

water channels, but by merely slight scorings of the surface. Towards the bottom of each of these hollows there usually gathered a little brook, and even if there were no brook, the bottom was always the softest, and one might easily have been »drowned» in the liquid mud. Between this ridge and a small isolated dome-topped mountain that rose in front of us there was an important water-divide or swelling, which separated us from the next self-contained basin on the south. This too contained a lake in its middle. From the extremely flat swelling (alt. 5,111 m.) a couple of rivulets flow down westwards to the pools I have lately mentioned, and on the opposite side a brook goes down towards the south-east, the ground sloping gently in that direction between low hills. The bed of this brook was rather firmer. We pitched camp at the southern foot of the dome-topped mountain, where a little grass was growing. Camp No. XXVI had an altitude of 5,076 m. We did not see here the slightest signs of either wild-yaks or kulans or antelopes. Evidently they shun these regions, where there is no pasture, and where they would have greater difficulty in escaping from a threatening danger. Yet curiously enough we did see a solitary wolf.

Neither did we that day come across any hard rock; the nearest approach to it was weathered, rotten gypsum in a watercourse. Occasionally the bottom of one of these channels would be black as if with pulverised coal, the last surviving remnants of schists destroyed at some antique period. The intensely brick-red hills are likewise no doubt the last survivals of some fine-grained red sandstone or clay-slate.

Our next step was to descend from the flat divide into the next latitudinal valley. Up to this point we had crossed over ten parallel ranges in Northern Tibet, all running from east to west. Of the present range, the eleventh, all that was left was a mere ruin, little more than a mud-ridge in fact, the schist being visible in only one single watercourse. Apart from that everything is not only weathered to excess, but even the disintegrated material itself, except for a thin crust of schist flakes, is powdered to the smallest possible dimensions, and this matter, when duly mixed with water, makes a wet yellow clay, resembling thin dough or porridge, so soft indeed that footprints in it have no permanence, the material closing up over them like a viscous fluid. But that these characteristics do not apply to the whole of this range, or everywhere along the latitude in which we then were, we ascertained on our return, for farther west on the selfsame latitude we crossed actual hard rocky mountains. But on the meridian by which we were travelling the range between Camps No. XXV and XXVII is quite different from the ten ranges that preceded it. It has, so to speak, advanced a gigantic step farther than the others towards utter decay; it is also flatter and lower, and its glens are neither deeply excavated nor definitely determined. One might almost hesitate to call it a mountain-range at all; it is more like a hilly swelling of the earth's crust.

At Camp No. XXVI it snowed heavily on Aug. 12th, and the whole of the following day it rained violently, the rain alternating with hail showers. The wind blew sometimes from the west, sometimes from the north-east. Icy cold clouds swept across those bleak, impenetrable highlands. Although the thermometer did not drop below — 3°.2, in consequence of the cloudy sky the ground on the morning of the 14th was so far frozen that it bore. In fact it was at first as hard as a