

But beyond the defile, looking toward the Pamirs, the mountains were all rounded, the main valleys were flat open plains, and even the side valleys were wide and shallow. No trees grew anywhere. The mountain-sides were brown, and only covered with coarse wormwood, but the valley bottom had a luxuriant growth of grass, which at this time of year was very rich and succulent.

At Lake Bulun-kul, Lieutenant Davison parted from me, and travelled westward to the Alichur Pamir, by the Ak-berdi Pass, which he was, I believe, the first European to cross. It is an easy one, as most of the passes on the Pamirs are, and leads down to the Rang-kul. Meanwhile, I travelled on to the Little Kara-kul, a lake with absolutely unique surroundings. No other lake in the world can boast of two peaks of over twenty-five thousand feet each, rising from its very shores. Here, on the edge of the Roof of the World, was this lovely sheet of clear blue water, with its grassy banks, and the two great mountains standing like two sentinels above its shores. These mountain peaks are the Mustagh-ata and another, which Mr. Ney Elias, who discovered it, named Mount Dufferin. They rise not as rugged pinnacles, but in huge masses, and so gradually and evenly that the ascent seems perfectly easy, and entices travellers to scale the icy summits, and from these to look out over the Roof of the World, far away to the Himalayas, and round over the vast plains of Turkestan to the Celestial Mountains, which divide Russia from China. No other mountain that I have seen seems easier of access, and from no other could such an extended view be obtained ; Russia, India, and China, each presses round its base.

Near the Kara-kul there were several encampments of Kirghiz, with their numerous flocks feeding on the rich pasturage round the lake. Thence I crossed by the easy Ulugh Rabat Pass into the wide Tagarma plain, and passed on to Tashkurgan, which I now visited for the third time. After