

pao-chêng, which Kozloff's map had led me to expect here. They proved to be those of a small but relatively well built fort, evidently recent in its extant construction. It overlooked broad riverine meadows and occupied an excellent strategic position; for the various routes which crossed the high range before us from the south naturally debouched towards the plains by the gorge the fort guarded. A massive clay tower about thirty feet high, which occupied its north-west corner, formed a conspicuous landmark. So we chose it as the station for our astronomical latitude observation, while we camped some distance below where there was grass and fresh running water in a channel about ten yards wide and one and a half to two feet deep. Our camp here was about 7450 feet above the sea, and all thought of heat now lay behind us.

The ground was singularly well adapted for starting extensive and necessarily rapid survey work such as we were bent upon in the Nan-shan. Across the uniform expanse of the great alluvial triangle we could at once sight the whole amphitheatre of mountains bending round an arc close on fifty miles long, and shape our movements accordingly. The landscape, barren in the extreme, singularly combined the attraction of grand mountain vistas with that feeling of freedom which wide Alpine plateaus always seem to convey. But the very uniformity of its features, which enabled us in the course of six days to survey an area of over 1200 square miles, will also explain why I may endeavour to shorten my account by avoiding a description of our work day by day.

The first two marches which took us south-westwards to the vicinity of the Kashkar Pass sufficed to show me the remarkable dryness which characterizes the western extremity of the Nan-shan even along its most elevated range. Ascending the great alluvial slope to an elevation of about 10,000 feet, we nowhere met with surface water, and all the dry beds we found crossing it from the mountains were quite shallow. I soon convinced myself that even at this season of melting snows the water brought down by the valleys of the main range becomes completely lost in the vast beds of rubble almost at their