

Once out of the surrounding desert, the traveller finds himself amidst the most inviting surroundings—cool shady lanes with water-courses running in every direction, alongside the road, across it, and under it, giving life to everything where before all was dead and bare and burnt. On either hand, as far as can be seen, lie field after field of ripening crops, only broken by the fruit gardens and shady little hamlets. Everything seems in plenty. Fruit is brought before you in huge trayfuls, and wheat is cheaper than even in India.

In this way it is a land of extremes. On one side nothing—not the possibility of anything; on the other—plenty. And the climate has as great extremes as the physical appearance. The summer is scorchingly hot anywhere outside the small portion that is cultivated and shaded with trees; and in the winter the thermometer falls to zero Fahrenheit. This is the natural result of the position of the country in the very heart of the greatest continent, where none of the tempering effects of the sea could possibly reach it.

The people, however, do not share this