

the east the plains could be seen far away to the green tracts under irrigation round Yangi-Hissar, Opal, and Tashmalik. A light haze of dust that hung over the plain on the pale-blue horizon was all that suggested to the mind the great desert beyond. Immediately before me was a maze of bare rocky ridges. The eye revelled in the bright and wonderfully varied tints which they exhibited. From bluish grey to terra-cotta every shade of colour glistened in the full sunlight. It was a view which will long live in my memory for its vastness and fascinating variety. For a couple of hours it remained before my eyes as I crossed in succession the Talantik, Sarvai-Bel, and Topalu-Bel Passes. The valleys between them were not deep, and progress was easy. Then at last there was a decided descent into the Kizil Jilga ("the Red Valley"), not inappropriately so-called from the reddish-brown hills that enclose it. A six miles' march in the dry bed of the stream that in the spring drains the nullah, brought us at last back again to the bank of the Gez River. It was flowing here over a bed of rubble nearly a mile broad, divided into numerous channels, but as rapid as above.

Only for $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles was there a way along the river-bank. Then a precipitous spur of conglomerate, which is washed at its foot by the current of the river, intervenes, and we had to wend our way again into a tortuous gorge. It felt hot in its still air, though the thermometer in the shade showed only 83° F. At the end of the gorge there was an extremely steep ascent at an angle of over 30° , where the ponies even without their loads had difficulty to scramble up. After crossing this—the Shagildik Dawan—there was once more a descent to the main valley. But our way there was soon blocked by a fresh spur, and instead of emerging on the level plain for which, I confess, I was by this time longing, a last great detour into the wild barren waste of conglomerate hills had to be made. One after the other of the ponies that had come all the way from Karakul broke down, and I was heartily glad