

built at the entrance to the Tagh-dum-bash Pamir. There are several small hamlets near it; but, being ten thousand feet above the sea, cultivation is, of course, not very productive, and the district can therefore support only a small population.

Above Tashkurgan is seen the wide Pamir of the Tagh-dum-bash, down which I had ridden to this place on the previous year, and overhanging it on the west was a rugged range of snowy peaks, which part the waters of Asia, those on the west flowing into the Oxus, and destined to mark the dividing-line between spheres of influence of two great empires, and those to the east flowing into the Yarkand River, and ending their career in Lob Nor. Behind this range were the chief Pamirs—the Little, the Great, and the Alichur Pamirs—which it was now our special object to visit.

On October 3 we left Tashkurgan to ascend the gorge which leads up to the Neza-tash Pass. The way was rough and stony, and the last part of the ascent steep, but we took our ponies over without any serious difficulty, and from the other side of the pass looked down upon a succession of bare, rounded, uninteresting spurs and barren valleys running towards the Little Pamir. After descending one of these, we found ourselves on what might almost be called a plain; it was flat and level, four or five miles broad, and extended for many miles on either hand, till the border of the mountain ranges hid it from view. This was the Little Pamir. On the side by which we had entered it, it was bounded by high snow-clad mountains, but opposite us were low rounded spurs, hardly high enough to be dignified with the name of mountains or to be covered with permanent snow.

The other Pamirs which we visited differed but very slightly, so that some detailed description of this one will suffice. We have, then, a level plain bounded by ranges of mountains of varying height on either side; and perhaps the best idea of what this is like will be gathered from an account of how it is