

and antelopes occasionally; also any quantity of yak-droppings, which we truly did not expect to find, but we were unable to make out whether they were left by wild yaks or by tame. On the one hand wild yaks shun narrow, inclosed localities; but on the other hand it is little likely that the nomads would wander so far astray. Possibly they were due to the convoy of a large hunting party. The surface in this glen consisted of nothing but mud, without any gravel, and was often very treacherous, and we had to proceed with the utmost caution.

At length however the side-hills grew lower, and permitted us to quit the glen on the left-hand side. The glen itself appeared to continue towards the west-south-west towards a not inconsiderable lake, which we saw in the S. 70° W. to W. at a distance of about 8 km. Accordingly we now aimed for the north-west across greatly broken ground, namely a series of gently rounded hills and ridges, with dangerous boggy ground, separated from one another by small glens, all of which run down towards the principal glen and lake. The grass thinned out and came almost entirely to an end; and after that the vegetation was confined to moss and japkak, rhubarb and garlic, this last furnishing excellent nourishment for both men and animals in our caravan. We pitched Camp LXI beside a couple of small pools at an altitude of 4924 m.

On 18th August we traversed a region which for sheer »cussedness» would be hard indeed to beat. It was tolerably broken; still we managed to keep pretty much at the same level, the vertical differences amounting to only a score or so of meters. But it was very rarely that the ground would bear the weight of our caravan animals; it was like riding amongst cunningly hidden traps and pitfalls. For a short distance we kept on towards the west, then towards the north-west, crossing at first over several small brooks, all streaming down to the lake or to pools close beside it. Alongside one of these brooks we perceived a track, which had clearly been used by hunters. From a minor pass we caught sight of a little lake to the south. On the other side of the pass we descended to a self-contained basin, in the middle of which was another lake, somewhat larger; this we left a couple of kilometers to the south. The ground around this lake was really the most detestable that I have ever had experience of — nothing but super-saturated ooze to which there was no bottom. Even in those places in which the ground had dried superficially in the glorious sunshine, our caravan animals sank in at every step. The entire locality is a cesspool or gathering-basin into which all the mud and ooze is washed down off the surrounding heights, until at length it forms a veritable slough of despond, no single inch of which will bear. It is traversed by a countless number of small water-channels a meter across, all of which converge upon the lake. The only ground that was at all of firmer consistence was that over which the water was actually flowing; but only one or two meters away it was as soft as a sponge or blotting paper from having absorbed moisture from the adjacent basin. In some places the ground was dry, but it was then as soft and powdery as flour. Of hard rock there was of course not a trace to be seen: it was all material in the conceivably finest state of division, amongst which it was impossible to discover the very smallest chip of rock. Had heavy rain chanced to fall just then, this region would certainly have been absolutely and entirely impassable.