

opened out panoramas more impressive and grand than any I had so far seen. As my eyes ranged over that amazing maze of ice-crowned spurs and deep-cut valleys enclosed between the two great Kun-lun ranges and drained by the Yurung-kash, it was an inspiring thought that the whole of this grim mountain world was unexplored ground, and that in all probability human gaze had never rested so long on it. Who among hunters or miners would climb such high points always exposed to icy winds and beyond the scantiest vegetation which this arid region affords? Everything seemed on such a vast scale, and I wondered how many months or summers it would take to explore all this wonderful and forbidding Alpine world in detail. The long hours we spent at our stations over work with theodolite, plane-table, and camera were made most trying by the icy blasts sweeping the crests of the ridges, and our fingers were benumbed while handling the instruments.

The poor miners, too, whom we engaged to carry our instruments (Fig. 319) felt the exposure badly even while the sun shone brightly, and the man whom I had to keep crouching between the legs of the camera stand, to steady it, while the panoramic work slowly proceeded, had to be changed every ten minutes or so to afford relief to his half-frozen hands. But our reward was ample, and to the miners, too, their well-paid exertions afforded a welcome change from their wretched burrowing in dark pits. In the end I gained their confidence sufficiently to obtain information about certain gold-pits which were once worked at points lower down by the precipitous banks of the Yurung-kash, and also about a difficult route, long suspected by me, which led to the latter right across the main range from the headwaters of the Genju River. But we had neither time nor supplies to waste over a descent down the valley, where the river still in full flood would make any crossing impossible.

The Zailik mines, accessible only during a few summer months, are now almost deserted, the total annual production of gold raised with difficulty by the Amban's contractor amounting to about 300 ounces. The small groups of miners toiling in this gloomy gorge are practically all bond-slaves of the contractor, who advances their supplies, clothing,