

Chinese post, emerged on to the great central plain of Turkestan again near Artysh. From here I saw one of those sights which almost strike one dumb at first—a line of snowy peaks apparently suspended in mid-air. They were the Pamir Mountains, but they were so distant, and the lower atmosphere was so laden with dust, that their base was hidden, and only their snowy summits were visible. One of these was over twenty-five thousand feet high, and another twenty-two thousand, while the spot where I stood was only four thousand; so their height appeared enormous and greater still on account of this wonderful appearance of being separated from earth.

Here, indeed, was a landmark of progress. More than a thousand miles back I had first sighted the end of the Tianshan Mountains from the desert. I had surmounted their terminal spurs, and then travelled week after week along their base, their summits constantly appearing away on my right hand. Now at last arose in front of me the barrier which was to mark the point where I should turn off left and south to India. It was a worthy termination of that vast plain, for the greater part desert, which stretches away from the borders of Manchuria to the buttress range of the Pamirs.

That evening we reached Artysh. Everything here looked thriving and prosperous. The fruit season was at its height, and all along the road, at any little garden, the most delicious grapes and melons could be obtained. Nor was there now any difficulty with the people, and they were always ready to allow us to rest for a time in their gardens or put us up for the night. I noticed a very large canal, which struck me as being an unusually fine work for the people of the country to undertake, and was informed that it had been made by Yakoob Beg. His intention had been to water a large desert tract beyond, but he had not lived to complete his task, and only a comparatively small piece of country is now irrigated by it. But it is a standing mark of his large ideas for the improvement