

of high favours had served to mulct local headmen and through them the cultivators. What with methods of fiscal administration and justice thoroughly mediaeval, one could scarcely feel surprised at the indifference or worse with which the Amir's subjects watched the Bukhara regime disappear after the Russian revolution. They could not well foresee what worse misfortunes were in store for them after 'liberation' by the Soviet's agents.

Heavy rain obliged me to halt on October 6 at Lajirkh near the dilapidated headquarters of the Amlakdar of Wakhia-bala. But luckily the weather cleared again and, in spite of fresh snow in the mountains, allowed us in the course of the next two days to get across first the Girdan-ikaftar ('the pigeon's neck') pass (Fig. 147) and then the elevated plateau of Tupchak, in character resembling a Pamir. Dr. Rickmers, who made Tupchak his base for prolonged alpine explorations, has described the imposing series of high peaks and fine glaciers which border it on the south.

When I passed from the plateau across the great range which stretches all along the valley of the Surkh-ab and borders Kara-tegin on the south I enjoyed a magnificent panoramic view. It extended from the snowy range of Peter the Great in the west past the great Cis-Alai chain to the ice-wall formed far away to the east by the peaks on 'Muztagh' which I had first sighted from the Tarsagar pass. Thus two months' instructive wanderings across the Pamirs and the high valleys by the uppermost Oxus had brought me back again to that 'Valley of the Komedoi' and the line of the ancient silk trade which I wished to follow from the Alai.