

Karakul, its depth there reaching 4 to 5 feet. The rest of the march lay alternately over stony "alluvial fans" spreading in front of the glaciers which descend from the great icy range eastwards, and over narrow strips of rich meadow land fringing here and there the steeply-cut conglomerate banks. The flora seemed more or less the same as about Karakul, but the growth and the scent of the herbs growing in these sheltered nooks was stronger.

It was close on 8 p.m. when I reached my camp pitched near the Chinese post of Bulunkul on the swampy piece of meadowland that fills a bend of the river. The military Amban of the place is supposed to watch the neighbouring passes which lead across to Rang-kul and adjoining parts of the Russian Pamirs. From the report brought to me he seemed little inclined to help me on my journey. Though he sent fuel and a sheep as a present, Osman Beg, the influential headman of the Kirghiz grazing in the neighbourhood, to whom I had been recommended from Tashkurghan, found it advisable to pay his visit by stealth and under the cover of darkness. Next morning the attitude of the Amban made itself palpably felt. Karm Shah Beg's men, with their ponies, which had brought part of my baggage from Karakul, had disappeared during the night. To move on with the five Kashgar animals (the rest I had left for Ram Singh's camp) was manifestly impossible. From the Amban, to whom I sent, came nothing but a rude reply, leaving it to my own choice how I should make my way beyond. I thought of Dr. Sven Hedin, who had met with an even worse reception at Bulunkul, and consoled myself with the conjecture that possibly the climate of the place disagrees with the liver of successive Chinese commandants.

Fortunately the Amban's obstructiveness was purely passive. I found little difficulty in persuading his interpreter ('Tolmach') that it was to his material advantage to supply the needful animals. He took the hint, and by