

In the piercing wind it was not easy to boil the water for the hypsometer. By scooping a hole in the snow, however, sufficient shelter was at last secured, and repeated careful readings of the thermometer gave a mean of 177.8° Fahr. as the boiling-point. Taking into calculation the temperature of the air, which was 33° Fahr., this corresponds to an elevation of almost exactly 20,000 feet. Our bodily condition would have allowed a further climb, though I as well as my Hunza followers felt the effect of our six hours' ascent through the snow. But neither the state of the weather nor the remaining daylight justified the hope that we could reach this day the end of the spur reconnoitred on the previous day. I accordingly decided to descend and to let a fresh attempt at reaching that point depend on the chance of the weather improving on the next day. The soft snow rendered even the descent by the route we had come a slow and arduous affair; but the grand view which lay before me amply compensated for the delay. To the west the clouds had lifted completely, and the multiplicity of the ranges over which my gaze travelled was the best demonstration of the height we were at.

Straight in front, where the view must have extended practically across the whole breadth of the Pamir region, there were no notable landmarks to attract attention. But this seemingly endless succession of valleys and ranges was perhaps best calculated to impress me with a sense of the vastness of the "Roof of the World." To the south-west there glittered white pinnacles of bolder shape far away on the horizon, and in them I thought I could recognise the mountain-giants that guard the approach to the Indus Valley. They had worthy rivals to the north in some towering masses of ice and snow, which from a reference to the map I could not fail to identify with Mount Kaufmann and other great peaks of the Trans-Alai range. Their highest points were shrouded in fleecy clouds.