

Turkestan; thence skirting the Taklamakan desert, through Yarkand and Khotan to Polu, a village on the slopes of the Kuen Lun Mountains; thence up to the Tibetan plateau, whose north-west corner we explored, passing through the unknown region called Aksai Chin; thence out through Ladak and Kashmir to Rawal Pindi on the railway; thence to Bombay.

The disasters which overtook us on the plateau were those more or less familiar in the recitals of other adventurers into this most difficult land. We travelled for eight weeks, never at altitudes less than 15,500 feet, often rising to 18,500 feet. The country is quite barren and uninhabited, and the cold is extreme. Hence the ponies rapidly die, thus imperilling the lives of men, who, at such elevations, must have transport. The hardships were in every respect more severe than those experienced by me in a considerable journey in Africa—from Somaliland to Khartoum.

The Turkestan region, at a much lower level than Tibet (about 3500 feet), offered little difficulty. Its historical interest is great, and has direct relation with the development of European civilisation. Geographically and topographically the Central Asian region differs so much from familiar lands that it must be closely studied in order to be understood.

In many parts of Asia (but not all), the civilisations, both past and present, have had as their physical basis a highly developed irrigation system. Consideration of the facts presented to the traveller and to the student has led me to conclude that *irrigation-civilisations* are of a special type. They are easily distinguishable, not only from commercial or