

main valley to the Wakhijrui Pass, we branched off from it about five miles lower down than the pass, and ascended a side valley. In this we found a glacier, up which we had to make our way, but it was easy enough to admit of our taking yaks up it, and just before sunset we reached the summit.

Then, indeed, a magnificent view presented itself. By Kukturuk the mountains had all been low and tame—I speak, of course, comparatively, for they were far higher even above the valley bottom than are any hills in the British Isles above the sea—but here we were among the real mountain monarchs once more. We saw before us an amphitheatre of snowy peaks glittering in the fading sunlight, and at their foot one vast snowfield, the depository of all their surplus snow and ice, and the first beginning of the great glacier which would bear the burden down the valley from it. This nook of mountains was the very Heart of Central Asia. One side of the amphitheatre was formed by the range of mountains which divides the waters of the Oxus, which flow to Turkestan, from the waters of the Indus, which make their way to India. Here was also the meeting-point of the watershed which divides the rivers flowing eastward into Chinese Turkestan from those flowing westward to Russian and Afghan Turkestan, with that other watershed which separates the rivers of India on the south from the rivers of Central Asia on the north. At the very point at which we stood those two great watersheds of Asia met; they formed the glittering amphitheatre of snowy peaks which we saw before us, and it was from the snowfields at the base of these that issued the parent glacier of the mighty Oxus.

Just below the pass we found a small lake, about three-quarters of a mile in length and width, fed by three glaciers. It was walled all round, except at one point, by cliffs a hundred feet and more in height of pure transparent ice. Its waters were of a deep clear blue, and overflowed at the one unguarded side in a small stream down the glacier in the main valley below.