

CHAPTER IX.

FROM MT ERENAK-TSCHIMO TO MT SCHA-GANDSCHUM.

October 4th. We had no alternative except to follow the only practicable route towards the west, namely the same route that Littledale travelled by, and even that was difficult enough for our camels. I myself however made an excursion up the slopes of the mountain which Littledale mistakenly supposed to be a volcano. On the way up I observed, first some bosses of red conglomerate and sandstone, as well as two large watercourses, both containing tiny brooks fed by springs. On the bank of the second stands an *obo* of *mane* slabs, probably intended to proclaim the fact that the mountain is regarded as holy. Just above it a pointed rocky crag rises directly out of the ground and west of it stood a tent, though we perceived no human beings about it. I dare say they had purposely hidden themselves or had been commanded by our escort to disappear, so as to avoid supplying us with a guide who might show us a more southerly road. But from what we subsequently saw of the country in that direction, the more northerly route that we adopted was in point of fact the most convenient. Perhaps however the sanctity of the mountain may have been considered sufficiently great to keep Europeans at a distance from it.

Leaving the *obo* we rode south-west up a side-ravine, which, like so many of its neighbours in the flanks of the mountain, unites with the more distant of the two glens down which the rivulets were flowing. This one came from the west-north-west, and turned to the south-east, and south-south-east, evidently with the intention of emptying into some marsh or lake in the big arena-like plain. From the very first the ascent up the ravine was very steep, in fact we were able to keep to our horses for only about two hundred meters up. The ravine appeared to terminate at an abrupt precipitous wall, where the hard rock cropped out as a bare and naked wall. After leaving our horses in a fissure of the rock, we continued the ascent on foot; but we were not able to take many consecutive steps at once owing to the great altitude, for we were considerably above 5000 m. We were unable to reach the foot of the precipice, where a vast avalanche of stones would seem to have fallen some time or other. On the way up we observed hard rock in certain places. From the point where we stopped, we obtained a magnificent view of all the region we had travelled through ever since leaving Dagtse-tso. The