

were rising above me. There was still some hard and trying work to be done, though. As the sun rose next morning a breeze sprang up which drove away the sandflies, but the heat became intense. In spite of it we had to start at 1.30 in the afternoon, and march till three the next morning.

For nearly two miles we passed through a country well covered with trees, and patches of coarse grass and bushes. The soil was partly clay and partly sand. This ended as suddenly as it had begun, and we passed over the gravel desert again, where there was no vestige of grass or scrub. The hot wind blowing off this seemed absolutely to scorch one up; but yesterday's order of things were now reversed—we were ascending while the sun was descending, and it gradually became cooler.

About ten at night we suddenly found ourselves going over turf, with bushes and trees on either side, and a shrill clear voice hailed us from the distance. We halted, and the guide answered, and the stranger came up and turned out to be a Turki woman, who led us through the bushes over some cultivated ground to a house, the first I had seen for nearly a thousand miles.

It was the first sign that I had entered a new land—Turkestan—the mysterious land which I had longed for many a day to see. Flowing by the house was a little stream of the most delicious water. It was scarcely a yard broad, but it was not a mere trickle like the others we had passed in the Gobi, but was flowing rapidly, with a delightful gurgling noise, and was deep enough for me to scoop up water between my two hands. I gulped down mouthful after mouthful of it, and enjoyed such a drink as I had not had for many a long day, and as I lay down on the grass on its bank while the water-casks were being filled, I thought the trials of the desert journey were nearly over. But they were not quite; hardly fifty yards from the stream the vegetation disappeared, and we were again on