

tagh, and down it coursed a small torrent, which however soon entered the principal river. We made Camp XIX (alt. 4937 m.) at the point where this glen begins to contract, just before starting up to the crest of the Arka-tagh. On the soft hills that stud its left side we again found a little grass, though of the wretchedest description. Not only was it excessively scanty, it was also yellow and hard, in fact more like short nails sticking up out of the ground few and far between. As fodder it was almost completely worthless; it merely gave our caravan animals a little exercise during their night's rest.

On the 22nd June we pushed on farther up the glen, the brook in which was now running pretty strong. The summit of the Arka-tagh was shrouded in impenetrable clouds, which all day from the morning continued to discharge uninterruptedly vast quantities of snow and hail, at the same time that the wind blew a hurricane from the north-west. In consequence of the blinding snow I missed some of the details of the landscape, while all hope of obtaining a more extended view from the top of the pass was effectually dashed. During this present series of journeys I crossed over this part of the Arka-tagh on three separate occasions, in spring, summer, and autumn, and on each occasion there was a downfall; the only time I have crossed the range under favourable conditions was in 1896. Thus the Arka-tagh acts as a focus of attraction to such atmospheric moisture as has been able to get past the other great upheavals of the earth's crust round about it; but then this range reaches considerably higher altitudes than any of its neighbours. And even though the other Tibetan ranges farther south often reach a greater height than the Arka-tagh, they do not possess the same compact and extensive development.

Even at noon it was twilight. We felt as if we had got astray in a world not meant for human habitation, where indeed all traces even of animal life had come to an end. The wild yak actually seems never to visit these regions, not because it finds them too cold or too snowy, but simply because they have no pasturage to offer it. If ever it does come there it is only in the course of its migrations to and fro between the Tibetan highlands and the self-contained drainage-basins north of the Arka-tagh. The glen up which we were marching was absolutely barren; both its slopes and its bottom were entirely buried under a continuous sheet of snow, which continued to increase in depth as the snow came floating unceasingly downwards out of those heavy, leaden clouds, enveloping all the mountains and filling up all the glens and valleys. The stream, which in consequence of the slowly melting snow, was running with a fairly strong current, made a dark winding ribbon flung across the eternal whiteness of the scene. Its bed contains a good deal of gravel, consisting for the most part apparently of green schists. There were no treacherous or swampy spots; on the contrary the ground was everywhere hard and firm.

At length we reached the point where the gentle and regular ascent came to an end, and a steep acclivity faced us leading up to the actual pass. In my popular work I have given an account of the inconceivable efforts it cost us to force our way over this culminating portion of the climb. Not only did we lose five camels, but the strength and powers of the caravan were tried to the uttermost. A steep, but shallow watercourse showed us the way up to the pass. This forms