing on these precious gifts through his unpaid subordinates to the Amlakdars or heads of subdivisions, and so in turn, until in the end all this display