

A FOURTH JOURNEY IN THE TIEN SHAN: *A paper read at the Evening Meeting of the Society on 22 February 1932, by*

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WE left Qara Shahr on 31 May 1931, and were glad to get away from the dirty fly-blown town, which is the rendezvous for the Torgut and Khoshut Kalmuks who regard it as little less wonderful than Paradise. After spending two nights at the headquarters of the Torgut chief at Khotun Simbel ("the Moslem encampment") we left the main Khaidik valley and followed the Kapchigai valley as far as the Kotil pass. Crossing this, our route led through the Yulduz, which we left by the Narat pass, and reached Aral Tepe in the upper Kunges on June 15. The weather throughout the Yulduz had been execrable, with unceasing rain, wind, and mist, and it pursued us into the Kunges across the watershed, for on June 16 a storm swept down, flooding the fine felt tents of the Qazaq headmen, and damaging the contents. The rain went through the thick coverings of the *auls* as though they were muslin. My object was to re-visit the upper Kash, and particularly the valleys north of the Satleh pass, and the Manass mountains, an area which the shortness of supplies and the lateness of the season had obliged us to leave in 1928. Accordingly we crossed the watershed between the Kunges and Kash valleys on June 19 by the Kaktassin or Qaraghai Su pass (9560 feet), one of the many passes that connect the two valleys, and at this time of the year convenient enough, though rather steep. Later in the season the Kangrai Su pass, due east of the Kaktassin, is one more convenient and frequented, besides being a good deal nearer. We reached the Umuraba Sai on June 21, a most gorgeous day, which we foolishly imagined was an augury of good weather. The upper Kash was wholly deserted as it was too early for the nomads and their flocks to move to the higher pastures; and we had, mercifully, the place to ourselves.

Although the next day was threatening, I moved a march up the valley, leaving the main camp to follow; but the weather broke and torrents of rain fell relentlessly for five days. I discovered, too, what I had not bargained for, that the river was unfordable, and that consequently we should not be able to reach our objective for at least four weeks, if not longer. In these circumstances it was no use havoring and wasting time. The only course was to abandon our plans and all further attempts on the headwaters of the Kash, and explore some more favourable area. It was a great disappointment and a grievous waste of time to turn back, but it all proves how difficult travel is in the Tien Shan. It was true that in a month's time the rivers would subside and be generally fordable; but at the same time the grass in the upper valleys would be growing scanty, the danger of an early snowfall blocking the passes was not remote, and the general disadvantages of a waning season would be considerable.

The flocks in the remoter uplands only stay a week or ten days, as the herds fear being snowed up on the higher pastures. Short though the stay of these animals is, they finish up the grass to the detriment of the traveller. This was our lot in September 1928, where we found extensive pastures absolutely barren, and with no means of feeding our animals.

We descended the Kash valley, wading through the luxuriant pastures, shoulder-high in the lush greenery, and our ponies revelled in it. We met, on our way down, parties of Qazaqs moving up. Their plan was to go up the valley and eat their way down, thus spending the autumn days in a lower altitude. We reached Kuldja (Ili) on July 6, and let the animals have a week's rest. The flies were intolerable, and although our house was in the new quarter, away from the bazaar, it was well-nigh impossible to eat or to read. The town was full of a mongrel crowd, including many refugees from



Sketch-map to illustrate Col. Schomberg's fourth journey in the Tien Shan

the rule of the Bolshevists. Good black beer at fourpence a dozen bottles helped to enliven our stay, as well as the great hospitality of the Rev. Theodore Hufnagel, the Catholic missionary. His six-year-old white wine was a revelation, and so was the four-year-old red; both illustrating the great possibilities for viticulture in the Ili valley.

We left on July 13, crossed the Ili river immediately below the confluence of the Kash and Kunges rivers, and where that river properly begins. The ferry boat was large and commodious, and rushed across the stream, being the fastest form of transport in that region. The route now led through the

curious nondescript range that lies between the Ili and Tekes river. These hills are little known and are not inviting. The forest is poor, and the trees are being rapidly and ruthlessly destroyed as the wood is needed in Ili. As the perpetual snow is scanty, and as the forest fails to retain the melting snow of spring, there is a great shortage of water, but there are nevertheless considerable grazing grounds; and, especially on the northern side, villages of some size. The moisture on the south of the range is less, and the absence of trees and brushwood, partly natural, partly due to cutting, is very marked. All the same this range of mountains deserves study.

We reached the Tekes valley by the low grassy Saraghujin pass, and came to Kuba, on the Tekes river, where a Chinese amban had been recently installed, and where our pet sheep, Li Darin, joined us.

The appointment of this magistrate was most unwelcome to the nomads, who preferred the easy sway of the remote military governor to the constant presence in their midst of a Chinese officer. The amban lived in a merchant's house in the bazaar, and he was not having an easy time of it. He had been boycotted and driven out of the large Kalmuk lamaseraï farther to the west, and after a sojourn at Kuldja he had been told to try his luck at Kuba. When we were there the betting was against the amban. The truth was that all the nomads, Qirghiz, Qazaq, and Kalmuk, were determined to get rid of him. They knew they were exchanging a King Log for a King Stork, and hated the idea. Naturally the military mandarin had no love for his civilian supplanter with the inevitable loss of prestige and perquisites. Administratively speaking, a civil administration would perhaps be an improvement, though the control of the nomads was in no case an easy matter, complicated also by the proximity of the frontier.

There is something very dreary in the Ili and Tekes valleys, with their mongrel population, their gangs of nomads, and the untidy, higgledy-piggledy villages and cultivation. The wide grassy plains are treeless, the crops, badly weeded, are inextricably mixed up with the tall grass, and the inhabitants—all immigrants—never regard themselves as permanent occupants of the land, but show, in their houses and their husbandry, their intention of some day moving elsewhere. Yet the land is kind, agricultural conditions good, and no reason exists for this reluctance to settle down permanently.

We were glad, then, to enter the mountains. We crossed the Tekes by a bridge, the private speculation of an energetic Kashgarlik, and entered the Kök Terek Sai ("green poplar valley"), one of the few places in Chinese territory, north of the Tien Shan, where Qirghiz are found. These belong to several branches, but the largest sept, of about three hundred families, is that of the Ming Murat, who came about a century ago from Qara Qol, now in Russian Turkistan. We reached Chongkurtur (9415 feet), an encampment on an old grassy moraine, on July 20, and as the track to the head of the valley was very awkward, we had to cross into the adjoining Cholaq Terek Sai by an easy pass from which a track led down a precipitous greasy slope to the bed of the valley. It was a wonderful sight to see the pack animals go tumbling head over heels down the hillside. The boxes flew off, and most of them burst asunder on meeting a rock, and their contents strewed the slopes. Clothes, maps, dry plates, medicines, Chinese paper money soon littered the ground,

and took long to collect as much got hidden in the creeping juniper. No animals were killed, and most of the scattered articles were found, but the delay was great, and heavy hail and rain hampered the search. The irreparable loss of fifty eggs nearly broke the cook's heart; and I shared his sorrow.

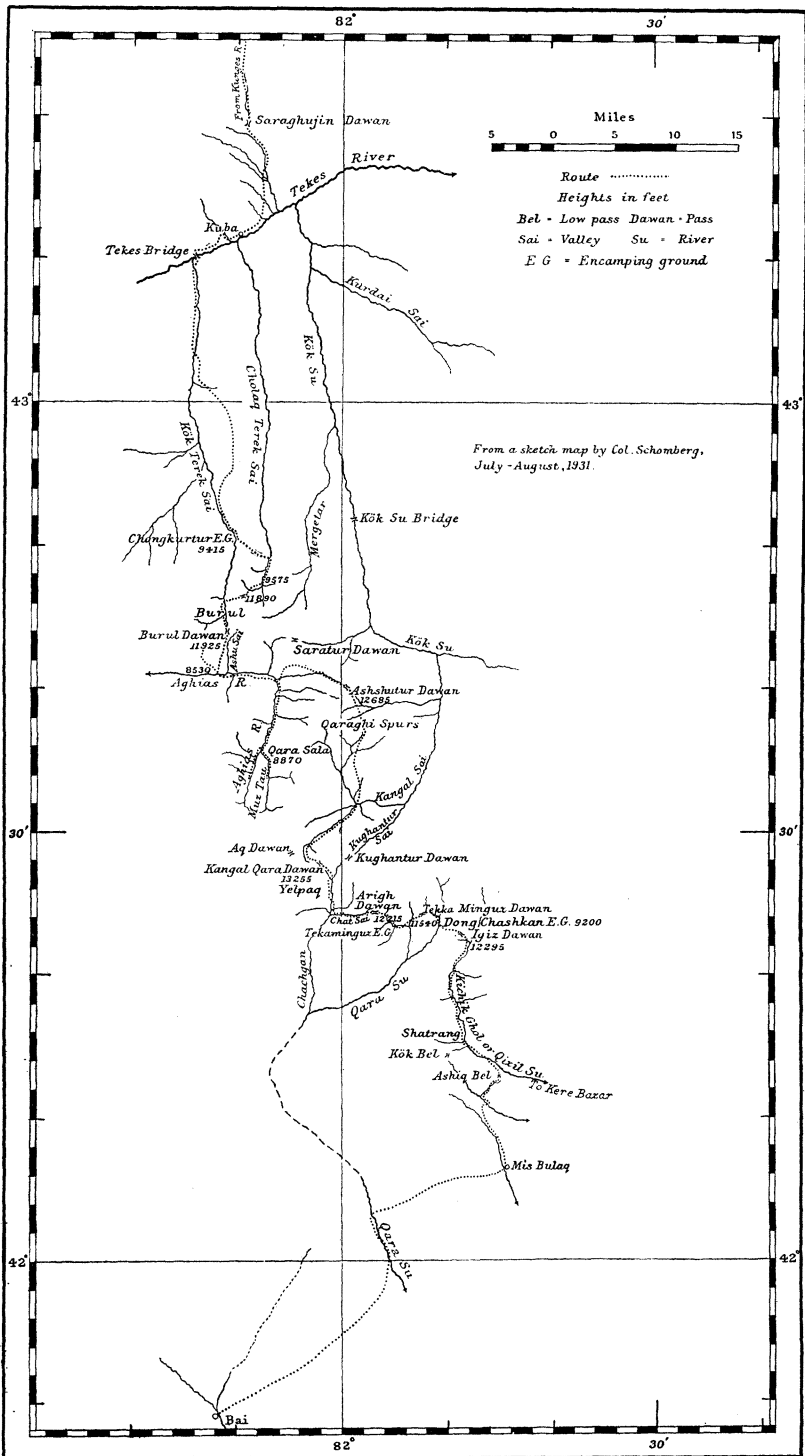
On July 23 the head of the Cholaq Terek Sai (9575 feet) was reached. This valley belongs to the Alban Qazaqs, and they say that the valley's name is derived from the destruction of the poplar trees for forage in the winter. "Chöl" is the Turki for desert, and this valley, once full of poplars, has now become denuded of them. The destruction of the conifers in the neighbouring Kök Terek Sai was truly melancholy. The whole valley carried dense forests of the dead trees which had perished, so the Qirghiz asserted, by forest fire. They said in particular that refugees had squatted in the forests during the time of the Russian revolution, had lit fires, and these had destroyed the trees. The objection to this theory (on which they were most positive) lies in many acres of forest being destroyed in an inaccessible place which even a refugee acrobat could not reach. Even helped by a strong wind, it is doubtful if fire could cause such widespread damage, and it is probable that some insect pest was concerned in the harm in certain cases.

In this valley, the Kök Terek, I saw the small black fly which deposits an oblong white secretion on the underside of the leaves of the spruce tree, and which was found at work. Captain George Sherriff, H.B.M.'s Consul-General at Kashgar, had heard of this and had drawn my attention to it. The Qirghiz shake off the deposit into a large pan, and melt it down over the fire. The result is known as *bäl* and used as sugar, but the nomads say that the secretion is not regular in appearance, that a warm summer is necessary, and that often four or five years pass without any being yielded.

After a very wet stay in the Cholaq Terek, a brief break in the weather enabled us to re-cross by an easy pass (11,890 feet) into the head of the Kök Terek. The descent on that side was very steep, and the mist was thick, but we groped and squelched our way down to the tents of the Qirghiz, and endured two more days' rain as best we could. We were now at Burul, a word expressing the green shoots of grass or shrubs that burst out in the spring, and the headquarters of the Ming Murat Qirghiz and their chief. We said good-bye to our Qazaqs who had served us well but whom we neither liked nor trusted, for no one can feel confidence in any one who is a liar, a thief, and an underbred scrounger, and all Qazaqs, except the Kirei, are essentially that, brought up to steal, lie, and cadge from childhood. We met an old Qazaq here who had accompanied Merzbacher, and who yearned to chaperone us, but we realized that he was one too many for us, and escaped his clutches. He talked too much Russian to please us.

The Qirghiz admitted there was a route to the Aghias, but said that the track at the head of their valley was quite impossible. All nomads endeavour to prevent a traveller from following a new or different route, and probably their chief reason for so doing is laziness; they are afraid (and often correctly) that they may be forced to come too. There was only one course to take, to reconnoitre the Burul Pass: so, taking Daulat Shah and a Qirghiz, I set forth.

The appearance of the pass was disagreeable, for it looked like a steep wall of snow. The nearer we approached the steeper the ascent looked, but it also



Col. Schomberg's route through the Central South Tien Shan

looked shorter. After crossing a moraine, covered with dwarf yellow poppies, we started on the pass, and found it to be what the Qirghiz had described, a glacier covered with snow and with numerous crevasses. The total ascent up the pass proper was only 1000 yards, but it was very steep, and we sweated profusely. The crest of the pass was very narrow, and the descent on the southern side was free from snow, and easy over shale.

From the summit the view was superb, with all the unknown, unmapped giants of the heart of the Tien Shan rising before one. There were years of exploration, I realized, for future travellers amongst these gleaming peaks and hanging glaciers and black unentered valleys. These secret snows were enthralling. The height of the pass was 11,925 feet. We came to the conclusion that it could be crossed by our pack transport—coolies are unknown in Central Asia—and started on July 28, a fine morning. If it had rained or snowed the crossing would have been impossible. The kindly headman provided us with an excellent Qirghiz guide (a rarity), some spare horses, and two other men. Everything went well, if slowly, until we got within 200 yards of the top. We had to clear away the snow to enable the horses to get a foothold; and in doing so, to our disgust, exposed a number of crevasses, just large enough for a horse to get jammed in; and the first thing we saw was two of our best horses, King Mulberry and Kök Sultan (Greengage), wedged in a crevasse. It took three and a half hours to accomplish the last 200 yards to the top of the pass, and most exhausting work it was, carrying kit, hauling horses, digging out the donkeys—a heart-breaking, boring business. In the midst of all this labour, bad language, and perspiration, the Qirghiz guide produced a large skin of koumiss, which greatly comforted us, and we finally reached a grassy plot on the southern side of the pass. The Turki pony-men who spend their lives amid the miseries of the Ladakh-Karakoram road were quite demoralized and wished to halt, in a place without fuel or shelter, and where a sudden storm would have troubled us sorely.

We went on to the Aghias river. The distance seemed unending. Down and down we went, with the muddy waters of the river in sight, and after endless trouble over an abominable track we reached the right bank of the river, height 8530 feet, and got the tents up just as the rain came down. Opposite on the left bank the forests of spruce swept down to the glacial river, whose white waters give it the name of Aghias, and on the right side willow and other shrubs grew. The blue gentians were very abundant, from the diminutive little star gentian to the large bell-shaped ones, known to the Qirghiz and Qazaqs as the Kök Baichichike, whilst the large, short-stemmed white gentian was also abundant.

The pasture in the Upper Aghias was very fine, but it is preserved for the winter months when the Qazaqs, both Kizei and Alban who have definite grazing grounds, bring their flocks for three months' sojourn. The river is then fordable and the journey easy, whereas when we were in the Aghias it was impossible to descend the broad valley which unfolded itself in a vista of swelling forest-clad ridges and grassy slopes. We were comforted in finding abundant mushrooms, wild spinach, and rhubarb, for which we had previously searched in vain.

Beautiful as the head of the Kök Terek Sai had been, with its side valleys

crowned with snow peaks and hanging glaciers, the Aghias was even more so. Every small side-water had a glacier at its head, while the slopes of the left main valleys were clad with thick brushwood, willow, and spruce. The right of the valley was very steep and very barren, and a climb to the top, over the wiry grass, was no easy matter. We moved up the valley, and fortunately were able to ford the river early in the morning, and to camp just beneath where the Saratur ("grassy place") stream flows from the pass of that name, and below the water from the neighbouring Ashshutur pass.

The main Aghias valley now turned south, and at a place called Qara Sala, descriptive of the black projecting rocks at the head of the valley (height here 8870 feet), the two main sources of the Aghias river unite, after flowing from two adjacent glaciers. The eastern affluent seemed to me to carry more water than the western, though local opinion was against me; but at 11 a.m. the water was well up to the saddle, and it was only by clutching the pommel of the native saddle, and half kneeling on the seat, that it was possible to ford the stream. On such occasions the unshod weedy Qirghiz horses are better mounts than their Kashgarian brethren, as the latter always dislike being kept with their heads against the current, though that is the only way to cross these rivers.

There were other differences between these two tributaries. The left or western stream flows from its glaciers down a narrow gorge, which in several places is bridged by fallen rocks; and in places the breadth is only 4 feet, with the imprisoned river roaring below. Above the mountains rise cliff-like, and it is a weary climb to reach the source of the river. In this western arm of the Aghias there are two glaciers only, one from an ice-fall that descends steeply from a short arm running south-west; the second and the main source is a glacier which flows from the east, and then, embracing a subsidiary one, turns north. The whole upper valley is filled with this combined glacier which seems, like its colleague in the eastern branch, to be advancing very slowly again after receding. The eastern arm of the Aghias is broad, and the progress of its glaciers will be unimpeded. In the western arm however the glacier and moraine have reached the gorge, and in a few years, given the continued advance of the glacier, the state of affairs will be most interesting. This glacier gave the impression of having slipped from the right to the left of the valley, and was filling up completely the left side—the right was already choked with debris.

I walked a great deal over the combined glacier and its awkward moraine, and whilst crouching in the rain during the continual storms I had ample leisure to watch it. The noise of the stones and rubble shooting down the ice-slopes was constant. My Hunza men declared it was a good glacier, and compared it favourably with their Batura, which is much larger. In Merzbacher's map both glaciers, the eastern and western affluents, appear too long and are not quite rightly co-ordinated. The eastern glaciers are less easy to "work" owing to the river, and bad weather and shortness of time did not allow of proper examination of this affluent. Both these valleys are named Muz Tau, or ice mountain valley—a ridiculous but characteristic piece of nomenclature in a land where every valley might be so described.

Curiously enough we had several visitors, unwanted ones. When they



*Looking east from near the top of the Ashshutur Pass*



*Looking west from the Igiz Pass*





*Looking east from near the top of the Ashshutur Pass*



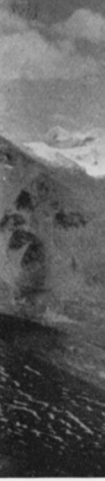
*Looking west from the Igiz Pass*



*Horses in crevasses ascending north side of the Burul Pass*



*The Kangal Sai*





*Looking south from the Burul Pass*



*Peak to the left of pass at head of the Kangal Sai*



*Head of the Kangal Sai*

found that a foreigner had crossed the Burul pass they came over too: now an easy route for unladen animals on a track improved by us. It was just like the nomads to wait for a stranger to show them the way over their own mountains.

Rain, which was due to an almost perpetual cloud-cap that collected at the head of the western tributary, shortness of food, and the fear of an early snowfall rather hustled us out of the Aghias, where I should have willingly stayed for another month, but our Qirghiz guide warned us that we might never get across the main watershed if we dallied too long. Retracing our steps from Qara Sala, we camped below the Ashshutur pass—this melodious name only means the crossing place—above the Saratur slopes. It may be mentioned that there is only one Saratur pass known to the Qirghiz, that shown on the accompanying map; and to reach the Mergetar valley, which flows into the Kök Su, it is necessary to return to the Kök Terek Sai and cross straight into the Mergetar, to which there is no direct route from the Aghias.

The Ashshutur Dawan (12,685 feet) was crossed on August 8, and it proved a very easy pass, and quite free from snow. The view to the south was good, but on ascending a promising ridge half a mile due west, and about 500 feet above the pass, we beheld a superb prospect. Below, at the head of a valley, was a large glacier with several small lakes from which a stream flowed through an insignificant nala into the Aghias above the Saratur stream. No one would have suspected this glacier. There is usually some catch about an easy pass in Turkistan, and so it was with the Ashshutur, as we found that two spurs known as the Qaraghi had to be crossed. The first was steep enough, and descended along a sort of grass-cliff into a good pasture. We managed this spur successfully, but were much perturbed to see a narrow perpendicular chimney confronting us, which was facetiously called the "road." In this we came to grief, many times, but finally reached the top, and looked down, dismayed and disgusted, on a series of precipitous slopes. The Ashshutur pass is on the Aghias-Kök Su watershed, and we now looked down on the Kangal valley, a tributary of the Kök Su. We wound along these cliff-like slopes, down into a ravine from which we climbed tediously, and finally descended steeply into the narrow wooded Kangal Sai (8035 feet), with great cliffs and snow-peaks above, and below spruce forests clinging precariously to the sheer sides.

It hailed furiously as we arrived in camp, and then it rained in sheets all night long, and in the morning I found Li Darin, the sheep, lying comfortably by my bed. A Tien Shan sheep is a good judge of weather. Here the horse-flies (Kokyin in Turki or Khamang in Chinese) were very trying; and so too was a fly like a bee, but not so respectable in its calling. Both were blood-suckers, and attacked man and beast alike. Even in the glaciers we were not free from them. They filled our tents, attacked the horses, and were a great pest. Common enough on the plains, it was difficult to understand how they managed to live in such high altitudes, where animal life was scarce.

The Kangal Sai formed a typical Tien Shan valley with a narrow bed and a rough stony track which brought us through fine scenery to the foot of the Kangal Sai Pass, which we had been told would be the *pièce de résistance* of the journey. Here all but one Qirghiz left us. The Qirghiz were pleasant fellows, and far nicer than the Qazaqs, but all these nomads are alike. Any job of work,

no matter how easy and well paid, is irksome, for a nomad's labours are limited to a few hours spent in rounding up horses. The men with us were well paid and well fed, and only one long day's march from their *auls*, but they could not endure the exertion of riding with us, and towing a pony, and preferred twiddling their thumbs in their tents.

We left our camp at the head of the Kangan Sai (height 9730 feet) on August 11 and started to cross the Kangan Qara Dawan, so called to distinguish it from many other Qara Dawans in the vicinity. As we left camp at 7.15 a.m. we congratulated ourselves on the beautiful weather. The valley turned east, and just at the turning a large disreputable glacier thrust down its snout. Climbing over the moraine, and then over the upper part of the glacier, we came to the mouth of a nala adjacent to the head of the valley which was a mass of snow and ice. Due west, and immediately opposite, was the Aq Dawan, or White Pass, so called from being always snow covered, and affording another example of the poverty of the local nomenclature. A difficult and rarely used track leads over this pass to the Qarabagh District, north-west of Bai. By a coincidence, just as we passed the mouth of this pass at 9 a.m. three Qirghiz women and two men came over it. They were probably as much astonished to see us as we were to see them.

We were now on the right of the main valley, at the mouth of the side nala, which was a mass of shifting shale. Our troubles began. There was no track, the gradient was steep, and the hillside was always slipping, and it was only by making five men walk in front, and lay out a sort of rough path, that we were able to move. This road-making had all to be done by hand, and it was chilly work, as the fair morning had changed to a mist-ridden sky with a little snow. I estimated the distance from the foot of the pass to be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and it took three and three-quarter hours to reach the top, height 13,255 feet, which is considerable for the Tien Shan. It was a slow, tedious climb, and I asked my men what they thought of the pass, as the opinion of experts from Hunza and Kashmir was more valuable than my own. They seemed surprised at the question, and said it was a really bad pass. Personally, I do not call the Kangan Qara Dawan very difficult, except after rain or melting snow, when the shale would be very precarious, and the many small landslips would be fatal to pack animals.

From the top we looked down on an affluent of the Qara Su and entered a very different country. A series of abrupt serrated ranges, powdered with snow but otherwise naked and repellent, lay before us, contrasting greatly with the narrow grassy slopes and tree-covered mountains behind us. Shooting over a few yards of snow-wall, we tumbled down a nala, a mass of shale and stone, passing a stream cascading through a narrow gorge; then we went over a very rough moraine from a glacier in the north-west, and finally reached a grassy patch (height 11,305 feet) with another nala coming down from the pass at the head of the Kughantur (dry or barren place) Sai, a branch of the Kangan Sai, but a little-used route as the glacier on the north has too many crevasses to be pleasant.

We were now at the head of an open, rather shallow valley called Yelpaq, with fair grass but no wood. There were some flocks of sheep with Turki shepherds, who gave us the latest news, a month old, from their metropolis,

the grubby town of Bai. But we were disappointed, as we found no supplies at all, although we had been told we should have some, and we badly needed flour. It is a feature of Turkistan that accurate information on the simplest point, well within the modest intellectual capacity of the average native, is quite unobtainable. The lack of fuel seriously inconvenienced us. A few "camel's tails" were to be had, but they were scarce, and horse dung hardly suited.

After Yelmaq the main stream, which is now called the Chachgan, flows through precipitous cliffs and hillsides of a great height, and the track turns east to avoid the defile which is passable in winter for unladen animals, with some difficulty, and after steps have been cut in the ice. It is only urgent need of supplies that makes this track used. Crossing a high spur we entered the Chat Sai (Chat in Qirghiz-Turki means the union of two rivers), and most unexpectedly came to a broad open grassy valley, about a mile in width, really an old moraine. It was curious to see deposits of stones brought down by torrents in spate, covering the grass. As often happens, this old moraine was very swampy. The ascent by the Aral or Arigh Pass (the word only means division), height 12,215 feet, was easy. This pass is the watershed between the two main branches of the Qara Su.

The view was impressive and sombre rather than beautiful and stimulating, for wherever one looked there was the same panorama of abrupt, jagged, well-nigh perpendicular mountain ranges, barren, harsh, and inhospitable, with patches of snow and small glaciers clinging uncertainly to the rock. Farther to the west rose a great massif of blackish stone, holding more snow. We did not like the scenery at all, as we wanted wood, and as the pony-men scanned this naked prospect cries of *wa dada-im, wa ana-im* ("alack, my father, alack, my mother") arose as their faces fell; for beyond a few sticks in a bag we had nothing wherewith to boil the pot, and to a Turki food comes first, before family, or money, even before life.

As a matter of fact we were not so badly off, but being without any guide we groped along without knowing it. Descending steeply we found, poked away on a little flat patch of grass at the junction of two torrents, a Qirghiz *aul*, and there we managed to get some wood and dung, and even (at a great cost) a little flour for the ravenous Turkis. The name of this haven of refuge was Tekka Minguz, or the Ibex Horns. After a very wet night and morning, for the rain pursued us relentlessly, we crossed the pass of the same name (11,540 feet), and from it had a view to the south-west over glaciers and snow-peaks, whilst due north we saw the sable peaks at the head of the main Qara Su, to which we descended to a grassy valley. Here, by the river-side, we found a deserted hovel, in which was a fiddle and a great prize, four pieces of wood. We took three pieces of wood and camped at Dong Chashkan ("Below the hill"), height 9200 feet, just below the Igiz or High Pass. We should have fared badly without the three pieces of wood, as we had taken all that the Qirghiz at Tekka Minguz could spare. The local supplies of cow dung were useless, as the heavy rain had spoiled them.

The scenery at this camp was really impressive as giant cliffs soared above us, forcing the Qara Su into a defile, and obliging us to climb out of the valley by a high pass. We were now sick to death of passes, as we had been

crossing one a day for some time, and the prospect of having only one more cheered us immensely, well though we could have dispensed with it.

On August 15 we started to climb the Igiz Dawan, or High Pass, a stupid name in a region of similar passes. It proved to be only moderately difficult, the height was 12,295 feet, and the view west over the snow-covered rocky peaks of the Qara Su was fine but limited. To the north was the head of the Qizil Su, with its black peaks and corries, with a glacier gleaming against a background of black rock, whilst south and east was the cultivation of Kere Bazar and the arid, dismal foothills of the Tien Shan. The sight of the far-away fields and tall poplars gladdened our Turkis, who had begun to wonder if the mountains would ever end.

We descended the Qizil Su steadily, and camped 4 miles down the river with a thick forest of spruce and willow covering the steep bank opposite, and with excellent black currants close at hand. The sun came out for the first time for four days, and brightened the beautiful glen. To celebrate the end of the mountain journey, the men made a *mazar* or shrine, piling up the stones, placing old sheep and ibex horns on them, and putting up sticks with bits of cloth as *ex voto* offerings. The materials for founding a centre of devotion are easily come by in Turkistan, and it was our pious hope that this shrine might become a place of pilgrimage in a district notoriously lacking in hagiographical interest. The men were all devout Moslems and much pleased with their shrine.

We continued to go down the forest-clad widening valley, and very charming was the scenery. At Shatrang there were wide pastures, rather eaten down at this time of the year; and a little lower we left the valley, which ended in the cultivation of Kere Bazar, and climbing the steep green side to the Ashiq Bel we descended into a maze of waterless valleys to the north of Mis Bulaq. There were a few spruce trees in the upper part of these valleys, but the general aspect of the country was very desolate and dry, for the aridities of Southern Turkistan affected the vegetation. Finally, after crossing another *bel*, or low pass, we entered the wide valley to the north of Mis Bulaq, and late in the evening of August 16 we reached the Sheikh's house, and the old gentleman tottered out to meet us. We camped near the delicious water of the spring (I could not discover why it was called Copper Spring) under conditions very different from those of the past month, which seemed dull and commonplace after the romantic scenery of the Tien Shan. Even at Mis Bulaq we could not escape the rain, but it was not so plentiful. The journey was certainly arduous and not really suitable for laden ponies, but the route was a new one, and enabled us to see unexpectedly large glaciers and forests on the southern or dry side of the Tien Shan.

#### DISCUSSION

Before the paper the PRESIDENT (Admiral Sir WILLIAM GOODENOUGH) said: I do not know why it is that some parts of the world are spoken of as very interesting countries. It is not their shape, for the Rub al' Khali is as interesting as the ice-caps of Greenland; not their people, for the hardly inhabited forests of Brazil are as interesting as a Chinese city. Whatever it is, we are to hear to-night of what



is in all respects, and from all aspects, a very interesting country: the Tien Shan, the Heavenly Mountain, which lies between Soviet Russia and China; and we are to hear of it from one of whom I may say that it is his pleasure-ground. When a man can give a lecture which he calls "A Fourth Journey," not only must he have a great knowledge of the place, but it must have been a great pleasure to him to go back to it. Colonel Schomberg was at Oxford and then in the Seaforth Highlanders. He served with distinction and then took the opportunity of carrying out various investigations in Asia on which he lectured to us at an afternoon meeting of the Society in 1930, on "The Climatic Conditions of the Tarim Basin," and at an evening meeting, on "Three Journeys in the Tien Shan." To-night he will give us, in a lecture which I now ask him to commence, his account of "A Fourth Journey in the Tien Shan."

*Colonel Schomberg then read the paper printed above, and a discussion followed.*

The PRESIDENT: We had hoped that Colonel Howard Bury would have been present this evening, but he has been obliged to go to the country. He writes to say he is sorry he cannot be here, for he has travelled much on the edges of the country that Colonel Schomberg has described. If he had been here he would like to have emphasized the extraordinary richness of the northern slopes of the Tien Shan in birds, animals, and plants, compared with the extreme poverty of the southern slopes. You heard our lecturer say there were with us to-night no less than three Consuls-General of Kashgar able to speak. I left the choice to them, and Mr. Skrine is the one who has been elected to address us.

Mr. C. P. SKRINE: Of the three Consuls-General who are present I am certainly the least qualified to speak. In the first place, I was in the part of the world about which we have heard longer ago than any of them, it being some seven years since I left Chinese Turkistan. In the second place, I have never been in the country to the north of the main axis of the Tien Shan, with which Colonel Schomberg's most delightful, amusing, and beautifully illustrated lecture was chiefly concerned. There are however one or two points I should like to make in connection with what he has told us.

The chief, in fact the only regularly used pass over the Central Tien Shan is the Muzart, which goes over from Aqsu to the Tekes Valley and Kuldja or Ili. Colonel Schomberg, I gather, travelled southwards from Kuldja through the Tekes and Yulduz valleys, and over another and even more difficult pass to the east of the Muzart, a pass which had never before been crossed by a European. This fact alone lends exceptional interest to his experiences. He came out on the south side of the mountains at a small town called Bai. My wife and I visited this place in 1923, when we marched eastwards along the southern slopes of the Central Tien Shan from Uch Turfan, visiting the Yangi Art and one or two other alpine valleys on the way. At Bai we turned south-westwards and returned to Kashgar *via* Aqsu and the Tarim River valley. The lecturer spoke, as does Colonel Howard Bury in his letter read by the President, of the fact that the southern slopes of the Tien Shan are generally regarded as extremely arid, with little vegetation and particularly few big trees. We saw only a few scattered conifers in Colonel Schomberg's pictures of the southern side of the watershed. I, on the other hand, was struck by the flourishing forests of conifers, which I took to be pines and *Pinus schrenkiana*, which I could see with the glasses away up in the alpine belt of the great massifs. This was to the west of the Muzart Pass, *i.e.* well to the west of the bit of country which the lecturer passed through coming down to Bai. I could only see the rim of the forest, as it were, along the tops of the ridges, for in those parts no conifers will grow on the southern side of the slopes where snow does not lie; but they stretched for 50 miles or more east and west,



and there was no doubt (and my local inquiries bore this out) that the forests in this part of the Tien Shan are of considerable extent. I refer to the southern versant of the great central massif of the Tien Shan, of which Khan Tengri, the highest peak of the whole chain, is the culminating point. Merzbacher, in his book, 'Central Tien Shan,' mentions this region, which he says is very arid, but he admits that he did not have time to go there.

I would like to bring this particular section of the country to the notice of future explorers—Colonel Schomberg himself, if he goes again, or any other traveller—as being one which would well repay close study. Apart from its forests and the probably plentiful flora and fauna therein, there is any amount of oil in that part of the world. I heard of several surface oil deposits, and the people use oil a great deal. I believe the oil deposits there are an extension of those in Russian territory in Semirechia, to the west. There are also surface deposits of coal. From a purely topographical point of view, again, the fact that the country is only partially explored—certain huge glaciers of which I saw the snouts far away in the north are, I believe, entirely unexplored—makes it of particular interest.

The plains at the southern foot of the Tien Shan are extraordinarily fertile. A local proverb says that you can get anything there except milk from a chicken. I saw one smallholder with his melon crop laid out on the ground in rows; there were, he said, between 15,000 and 16,000 of them. He was not at all proud of the crop, for which he expected to get about  $\frac{3}{4}d.$  per melon in the local market. In conclusion, I would like to say that I think the lecture one of the most interesting and amusing I have listened to for a very long time.

The PRESIDENT: I do not know whether Sir Francis Younghusband has been over the actual ground about which we have heard; I know he has been very close to it. You know, as I do, that when we are discussing matters of this kind, his word is one which we would always wish to hear.

Sir FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND: I should like to join with the Consul-General in congratulating the lecturer upon the interesting lecture which he has given us and on the very amusing way in which he has made us acquainted with the country.

The Tien Shan I visited first about forty-five years ago, when crossing the Gobi Desert; and then I well understood why it was called the Tien Shan, the Heavenly Mountain, because from the Gobi Desert you first see the Tien Shan as a line of white in the sky. You do not see the base of the mountains at all, but just the broad line of white on the horizon. I travelled for several days towards that line before I realized, as the base came into sight, that I was looking at mountains. That was a good deal farther east than the lecturer has described. Proceeding westward I saw these mountains towering above on my right-hand side, with the rivers coming down from them on to the plains and forming a succession of oases through which I travelled. But farther westward I did go up into the mountains which Mr. Skrine was telling us of, and travelled amongst the Qirghiz. My experience entirely corroborated what Colonel Schomberg has said as to their genial qualities and their liking to take ordinary travellers into their tents and make them thoroughly at home and one with the family. Also it seemed to me that the ladies amongst the Qirghiz, as amongst the others, did most of the work and management, so that they were a very hefty, capable lot. All the people in those parts look extremely healthy and strong, although they live on uncommonly little. Perhaps you may have seen in to-day's *Times* a letter with reference to the healthiness of the inhabitants of the little island of Tristan da Cunha in the Southern Atlantic. Apparently, they feed there on very little, and only eat one article of food at a meal, either milk or grain of some kind, or

potatoes. Perhaps it is also because their meals are so simple that the people in the Tien Shan are so healthy. At any rate, they are a strong, robust people.

I congratulate Colonel Schomberg upon his interesting lecture and thank him for his enterprise in going again and again into that interesting region.

THE PRESIDENT: One or two points have been raised which I think Colonel Schomberg might like to reply to.

COLONEL SCHOMBERG: Perhaps I may add three or four brief remarks in reply to the interesting speeches you have heard from Sir Francis Younghusband and Mr. Skrine. Mr. Skrine, among other things, spoke of the fruit, and my mouth just waters for the fruit we had at Uch Turfan. The nectarines are especially good, and I have been twice there to eat them. The second time there were none—it was absolutely heart-breaking.

What Mr. Skrine said about oil is perfectly true, but you know when travelling in Chinese country it is advisable not to go and see an oil well or mines, or even to inquire about such things. Some Germans went three or four years ago to look at some copper mines, but a good deal of the trouble they subsequently suffered was due to that perfectly natural scientific curiosity.

I rather hesitate to differ from Mr. Skrine because he is far more learned than I; but he talked of conifers in the plural. I am prepared to bet him a small sum, say, one penny, that in the Tien Shan there is only one sort of conifer, and that is the ordinary Karaghai or Tien Shan spruce. It is true that in other parts, far away to the north, you get the larch—but I am not going into botanical niceties now.

There is one other thing about travelling in that country. I am sorry to say that the tourist season is for the time being closed in Central Asia. Sir Aurel Stein and the Haardt Expedition have had much to put up with. I feel it is only right that the Society should know the way in which a distinguished man like Sir Aurel Stein was treated. This is no place for politics, but I contend that one of the most distinguished archaeologists now living should have been treated with common decency.

THE PRESIDENT: That is exactly what I was going to say. It is disappointing to find that these places are at present closed to us. Many a true remark has been made by Colonel Schomberg, and the truest of all was that we do not discuss anything in the nature of politics in this Society. We can only hope that in the future there will come a time when we can go and find that there is still much unknown country which the adventurous explorer who is prepared to risk a good deal can open up.

There are many points to which I could refer. The questions asked have been more or less answered. If Colonel Schomberg had made any complaint we should not have thought it very genuine, for it is quite evident that he took a most intense delight, as great delight as we have taken in listening to him, in crossing that pass and going through that country. His lecture has shown how very observant he was in every particular. He has shown us the different types of natives and told us of very interesting names and their interpretations. That is one of the most delightful things, to hear these great rolling eastern names. I know no Arabic or Eastern language, and I always long to know what these fine-sounding names mean, and this Colonel Schomberg has told us in more than one instance.

A very enthusiastic fisherman sitting near me murmured into my ear a question as to whether there were fish in the rivers. I am glad to tell him that there are many, and when he returns from that important duty he is doing in keeping us alive in this country, I have no doubt he will go across and have a good day's fishing.

I was going to refer to Tristan da Cunha, but that Sir Francis Younghusband

has done, especially with regard to the islanders' good teeth. I have never been there myself, but I know a good deal of it, and I only wish I could say the same kind of thing as to their intellect; it is not of such a high quality as their teeth evidently are. However that is somewhat of a digression from the subject of the lecture. Both Sir Francis Younghusband and Mr. Skrine have spoken from actual knowledge of the great charm of the country about which we have heard. What I do is, on your behalf, to thank Colonel Schomberg for one of the most delightful evenings I have spent in this hall. We make no comparisons, but he can rest assured that we are never tired of seeing mountains, and even if we were we should be afraid to say so, especially in the presence of Sir Francis Younghusband and others. Will you therefore, Colonel Schomberg, accept from this audience and from the Society our most sincere and cordial thanks for the admirable work which you have done in the Tien Shan, and for the charming way in which you have recounted it to us.