

walls, overhanging in places, which in case of a sudden rush of flood-water would leave no escape. Luckily the snows were late in melting, and with the help of the Kirghiz yaks we got our baggage safely through. At a particularly confined point, where deep pools of tossing water between big slippery boulders obstruct progress, I noticed large and well-cut holes in the rocks on either side evidently intended for a bridge (Fig. 10). The work looked decidedly ancient. But there was for me another memory of old times haunting this forbidding passage which in the spring and summer becomes altogether impassable. This was in all probability the narrow defile where Hsüan-tsang's precious elephant, brought all the way from India, got lost in the water during the confusion caused by an attack of robbers, as duly related in his biography.

Where the defile widens lower down we came upon the first shrubs and flowers near the Kirghiz grazing-ground of Toile-bulan (Fig. 37), and after making our way up another steep valley and across the loess-covered Tor-art spur reached our night's halting-place at Chihil-gumbaz. Apart from a number of ruined Kirghiz tombs which account for the name 'Forty Domes,' the valley bottom shelters a few fields of oats. Leaving the route to Yarkand which here branches off south-eastwards, we ascended on the morning of June 6th to the long-stretched ridges of the Kashka-su Dawan (Fig. 36). Thickly covered with loess and in parts quite of down-like appearance, these ridges, in spite of their elevation of probably close on 13,000 feet, seemed to offer excellent grazing, the most extensive I had yet seen on the rims of the Tarim Basin. I was delighted to greet familiar flowers again, small white daffodils and a hardy sort of iris common in Kashmir.

Glorious was the wide view to the south reaching the high snowy range between the Tash-kurghan and Zarafshan rivers, those two great feeders of the Tarim. But there lay fascination for me also over the far less imposing vista which spread out east and north-eastwards. A succession of absolutely barren transverse ridges,