

cut into the rock by the action of rain and melting snows, we wound our way onwards, often in the welcome coolness of overhanging cliffs. In a little cul-de-sac of rocks there was a tiny stream of cool water dripping over the stones and losing itself below in the fine sand. Not far from it the Ularlik Jilga contracts to a narrow fissure, some 8 to 10 feet across, closed in by unscalable crags. The large rocks which form the bottom are too steep to be climbed by laden animals. So all the baggage had to be taken off and carried by men for a short distance. Emerging from this gloomy fissure we had fresh trouble in pulling the ponies along a series of rocky ledges and up an exceptionally steep spur. At last the top of the second pass was reached, with a distant view to the snowy peaks south-west and a succession of bare serrated ridges in the foreground looking like lines of petrified waves. Far-advanced decomposition was plainly written on all features of the landscape. Winding round the highest ridges of some neighbouring peak, at an elevation of about 10,500 feet, we reached at last the head of the Khush-kishlak Valley, the only one in this maze of mountains which contains a permanent spring, and where a longer halt is practicable. Dreary and miserable the place looked, which we reached after a descent of some three miles between bare hillsides, apparently sandstone. But there was the spring, fresh and clear, and after the long, hot climb men and beasts were equally grateful for its blessing.

The march of the 28th of July was to bring me right down into the plains to the large oasis of Tashmalik at the entrance of the Gez defile. It was a double march, and we started early. A slight storm had cleared the air remarkably, and when the top of the next pass, the Aktiken-Bel, was reached in the fresh morning air I was surprised by a delightfully distant view. On the west it extended to the great icy peaks which lie between Muztagh-Ata and the Gez-Darra, most prominent among them the glittering cone of Sarguluk. To