

they belonged to Turkestan and marked the end of my long desert journey, and the conclusion of one great stage on the way to India.

Our next march, however, was the most trying of all, for we had to cross the branch of the Gobi which is called the desert of Zungaria, one of the most absolutely sterile parts of the whole Gobi. We started at eleven in the morning, passing at first through the low hills, perfectly barren for the most part, though some hollows had a few tufts of bushes, and one hollow was filled with white roses. After seven and a half miles we left the hills, and entered a gravel plain covered with coarse bushes, but no grass. There was no path, and we simply headed straight for the end of the Tian-shan range. Through the whole afternoon we pressed wearily along. Sunset, and still we did not halt, for there was no water for many miles ahead. At last, near midnight, we halted for a time over the plain to cook some food and rest the camels. To pitch camp was useless, for there was neither water, fuel, nor grass; not a bush, nor a plant, nor a blade of grass—absolutely nothing but gravel