

sists," writes Colonel Yule, "chiefly of stretches of tolerably level steppe, broken and divided by low rounded hills, much of it covered with saline exudations, and interspersed with patches of willows and thorny shrubs, and in summer with extensive tracts of grass two or three feet in height, the fattening properties of which have been extolled by travellers, from Marco Polo to Faiz Buksh. Many lakes are scattered over the surface of the plateau, from which streams flow. Wild fowl abound upon the lakes in summer to an extraordinary degree; and in the vicinity water deer of some kind are very numerous, and the great sheep (*Ovis Poli*) apparently all over the plateau. In 1869 a murrain among these latter is said to have killed them off in multitudes. A goat called 'ang, affording a fine shawl-wool, is found on the steppe; also a kind of lynx, whose fur is valued. Foxes and wolves frequent Pamir; bears and tigers are occasional visitors. The wild yak, according to Faiz Buksh, is also found there; if this be true, Pamir is its west and north limit. Pamir was at one time the summer haunt of a large nomad population of Kirghiz, with their numerous flocks; but the depredations of the Shighnis (regarded also with horror by the Kirghiz as Shiah heretics), and other kidnapping neighbours, are said to have driven them to the eastern valleys, or to the Kokan territory, and the only summer visitors now are about one thousand families, who frequent the shores of Rangkul in Little Pamir." In Moorcroft's time some of these Kirghiz pastured on these lofty grazing lands 30,000 sheep and goats, 500 yaks, and 200 camels. The great height of the plateau renders the air so rarefied as to make respiration difficult. Even this trouble is experienced by the natives, who use dried fruits, garlic, and leeks as antidotes. The plateau is broken by spurs and peaks. But so little is known that it is still a geographical problem whether there is or is not a meridional range on its eastern confines. MM. Severtsoff and Mushketoff—the Russian explorers—are inclined to consider them as extensive highlands covered with a somewhat complicated system of mountain ranges. Mr. Hayward considered that they form a continuous north and south range, while Professor Fedchenko was of opinion that the so-called mountains were only the bluff escarpment of a table-land. Among the lakes, Siri-Kul, Sikandari Kul, or Victoria (p. 285), is one of the largest. It is fourteen miles long and about a mile in breadth, and is bordered on all sides by high hills and even lofty mountains. It is 15,500 feet above the sea, and the source of one of the branches of the Oxus, the other having been traced by the "Mirza"—one of Colonel Montgomerie's native geographical spies—to Pamir Kul, at a height of 13,300 feet. The air is so rarefied that when Captain Wood attempted to break the ice on the lake a few strokes of the pickaxe produced such exhaustion that he and his companions had to lie down to recruit their strength. A musket loaded with blank cartridge sounded as if the charge had been poured into the barrel and neither wads nor ramrod used. Even when ball was introduced, the report, though louder, wanted that sharpness which marks similar discharges in denser atmospheres. Many of the party were dizzy with headache; any sort of muscular exertion soon became very distressing. Conversation it was impossible to keep up, and a run at full speed produced pain in the lungs and prostration that lasted for some hours. The line of perpetual snow is in the Pamir something over 17,000 feet, but by the end of June the ice is broken up, the lakes