

succeeded in making it clear to the surly Taghliks that the Amban's order for assistance to me must be obeyed. So those who rule Karanghu-tagh set about to collect the yaks which were to take on my baggage and the men who were to accompany me.

It was no difficult task, for Karanghu-tagh, though hidden away amid a wilderness of barren mountains, is a place of some resources. When I inspected it in the morning I was surprised to find a regular village of some forty closely packed houses. The scanty fields of oats below and above could scarcely support this population. But Karanghu-tagh is also the winter station for the herdsmen who graze flocks of yaks and sheep in the valleys of the Upper Yurung-kash. These herds belong mostly to Khotan 'Bais,' or merchants, and the visits of the latter seem the only tie that connects this strangely forlorn community with the outer world. From time to time, however, Karanghu-tagh receives a permanent addition to its population in the persons of select malefactors from Khotan, who are sent here for banishment.

It would indeed be difficult to find a bleaker place of exile. A narrow valley shut in between absolutely bare and precipitous ranges, without even a view of the snowy peaks, must appear like a prison to those who come from outside. It was strange to hear the hill-men, who during the summer lead a solitary life in the distant glens, speak of Karanghu-tagh as their 'Shahr' or "town." For these hardy sons of the mountains this cluster of mud-hovels, with its few willows and poplars, represents, no doubt, an enviable residence. To me the strange penal settlement somehow appeared far more lonely and depressing than the absolute solitude of the mountains.

I was glad to start soon on a climb to one of the steep ridges north-east of the village, which offered a convenient station for further survey work. But the day was far less clear than the preceding one, and the views too were less