

faithful discharge of all such obligations. How cheerful was it to feel shifted back into the centuries, seemingly so far off, which knew no postal service, and to realize in practice that safe opportunities were available then, too, for friendly communications over great distances.

A host of writing tasks obliged me to make a busy day's halt at Kilian. A short evening walk along the track, deep in soft loess dust, which leads up to the southern edge of the Kilian oasis, counting in all some four hundred or five hundred homesteads, was my only diversion. Next day the completion of my heavy mail would not allow me to follow my baggage started eastwards until after mid-day. This delay brought its due punishment. After a dreary march of some seventeen miles, mostly over desolate ridges of sand and gravel stretching down from equally barren hills southward, I arrived at the tiny spring-fed stream of the Sulagh-aghzi Valley, the only place where water could be obtained for a night's halt. Then I found to my dismay that by a mistake of my men the baggage had been moved down to a distant Langar on the Sanju-Karghalik trade-route. What had induced the men thus needlessly to increase the day's march, I could not learn, unless it was the 'Kirakash' instinct, which drew them back to the high road familiar from many journeys to and from the Kara-koram.

It was dusk by the time I reached the few homesteads established in a tiny oasis near the source of the Sulagh-aghzi stream, and the weary march in complete darkness down the valley for some seven miles seemed endless. The flat glaxis-like Sai on which it debouches stretched away in absolute bareness, and the absence of any marks to indicate our goal made the distance seem still greater. Sulaghaz Langar, reached by 10 P.M., proved a cluster of wretched mud-hovels, and the short night's rest, passed by necessity in the stuffy hall of one of them, was anything but refreshing.

The heat would have sufficed to send me back to the route I had intended to follow through the hills, even if there had not been the necessity of resuming my survey at the point where darkness had before stopped it. So,