

Cupid. We then rode for four miles over the high banks of stone and gravel which the river has brought down from its course in the mountains, and at last crossed to the right bank. The bed of the Yurung-kash is over a mile broad at this point, but the water flowed only in a few narrow channels. The rest is diverted into the canals that feed the villages of the eastern part of the Khotan oasis. Our night's quarters were at Bizil, a small village close to the river-bed, where many burrows and pebble heaps showed the working of jade-seekers. The stone, which has from ancient times been so highly prized in China, and to which the river owes its name, "White-jade," is still an important product. As I crossed the river-bed I thought of the distant lands to which it has carried the name of Khotan.

Beyond Bizil, to the south, low, undulating slopes of much-decayed conglomerate ascend towards the mountains. Over these we travelled on the morning of the 18th of October. Several ridges, fairly steep on the north side but joined by almost level terraces on the south, form natural steps in the ascent. Gravel and coarse sand, with scarcely a trace of vegetation, covers the ground; and the landscape, save for the distant view of the Khotan oasis below, was one of complete desolation. When the last of the steps was crossed by the Tashlik-Boyan Pass, I found myself in full view of the outer ranges through which the Yurung-kash flows in a tortuous gorge, and greeted with relief some snowy peaks that raised their heads above them, far away to the south. A long descent over a sandy slope brought us to the Kissel Stream, along which our onward route lay. Half smothered by the dust that the ponies raised as they scrambled down, we reached the bottom of the valley at the little hamlet of Kumat. A narrow strip of level ground by the side of the Kissel and irrigated from it, supports some fifteen families. It was soon dark in the deep and narrow glen, and the four miles we had to march to Yangi-Langar, our night quarters, seemed very