

Colonel agreed to let me examine in the morning of May 21st the ruined fortifications reported on the steep spur overlooking the debouchure of the Baroghil route on the west, while he himself would look after the starting of baggage and escort.

So with Naik Ram Singh and a few Wakhis, including the Karaul Beg and Talmish, a versatile follower of his who quickly attached himself to me as a sort of local factotum (Fig. 30), I rode off to the south for three miles across the level plain of sand and marsh over which the Baroghil stream spreads out towards the Oxus. Just where the mouth of the valley narrows to a width of about half a mile at the bottom, it is flanked by precipitous rocky ridges, the last offshoots of spurs which descend from the main Hindukush watershed. Protected by these natural defences the position seemed to correspond accurately to that which the Chinese Annals describe as having been occupied in 747 A.D. by the Tibetans when they endeavoured to bar Kao Hsien-chih's advance to the Baroghil and Darkot. Posted at a distance of fifteen Li, or about three miles from the river, to the number of eight or nine thousand, they are said "to have taken advantage of the mountainous ground to erect palisades." This time-honoured Tibetan scheme of defence, to await attack behind a wall erected across the open ground of the valley, had the same results then as when repeated in 1904 against the British Mission force at Guru and on the Karo-la. For the Chinese general having gained the heights, *i.e.* turned the fortified line, engaged the defenders in a fight which ended in their complete defeat with heavy loss.

Of the palisades I could not well expect to find visible traces after the lapse of centuries. But how Kao Hsien-chih had turned the Tibetan position I could see quite clearly when, starting a short distance south of absolutely impracticable rock faces, I climbed up to the top of the western spur after an hour's hard scramble over steep slopes of rock and shingle. There, beyond a stretch of easily sloping ground, rose the old fort of Kansir my Wakhi informants had spoken of, at the extreme north