

bash from ancient times as a great natural thoroughfare over the "Roof of the World." Here my newly-found companion left me in order to hurry onwards to Tashkurghan. He had been fitted out with what was needed in the way of tinned provisions, &c., in order to take him comfortably through to Kashgar; and M. Sher Muhammad, for whom I gave him a letter, subsequently secured for him the change of animals and the passport of the local Chinese commandant which were required for his further progress.

My way on July 6th lay from Ghujakbai first over a broad alluvial plateau which stretches for miles up the valley of the stream coming from the Khunjerab Pass. As it approaches the Taghdumbash Darya it spreads out fan-wise, and resembles most closely the 'Karewa' plateaus which form so characteristic a feature of the Kashmir Valley. A ride of some five miles across this barren waste brought me to Dafdar, where, near a couple of 'Ak-uis,' I found a picturesque assembly of Wakhis and Kirghiz awaiting me. The latter had come from Pisling, a small settlement across the river. By the side of their stalwart and handsome Wakhi neighbours they looked somewhat insignificant; but their cheerful expression and joviality amply made up for the defects of stature and countenance. A short distance below Dafdar I came upon the first traces of cultivation. On the scattered fields which little channels from a side stream irrigate, the crops of oats and barley have evidently a hard struggle. All the same it was a pleasure to meet again with this evidence of permanent habitation. It is only during the last ten years that the latter has become possible, since Kanjuti raids have ceased and order has been secured for the valley.

It was a novel sensation, after the weeks passed in narrow gorges and amidst snow-covered heights, to ride along these broad, smiling slopes gently descending from the foot of the mountains. Wherever water reaches them from the side valleys, the ground was covered with a carpet of flowers and