

rock-walls. As we descended for about two miles in this narrow defile to where it joins the gorge of the Nissa stream, the reddish glow of the evening sun that had set for us long before lit up some towering pinnacles in front. It was like a magic illumination, this display of red light on the yellowish crags devoid of all trace of vegetation. Only in the Tyrol Dolomites, and on a smaller scale in the defiles where the Indus breaks through the Salt Range, had I seen the like.

The Nissa gorge which we had next to ascend was equally confined, and the darkness which now completely overtook us made the long ride, with our ponies slowly groping their way between the boulders of the river-bed or along the narrow ledges, most wearisome. Here and there in bends of the defile we passed scanty patches of cultivated ground, with low mud huts inhabited only during the summer months. The wicked Yüzباشi who by his delay had caused this trying night march, and who was now accompanying the baggage, came in for some blows from my men as we passed the belated yaks, a long way yet from the end of our march.

When at last we arrived at Nissa, I was glad of the temporary shelter which the hut of the ' Bai ' of the little settlement offered. My host owed this proud title to the possession of some yaks and a flock of sheep, and his habitation was but a mud-built hovel. All the same, it was a cheerful change from the raw night air to the warmth and light of his fireplace.

The 31st of October we halted at Nissa. The men needed rest and Ram Singh time for astronomical observations. I used the day to collect information regarding the mountain routes that lead to the Kara-kash Valley westwards and towards Khotan, but found it no easy task; for the apprehension of the trouble that my tours might cause made the hillmen more than usually reticent. Nissa counts some twenty houses, but most of the men that inhabit it during the winter were still away with the sheep and yaks on the higher