

sed down by its own weight. The reason that the procedure has not advanced so far as to make the range to all intents and purposes level must be, not only that it possesses a skeleton of hard rock, though this is for the most part invisible, but also that the erosive energy is never at rest.

In spite of this abominable ground — and its difficulties were still further intensified by the continuous downfall, which gave rise to tiny rivulets and rills in every hollow — the antelopes exhibited no hesitation to remain there, for we saw several large herds in the vicinity. Of wild yaks and kulans we observed nothing except their tracks and droppings, and these evidently belonged to a season when the ground was firmer than it was just then.

The pass formed a very slight notch in the crest, or rather it formed a flat arch, for we preferred to keep to the side of the actual pass: on it we should inevitably have perished in the mire. On this saddle, which reaches an altitude of 5367 m., the only outstanding feature is a small insignificant ridge of hard rock, its strike running from S. 38° W. to N. 38° E., with a vertical dip; it consisted of the same fine-grained crystalline schist as that which we came across on the preceding day's march. A little way down the southern glen we observed a hard porphyry-like rock with a dip of 33° towards the S. Although these passes form the culminating points on the meridional line by which we crossed the Tibetan highland, hard rock was nevertheless remarkably rare. It is true, there were rocky crags on both sides of the pass; but when you are 550 and 650 m. above the altitude of Mont Blanc, and have for months been travelling at elevations that exceed the elevation of Mont Blanc, both men and animals become so wearied that you are only too glad to avoid all extra excursions.

The glimpses which we obtained from this pass through the rain and hail, and through chance rifts in the clouds, were anything but encouraging. There was, for one thing, not the slightest indication of a latitudinal valley. We saw nothing but a world of mountains — a region which was in fact in a far higher degree a highland region than a plateau-land. In the south-west, beyond the rounded crests, free from snow, that were nearest to us, rose higher mountain-masses, covered with snow, which had evidently fallen during the last few days. Usually it was with a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure that we began our descent from these lofty ranges; but from this pass the downward march was anything but agreeable. The southern slope of the range was much worse than the northern. Probably the precipitation is in general more abundant on the former; at all events it was so that day. The consequence was, that the ground was more saturated and softer than it was on the northern side. If anybody should think that my words are exaggerated when I say, that there was a risk of being engulfed in the mire, I may state that just below this very pass we lost one of the best of our camels, the poor beast having literally sunk so deep into the quagmire that it was impossible to save him. Accordingly we left him behind with a couple of men to look after him, in the hope that next morning, when the ground had frozen, we might be able to rescue him; but during the night he sank in still deeper and became entirely lost. It cannot be more dangerous to sail through unknown waters where shallows and sunken rocks abound than it is to travel in such a country. A couple of men went on first to