

the same time the watercourse grows more undecided, its sides being only a foot high at the most. In one place a couple of sign-posts show that the road deviated from the watercourse for a little distance, and made a short cut across the flat slopes on the right-hand side of the valley. Then the steppe vegetation thinned out, and the saksaul ceased altogether. A little bit lower down the principal watercourse, and with it the valley, bends to the east-north-east, being fenced in on the right by a mountain-ridge, massive and craggy, from which short spurs jut across the valley. The landmarks indicate however, that the ancient road did not follow this main valley, but ascended a side-glen coming from the north-west. On the west side of this last there is a very imposing grey mountain-knot, the biggest and most compact of any in all that region. Here the water, a rare visitant, has scooped out ravines and deep gorges in the soft material, leaving rounded hills between. Here there was no snow; in fact we saw none all day, with the exception of two little patches in exceptionally sheltered positions. The head of the glen we were now following was overhung by lofty black cliffs, and to avoid them I struck up into a side-glen on the left, which in a quarter of an hour led us to a very easy pass, crowned with a heap of stones. For a short distance immediately below the pass the northern slope is steep and thickly strewn with gravel; but after that the surface falls away gently and gradually towards the north. On this versant the watercourses are more undecided and less plainly indicated than on the southern side of the pass. The broad valley we were following is inclosed between two big mountain-spurs, which terminate upwards in rugged pinnacles and denticulated crests, showing various shades of black, grey, white, and red; and the farther we advanced the more were their slopes buried under drift-sand, reaching a considerable distance up the mountain-side. Then our valley is joined from the left by a second valley, very similar to itself. The valleys here are open and broad, and are inclosed between barren, desolate mountains, which, like the Masar-tagh, are the last fragmentary relics of a former vast mountain system. Towards the end of the valley the saksaul appeared again, and reached 3 to 4 meters in height, remarkably fine, vigorous bushes for such a dreary region. Another bush, *jantak* (*Alhagi camelorum*), also grows there. The vegetation is however richest in the mouth of the valley, where two arms of the mountains, one from the left, the other from the right, approach one another like the claws of a gigantic crab, leaving only a relatively narrow opening between them. It is within the shelter of these giant arms that the vegetation I have mentioned is able to thrive, safely protected against wind and drift-sand. The only drift-sand that does penetrate within that stony fence has arranged itself into quite small dunes, but the slopes of the two arms are deeply buried in it. Here again at Camp No. CXXXIV we found signs of human presence in a species of temporary fireplace, made of stones, in part still blackened by soot.

We had travelled all day through granite. Below Camp No. CXXXIII it was dark-coloured, fine-grained, and greatly weathered, dipping 77° N. A little lower down it was grey, and medium-grained, and accompanied by pegmatite with similar properties, dipping 83° towards N. 15° E. Then came red, fine-grained granite with some veining, and dipping 83° N. On the threshold of the second pass the granite was dark-coloured, fine-grained, veined, and strongly disintegrated, its dip being 79°