

Yurung-kash rushes through this narrow channel, cut in the solid cliffs, with such violence and rapidity that no attempt at measuring the depth would succeed: the speed of the current being nearly four yards per second. My thoughts went back to the story graphically told by the Moghul historian, Mirza Haidar, in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, how the tyrant Aba Bakr, his own uncle, when on his flight from Khotan to Ladak, had from the bridge then existing at the identical spot thrown down all his riches of gold and precious objects; finding that they could not be carried beyond Karanghu-tagh over the extremely difficult tracks alone offering a chance of escape.

His ill-gotten treasures, of which the Moghul historian records an extravagant estimate, have been often searched for since, but in vain. Looking down into the whirling water of the chasm, it was easy to realize that the fugitive prince could not have selected a safer place for depriving his pursuers—or future treasure-seekers—of whatever wealth he had himself to abandon. Nor was I surprised to find that the story, however little of historical truth there may be in it, still lives in local tradition. How could it be otherwise in a region like Khotan where the thought of 'treasure,' whether in the form of gold, or jade, or riches hidden by those of old, has been the chief object to exercise people's imagination for untold generations?

The ascent of the extremely steep track which leads up to the edge of the Tope ridge, close on 13,000 feet high and overlooking the Yurung-kash, was a tiring business. But luckily the rain of the previous days had laid the deep loess dust which covers the rock frame of the slopes. From a height of about 10,500 feet on the Kara-kir spur I could follow the whole gorge of the Yurung-kash from where it winds round the mighty buttresses of Peak K.5 (Fig. 66), to the cañon-like chasm into which the river disappears lower down near its junction with the river of Nissa.

I knew that the gorge itself could offer no possible passage to the Tibetan plateaus south-eastward. But across the Yurung-kash I scanned with no small interest the precipitous slopes of the spurs which descend to the