

to Issik Kul, where, after a month of joint work, they separated, Mr. Davis returning to America via Omsk and St. Petersburg, and Mr. Huntington going on to Kashgar.

After Tashkent, I visited Marghilan and Andizhan, the end of the railroad.

Continuing our journey to Osh, at the entrance of the mountain region, we organized an expedition to the Pamir, with the courteous aid of its governor, Colonel Zaitza. The way to the Pamir covered part of the route and two of the passes, the Terek and Taldik, in one of the great currents of ancient trade between China and western Asia, and it promised light on the physico-geographical part of our problem. After returning from the Pamir we visited the ruins of Ak-si, in the northern part of Khokand, beyond the Syr Darya, and examined the ruined sites of Samarkand, and of Paikent in Bokhara and a trenched tumulus at Anau near Askhabad.

Throughout the journey, both by rail and in the side excursions, we had occasion to note the existence and position of a great number of former sites of occupation, both towns and tumuli.

It had been my wish to examine Balkh, the site of ancient Bactra, and other ruins of northern Afghanistan, but this was found to be impossible on account of the hostile attitude of the Afghans toward even Russians.

OUTLINE SKETCH OF THE REGION.

A glance at a map of the Eurasian continent shows that the three seas, the Aral, Caspian, and Black, occupy parts of one great basin, bounded on the south and east by great mountains, and on the north by the Aral-Arctic divide.

If the Bosphorus were closed and there should exist a continued excess of rainfall over evaporation, these seas would merge and the basin would fill till it overflowed into the Northern Ocean. The area of this Asian Mediterranean would be determined by the height of the northern divide, which is as yet unknown. In any event, it would be sufficient to submerge a large part of southern Russia and much of Russian Turkestan.

If, on the other hand, there should be a continued increase of excess of evaporation, the seas would dry up; the whole basin would be transformed into a vast desert, on the borders of which the retreating river mouths would be lost in the sands. Turkestan, once largely covered by water, is now in a state approaching this condition of aridity. The greater basin is broken up into smaller, disconnected ones, of which only the Black Sea has an outlet. The Aral stands 159 feet above the ocean, the Black Sea practically at ocean level, the Caspian 84 feet below ocean level. The great Volga and several small streams reach the Caspian; east of the Caspian only two rivers, the Syr and Amu (Jaxartes and Oxus), reach the Aral; and they gather water only at their sources in snow-clad mountains; all other streams are consumed by direct evaporation and irrigation and have short courses, ending in desert sand.

According to Schwartz, about three-quarters of all this vast region is desert and one-quarter is capable of supporting the herds of the nomads. Water can be distributed on about 2 per cent of the entire area, on land free from drifted sands.