

jungle. Close to the route runs the new canal, a modest work so far, only 6-8 feet broad, yet likely to bring life and wealth to this lonely woodland. The soil is a fertile loess, and the level of the ground so uniform that its irrigation will be easy when the jungle is once cleared away.

For over eight miles we followed the canal, and I pictured to my mind the changes it is likely to bring soon to this silent scene. No doubt in ancient times irrigation was carried all along the streams which cut into the desert area, and by a careful storage of their waters probably much ground beyond, that now seems irretrievably lost to the moving sands, was secured for cultivation. A strong and capable administration, whether on European or Eastern lines, might any day take up again the old struggle with the desert and successfully push forward the borders of human habitation, just as it has in the Turkoman steppes and the Doabs of the Punjab, by nature scarcely less arid. But whence is that impulse to come?

Wherever the forest left sufficient open ground I could see the distant snowy range rising far away to the south of Niya. The atmosphere kept so clear that even up to Oтра Langar, where a few reed huts form a halfway rest-house for the pilgrims, our position on the plane-table could always be fixed by intersections from the prominent points in the great mountain range. Truly a remarkable testimony in favour of the winter atmosphere of the desert, considering that at Oтра Langar we were close on seventy miles away from the nearest of those peaks.

But these distant vistas ceased when the thickets of poplars and tamarisks were entered a little beyond that station. Here the woodland seemed to expand considerably over ground that bears ample evidence of having once been occupied by the shifting bed of the river. According to our shepherd guides the width of the jungle tract is here 8-10 miles, and the bearings obtained from certain elevated points on the day's march seemed to confirm this estimate. Under the trees and in all depressions of the ground there remained a thin layer of snow, evidently of the previous week's fall. With the bare trees and their thick undergrowth it made up a landscape