

in the West and to my plans for the winter campaign in the desert.

The rain did not stop till late at night, and next morning the masses of clouds were still hugging the peaks at the head of the valley and also the slopes of snow and ice below them. But our reconnaissances of the previous days had sufficed to convince me that this valley offered no possible outlet south or south-eastwards which Johnson could have used with yak transport. Trained mountaineers from Europe might, indeed, make their way over more than one col I had sighted on the crest overhanging the glacier to the south-east. But for load-carrying men, let alone yaks, the barrier was quite impassable.

There could be no doubt that our prolonged stay at this height exposed the wretched dwellers of Karanghugh to a great deal of privation and suffering. So on August 28th, after a fresh climb to a side glacier westwards, I did not hesitate to give the order for our descent. The rain was not slow to overtake us; but while it still held off I secured a photograph of one of the felt tents pitched on the lower plateau and of its inhabitants grimy with smoke and dirt (Fig. 64). Among the few weather-worn Karanghugh women who pass their summer here, I found to my surprise an old acquaintance, a quaint woman of great age to whom I had given six years before some alms on my passage through Omsha. My charity, no doubt a rare thing among these harsh surroundings, had evidently left an impression; for the shrivelled age-bowed woman had made her way here with a view to a fresh appeal, in spite of all the difficulty of the summer route. The swollen river had closed the direct tracks from Omsha to the Busat Valley; and in order to reach the bridge below Khushlash-langar, by which alone the Yurung-kash could be crossed, the old lady had to follow a rock path which was declared to be quite impracticable even for unladen yaks.

The march down the valley did not pass without an incident which showed me what little chance there was of getting help from the Taghliks for further work in these mountains. I had intended to halt some four miles above