

side. Not a tree was in sight. There was a delightful sense of freedom and exhilaration which was accentuated by the rare purity of the air and the glorious view of the magnificent mountains surrounding Pisha on every side.

Every sharp peak, gleaming crest, and blue-shadowed glacier of the snowy Kwen Lun range to the south stood out with cameo distinctness, though the mountains, from 20,000 to 24,000 feet high, were twenty-five or thirty miles away. Westward I looked down 7000 feet over grandly buttressed walls of naked rock into the unknown canyon of the Yurungkash River, narrower and deeper than the famous canyon of the Colorado. It separated the west side of the Pisha basin abruptly from a veritable maze of deeply gashed, naked mountains, the remnants of a dissected plateau. To the north, an opening in the mountains disclosed the yellow line of haze above the sandy desert sixty miles away, near Khotan; while to the northeast, the huge flat-topped bulk of the isolated Tikelik plateau, 19,000 feet high, obscured the view of the basin floor. Still farther around to the right, fair, green pasture slopes, the gift of the loess, fell off, at what seemed by comparison a gentle grade, to the half-naked red and brown outcropping rocks of the centre of the Pisha basin at a height of 9000 feet, and then, twenty-five miles away, rose again to 16,000 feet in the rounded peak of Khan Ilesch, connecting the outlying plateau of Tikelik with the main range of Kwen Lun. During the morning, every detail of the magnificent view was clearly visible. At noon, however, when a strong south wind gave place to the usual afternoon breeze from the north, a change took place, and the process of the deposition of loess was vividly illustrated.