

I could of such opportunities as might offer for the increase of our geographical knowledge. The primary object with which the Mission was despatched necessitated a very rapid outward march, and the difficulty of arranging about supplies compelled our return with nearly equal rapidity, giving no time or opportunity for making detours or excursions off the road: with the exception of halts at Panjáh in Wakhán, the furthest point westward reached by the Mission, and at Táshkurghán, where we were compelled to halt for the purpose of resting our cattle, and one day at Ak-tásh for the same purpose, our journey was merely a rapid continuous march from beginning to end. I am induced to make these remarks at the outset, as I have seen paragraphs in the newspapers, and notably in the telegraphic reports of the *London Times* to the effect that "the Pámír has been completely surveyed," and other similar statements which are apt to mislead the public and induce them to expect a great deal more than has been, or could possibly have been, accomplished under the circumstances.

What I have been able to perform in the way of actual survey chiefly consists of fairly complete sets of astronomical observations, which have enabled me to fix with considerable accuracy the positions of the more important places along our line of march. These places have all been connected by a route survey, executed as carefully as circumstances would permit. I also succeeded in getting good observations with boiling point thermometers and aneroids on all the passes and at all our camps, which, combined with simultaneous barometric readings at Leh should furnish very trustworthy determinations of height. Observations for magnetic dip and declination were made at Sarikol, and for declination only at Panjah. Owing to the necessity for cutting down baggage, servants, and camp followers to the lowest possible limit, I left both my survey khlassies behind in Yárkand, as also all photographic apparatus.

From Yangi-Hissár as far as Táshkurghán I had the advantage of the Pundit's assistance, and he with the Munshi paced the whole road up to that point. The Pundit being a Hindu was not taken beyond Sirikol, but Colonel Gordon obtained permission (from Hussan Sháh, the Governor of Sirikol,) for him to return to Yárkand *via* Chehil Gombáz and the Chárling River. From Panjah the Múnshi was despatched on a special exploration, to be hereafter described. Up to that point I had the advantage of his services as a recorder for astronomical work. On the return journey to India the late Dr. Stoliczka kindly took his place, and recorded for me on several occasions, the last being only a few days before his death.

Before going into the details of my own reconnaissance I may, perhaps with advantage, notice the mistaken ideas* which most geographers have held, at all events until very recently, of the nature of the mass of mountains and high table-lands which separate the provinces of Eastern and Western Turkestan. The labours of the Russian Venuikof, who taking the writings of the illustrious Humboldt for his basis, and working on to them the cleverly constructed but mischievous forgeries of Klaproth, have thrown back the geography of this region into almost inextricable confusion, from which even the recondite researches of Colonel Yule and Sir Henry Rawlinson have hardly yet rescued us. The vague statements of ancient travellers such as Huen Tsán and Marco Polo, who scarcely imagined when they penned their writings, the keen interest with which they would centuries later be studied and criticized, have added to the difficulties of forming a clear and correct idea of the country. The ideas I had myself formed before my visit were vague in the extreme, but perhaps not very much more so than those of others who knew a great deal more about it. Such different descriptions as the following are difficult to reconcile:—

"The Pámír plain extends 1,000 li† from east to west and 100 li from south to north."—*Huen Tsán.*

"The centre of the plateau is "Saryk-kul" out of which there should issue, according to all accounts, the Jaxartes, Oxus, and a branch of the Indus. This plateau, which affords excellent pasturage, extends round the lake for a distance of six days' journey in circumference, and it is said that from this elevation all the adjacent hills appear below the observer."—*Burnes.*

* Derived from incomplete and discordant information.

† A li is about one-fifth of a mile.