

fascination for me ever since I was a boy. How I wished to have been able to follow the waters of the Oxus on their onward course! All the interests of ancient Iran cluster in one form or the other round the banks of the great stream. Since the earliest times it has brought fertility and culture to the regions which it waters. Here at its source there was only a silent, lifeless waste of rock and ice. Yet I found it hard to leave this desolate scene.

The evening glow was spreading over the valley when I retraced my route to the pass, and it was dark before I returned to camp. I found there to my delight an eagerly-expected home mail, which the attentive Wazir of Hunza had sent by special messenger over the Kilik. With it came a batch of the latest telegrams of Reuter, which were to be forwarded to Mr. Macartney at Kashgar after perusal. They brought news of the attack on the Peking Legations and of the fighting about Tien-tsin. It was strange to read here at the westernmost extremity of the Chinese Empire of the events which had convulsed its capital in the far East scarcely more than a week before. I thought it fortunate indeed at the time that this disturbing news would probably take months to reach the population of the outlying province of Kashgar. And I felt still more grateful for the time-honoured decentralisation of the Celestial Empire which made any immediate influence of those troubles on Chinese Turkestan and on my programme of explorations appear distinctly improbable.

On the 3rd of July I marched back to Köktörök, and having picked up the Sub-Surveyor and heavy baggage, continued in the broad, grassy valley down to Tigharman-su.

There I camped near two Kirghiz felt huts or 'Ak-uis' pitched by Muhammad Yusuf's people, who graze their flocks of sheep and yaks here during the summer. On the following morning appeared Karakash Beg, the Sarikoli headman in charge of the Mintaka route, to escort me further down the valley. We were nearing, after a march of some six miles,