

great elevation badly, but stout in spirit would not give in as long as his Sahib continued. As, however, his need of halting after every ten to fifteen steps caused delay, I decided, now that the risk of crevasses had practically ceased, to let the three Kirghiz pass on ahead while I put myself with Musa on the rope before the Surveyor and helped him by pulling. Fortunately there was no discernible danger from avalanches, owing to the width of the topmost névé beds and the distance of the great snowy ridge we saw towering above us on the right. The advance of the hardy Kirghiz in front of us continued steadily, and at last there came an encouraging shout that they had reached the crest. After what now seemed a short time we were by their side. But it was 3 P.M., and it had taken over seven hours to cover the approximate distance of four miles from where we first got on to the glacier.

The Kirghiz had stopped close to the brink of a snowy precipice falling away many hundreds of feet to the névé beds of a big valley north. Having reason to apprehend snow cornices, I moved up to a slightly higher knoll of snow which stood farther back from the edge. The panorama before me was overwhelmingly grand (Plate XIII.). Straight to the north stretched a glacier-filled valley hemmed in by bold snow-covered spurs. Above the spur to the right I could see rising a fantastically serrated massif, which at once recalled to my mind groups of peaks I had seen two years before above the Nissa Valley. Beyond in the distance the view ranged over a maze of rugged snowless ranges, no doubt the barren eroded mountains overlooking the lower Kara-kash Valley. Even the brilliant white of the eternal snows all round us and the deep blue of the sky above could not efface the striking yellowish hue of the far-off horizon northward. It was clearly the dust-haze ever hovering over the familiar desert of Khotan, and it was the Taklamakan which thus sent me its greeting.

Our Survey aneroid, which had kept remarkably reliable as long as we could check it by the mercurial barometer, indicated for our position a height of close on 20,000 feet,