

long. The night air was still and warmer than in the plain of Khotan, the thermometer showing 48° F. at 8 p.m.

On the 19th of October a march of some eighteen miles up the winding gorge of the Kissel brought us to Tarim-Kishlak. On the whole way there was no habitation, nor indeed room for one. The rough path crossed innumerable times the stream that flows between high and precipitous spurs of conglomerate and what looked to me like sandstone. In more than one place there was a difficulty in getting the laden ponies over the rocks that fill the narrow bottom of the gorge. As this jumbled mountain mass has never been surveyed, it was tantalising to wind along between the rocky walls without a chance of an open view. But there was no time to be lost with climbs to points that might give one. Tarim-Kishlak ("cultivated holding") consists of a single miserable mud dwelling amid a few fields of oats. Apart from the small patch of sloping ground that is irrigated from the stream, there is nothing around but decayed rock and ravines filled with gravel. Compared to the absolute barrenness of these hill-sides, the vegetation of the Hunza or Sarikol glens would look quite luxuriant.

On the morning of the 20th of October I found the little stream, by the side of which my tent was pitched, half covered with ice. The boiling-point thermometer indicated an elevation of close on 9,000 feet, and the air at 7 a.m. was just at freezing-point. The gorge we ascended continued for another eight miles in a south-easterly direction. Then the path leaves the stream which comes from a high mountain capped with snow, and strikes up a dry side gorge to the south. Here all trace of rock disappeared from the surface of the hill-sides. Loose earth and detritus was alone to be seen, with scanty patches of hardy scrub. Before we reached the pass, a strong wind sprung up that overcast the sky with clouds and shrouded us in dust. So when at last by 2 p.m. we stood on the Ulugh-Dawan ("High Pass"), the distant