

of cultivated fields. The reception that met me at Kaurük-Kurghan was a cheerful contrast to our Gez experience. The Kirghiz Karaulchis, among them some picturesque old men in padded coats of wonderful hues, turned out for my reception in great style. All the ponies we required for the difficult marches of the next two days were supplied most readily, and the services of extra men offered to help the animals over the difficulties of the track. Kaurük-Kurghan proved a far cooler place than Gez. The evening, after a light shower from the east had sprinkled the ground, was delightful, and I felt refreshed by the scent of the thyme growing profusely about my camping-place.

The ordinary route to the plains below Kaurük-Kurghan runs along the bottom of the river gorge, but this is impassable during the summer months owing to the flood. Then communication can be maintained only by the circuitous track through the mountains, known characteristically as Tokuz-Dawan, "the Nine Passes." The first of these passes was up a steep spur a couple of miles below the Karaul. The hillsides were clothed with plenty of shrubs, and reminded me of the scenery I had seen in Buner and in Hazara, east of the Indus. On the top of the pass a pleasant surprise awaited me. Unexpectedly the path opened on a charming glen with trees and fertile patches of oatfields. The height was over 9,000 feet. Kaurük-Bel looked a veritable oasis after the stony barrenness of the Gez defile, and might with some imagination be turned into a suitable site for a cosy "hill-station." Unfortunately the glen holds practically no water. For a couple of miles we descended it, and then turned up a narrow side gorge to the north-east.

The scenery had by this time changed considerably. All vegetation disappeared from the gravel-strewn bottom of the gorge, and the sides were formed by bare rocks of reddish-grey tint, worn into fantastic shapes by the influences of climatic extremes. At the bottom of the narrowing gorge,