

journey that I am now describing, when it got to be the end of July and August we experienced a far heavier rainfall, and it, to our cost, rendered the surface of these high plateaus soft and our march consequently all the more difficult.

On the morning of the 4th July there was a gentle breeze from the east; but it soon gave way to the usual westerly wind, which however blew not quite so hard as usual. For the most part we marched due south over gently undulating ground, with a sprinkling of grass. The bottom of the latitudinal valley, which we were now crossing diagonally, sloped upwards in that same direction. The watercourses that run towards the north were then dry. For a short distance however a number of springs of fresh, bright water bubbled up and gave rise to tiny, but deep rivulets, edged with thick moss. Around these springs there was excellent grass, which had attracted numbers of kulans and antelopes to the neighbourhood. The range which barred our path to the south did not look difficult. We made our way slowly up towards its northern foot, along which ran a watercourse coming from the west. This, at the point where we crossed over it, was a couple of hundred meters broad and about 15 m. deep, and sunk between steeply scarped terraces. It inclines gradually towards the north-east and pretty certainly makes its way to some lake situated farther east. At that time it did not contain a single drop of water. The surface still continued to be hard and good for marching on, and perfectly dry; at times the track of the caravan was marked by a trail of rising dust.

The main stream was joined by a number of contributory torrents from the range, and having crossed over it, we ascended one of these; it was rather steep, and its bottom was strewn with gravel. Here there was a good supply of kulan and wild yak droppings. The pass we were making for was 5210 m. above sea-level, and, as is customary in this severely denuded region, it formed a flat rounded arch. Yak moss was the only vegetation. This was therefore the second pass that we crossed over south of the Arka-tagh which possessed a considerably greater altitude than that range itself. In fact on the high plateau there are several ranges which, in respect both of their passes and of their summits, surpass the Arka-tagh; nevertheless this is entitled to be considered the most distinguished, not only because of its solidity, compactness, and unbroken continuity, but also because of its relative wealth of ice and snow. In this respect also we shall subsequently compare all the parallel ranges of Tibet.

We invariably approached the summit of each successive pass with a certain amount of expectant curiosity, for they almost always afforded us an excellent view of the country to the south. From our new point of vantage the country in that direction looked particularly inviting, the widespread, undulating plateau being diversified by quite insignificant stretches of heights of no great elevation. For several days we should be able to march without encountering any serious obstacle. The pure bright atmosphere allowed us to see to a great distance, in fact right away to the far-off horizon. It amazed me that from this point of view there was not a single lake in sight; but it turned out subsequently that there were two, though they were hidden behind the before-mentioned flat heights. On the northern side of the range we now discovered several large pools, which had hitherto been invisible. What a difference between the relief of the plateau to the south as compared with