

Muztagh-Ata, and is visible even from Kashgar, in the form of a great truncated cone.

This detour had delayed us much, and it was getting late in the afternoon when the baggage arrived at the little Karaul of Gez, from which the valley takes its name. Fresh animals were to be taken here, but they were said not to have arrived as yet from their grazing-grounds. So we pitched camp among the fantastic conglomerate formations which line the river-bank. The evening brought a fresh duststorm, and notwithstanding the elevation—about 8,000 feet above the sea—it felt oppressively warm. On the morning of the 26th of July I awoke to hear the news that the promised ponies had not arrived, and that the men from Bulunkul together with their animals had decamped during the night. To make matters worse, the 'Karaulchis'—Kirghiz posted at the Karaul for carrying the Chinese Dak—had also for some unknown reason disappeared.

I did not appreciate the prospect of being detained indefinitely at so dreary and desolate a spot, and the hours of weary waiting sorely tried my patience. Amidst the sand and bare rocks the air grew almost hot as the day advanced. Satip Aldi, the Kirghiz I had engaged at Karakul, was despatched to the herdsmen high up the Koxsel Valley, but I knew that assistance from that side could not come till night-fall. All the greater was the feeling of relief when by 2 p.m. a party of traders with four ponies came in sight, the first travellers we had met since leaving Karakul. With some persuasion and gentle pressure my men prevailed on the party to unload their animals and to help to take our baggage down to the next Karaul, Kaurük-Kurghan. Heavy loads had to be made up, and we all had to walk—no great sacrifice, for the ten miles down the valley proved exceptionally easy-going. The scenery became less sombre as the valley broadened, and after returning once more to the right bank at Kök-moinak, a picturesque little cross-spur, I was gratified by the first view