

Still, here the mountain was, and what it lacked in grandeur was made up for in beauty, for its sides were covered with the most exquisite meadows and copses. In Kashmir there are many beautiful meadows, but none to compare with those of the Ever-White Mountain. These were such as I have never seen equalled. Masses of colour, flowers of every kind, whole meadows of irises and tiger-lilies and columbines, and graceful, stately fir trees scattered about to relieve any excess of colour and add to the beauty of the whole. And, looking closer, we found ferns of the most delicate tracery, deep blue gentians, golden buttercups, azaleas, orchids, and numbers of other flowers of every type of beauty, all in their freshest summer bloom.

The following day we visited some springs which form one of the sources of the Sungari, and on the next we ascended the mountain. The trees became fewer and fewer, and we emerged on to open slopes covered with long grass and dwarf azaleas, heather, yellow poppies, and gentians. Except the steepness there was no difficulty in the ascent, and we made for a saddle between two rugged peaks which crowned the mountain. We pressed eagerly on to reach this, as from it we hoped to look out beyond, far away over Corea on the opposite side. At last we reached the saddle, and then, instead of the panorama we had expected, we looked down in astonishment on a most beautiful lake in a setting of weird, fantastic cliffs just at our feet. We were, in fact, on an extinct volcano, and this lake filled up what had once been its crater. The waters were of a peculiarly deep clear blue, and situated here at the very summit of a mountain, and held in on every side by rugged precipitous cliffs, this lake was particularly striking. We tried to descend to its brim, but could find no way down the cliffs; so, after boiling a thermometer to ascertain the altitude, I set out to ascend the highest of the rocky peaks which formed a fringe around it. The climb was a stiff one, but I succeeded