

the same time relatively narrower, and their slopes proportionally steeper. It was plain that we had again to do with a mountain system, which had been split up by erosion in a more capricious fashion into several crests and valleys.

Before starting again we made a reconnaissance up a gently inclined glen, which brought us to yet four other lakes, equally as small as the preceding ones. Round the most easterly of these the mountains form a gigantic circle and can only be crossed over by a very inconvenient pass. Here we found wild yaks and kökmeks. This route I therefore abandoned owing to the unfavourable ground. I wished as soon as possible to turn off towards the south-east, so as not to come into contact with Littledale's route, being anxious to keep to regions in which no European had hitherto set foot.

With regard to the weather also a decided change took place here. At about 3 p.m. on the 7th July, when we were in the vicinity of the salt lake, the sky suddenly darkened and heavy masses of steel-grey clouds came rolling up, especially from the west; but as the wind was blowing from that quarter, a little sleet fell for the space of ten minutes only, and after that the sky cleared again and it became warm and summer-like as before. On the 8th July we had a shower of rain at noon, followed by the usual westerly wind. This was clearly the forerunner of the rainy season, for on the 9th July we had a copious downpour. In the forenoon it took the form of three violent showers of sleet, which suddenly gave the landscape a white and wintry appearance. After that a fine rain continued to fall thick and fast all day, so that the hitherto dry surface became wet and slippery, and for some little time greatly hindered our advance. At 10 p.m. the rain began to come down in torrents, and all our loads and tents were soon wet through, adding greatly to the weight which our already wearied caravan had to drag with them.

And in fact it soon became evident that the rainy season had set in in earnest. On the 10th July we had a good deal of downfall, for it rained and snowed all night long. When we started again our animals had to plough their way through the thick, soft mire, and both they and the men were soon carrying heavy masses of clay at each foot. One hail-shower was so violent that we had to halt, it was impossible to see where we were going to. The sun only showed itself for a short period, the sky being otherwise shrouded in impenetrable clouds. After we had encamped we were overwhelmed by a perfect tornado of rain. All the heavy black rain-clouds came from the west. Some of these passed over the mountains on the north or south without touching our latitudinal valley; but it was easy to trace their passage, as their dark fringes swept along the flanks of the mountains, leaving behind them white streaks of snow and hail.

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