

CHAPTER VII.

A TIBETAN SALT LAKE.

August 20th. The stream beside which we encamped flowed towards the south-south-west, and soon afterwards joined the large river of the day before. Instead of following it, we steered our course towards the south-east, across the low, flat rounded hills. These consisted entirely of soft material, and they were threaded by small brooks and rivulets; while in other places the ground was wet, and consequently very marshy. Our track meandered up and down, but the differences in elevation were really very slight. At a distance of 3 to 4 km. to the west we saw the river winding like a dirty red ribbon through its broad mud-filled bed, the country through which it flows being uncommonly level. Southwards too the country appeared to be remarkably level, and easy to march across. Almost all day the grazing was tolerably good, consisting chiefly of moss and wild garlic; in some parts of the Tibetan highlands this last is extraordinarily abundant. At a little distance to the left of our route was a series of hills of moderate elevation, while to the east-north-east rose a dome-shaped mountain (B¹) free from snow. Except this and the peaks we had lately turned our backs upon, there were no other dominating summits visible. Between the chain of hills and our line of march the country formed an almost dead level, its undulations being hardly perceptible. There were a good many wild yaks busy grazing. On both sides of us there were numerous small pools, into which the rivulets of the neighbourhood flowed.

After that we made a detour half round two small lakes connected together by a sound 2 m. broad, the shallowest part of which had however a depth of $1\frac{1}{3}$ m. Its bottom was hard and firm enough to travel on. The water in the upper lake is fresh and of a yellowish red colour, and consequently must somewhere be entered by turbid brooks, while the water in the lower lake is salt, but bright, and of an ultramarine colour. The water was flowing out of the northern lake into the southern, although the current was scarce perceptible. The western shore of the lower lake is studded with pools, both big and little. Both lakes are surrounded by low hills, with sandy ground, and the best grass we had yet seen since leaving the Kum-köl. At intervals the lower lake is joined by ravines, then however without water, although the bottom was covered with moist sand and gravel which would hardly bear us.