

carefully irrigated terraces : that was all. Yet how delightful it seemed to halt for a short while in the grateful shade and, after all those long marches amidst barren wastes of snow, rock, and detritus, to rest my eyes upon this familiar picture of a tiny Turkestan oasis. If anything can approach the fascination of reaching new ground long vainly sought for, it is to regain by a new route a region endeared by former labours and still full of interests. A lucky chance would so have it that Kichik-karaul had served only a year earlier as the Macartneys' 'hill station' during the hottest weeks of the Kashgar summer. So when the kindly housewife of the nearest hut hospitably sent out to me a bowl of cool milk by her ruddy good-looking boy and asked for news of my friends, I had the welcome touch of a personal *accueil*.

Some four miles lower down at the 'Big Karaul' another reception awaited me as if from a far-distant age. The sun declining behind us lit up in bold relief long lines of battlemented wall, stretching along the low detritus ridges on either side of the valley : picturesque ruins of defences by which Yakub Beg, the successful chief of the last Turkestan rebellion, had thought to guard the approach to his kingdom. This quaint attempt at a 'Chinese Wall' system, barely forty years old, seemed like a hint at the very threshold to assure me of all the old-world lore still surviving in this innermost portion of Central Asia. I had ridden through the big crumbling gateway and received friendly greeting and tea from the humble Turki scribe who is supposed to keep watch here over wayfarers, when a cluster of horsemen, including the Yüz-bashi or head-man of Ighiz-yar, galloped up to conduct me to the first real oasis.

The village of Ighiz-yar, where I was to halt for the night, was cheerfully spoken of as 'quite near.' But I scarcely minded when the distance stretched out to some eight weary miles. Before me extended a view, wonderfully impressive in all its barrenness, across the most perfectly regular alluvial fan I have, perhaps, ever beheld. The absolutely bare gravel glacié sloped away unbroken to the north and north-east. There was by a fortunate