

We determined now to march on as hard as we could till we got out of the country inhabited by Kirghiz, and down into the plains again, where the people were all Turkis. This we succeeded in doing the same day. We followed down a stream, and then, after passing a small Chinese post, emerged on to the great 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 Tian-shan Mountains from the desert. I had surmounted their terminal spurs, and then travelled week after