

fresh supplies, we moved south to cross the high chain dividing the Alichur from the Great Pamir. On August 26 we crossed it by the Bash-gumbaz pass, which in spite of its elevation of about 16,300 feet was found clear of snow. As we descended towards the glittering expanse of Lake Victoria or Zor-köl, where the Great Pamir branch of the Oxus rises and the Pamir borders of Russia and Afghanistan meet, a grand panoramic view opened across it towards the glacier-crowned range which divides the Great Pamir from uppermost Wakhan.

Ever since my youth I had longed to see the truly 'Great' Pamir and its fine lake, of which Captain John Wood, its modern discoverer in 1838, had given so graphic a description. This desire was greatly increased when the closer knowledge since gained of the topography of the Pamir region had confirmed my belief that the memories of those great old travellers, Hsüan-tsang and Marco Polo, were associated with the route leading past the lake.

The day of halt, August 27, spent by the sunny lake shore (Fig. 134) was most enjoyable, though with an icy wind sweeping along the lake shore at an elevation of nearly 14,000 feet it felt bitterly cold even while the sun was shining from a speckless sky. In the morning the thermometer showed a minimum temperature of 12° Fahrenheit below freezing-point. In the peace around, undisturbed by any sign of human activity past or present, it was easy to lose all count of time and to feel as if spiritual emanations of those cherished old patrons of my travels were still clinging to the scene.

As I looked across the deep blue waters of the lake to where in the east they seemed to fade away on the horizon,