

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DESCENDING FROM THE HIGH PLATEAU.

November 20th. To reach Camp CXXXII we had to march 21 km. towards the N.  $72^{\circ}$  W. across an easy country with a gentle slope. The wind was not strong, but bitterly cold, and after 1 p.m. the sky was almost entirely covered with clouds, especially in the west, where they were massed together and looked as if they might easily contain snow, yet none fell. As a general rule, snow does fall at that season, but according to the Tibetans, that winter was somewhat of an exception. The absence of the sun in no way intensified the cold, rather the contrary: for the sun is perfectly powerless against the wind.

After striking camp, we proceeded first towards the north, down the bush-grown watercourse, though the vegetation soon died away. After that we doubled the eastern extremity of the moderate-sized butte and swung away towards the north-west. A larger watercourse runs in the same direction, and upon it all the others in the locality converge. On the left we passed a broad glen, which comes out immediately west of the detached bluff, its water-channel skirting the western side. Up through this glen we obtained an instructive view as far as the main chain of the southern snowy range, with its many spurs and offshoots, and many glens ensconced between them. There was no great quantity of snow, in some places only streaks and patches in the more sheltered localities: in the morning, before the sky became clouded, these glistened like wet white colours. The range which we then had on our right is quite imposing; and the transverse glens which come out of it terminate in radiating screes. The nearest range on the left is quite insignificant; close along its base runs the watercourse that, issuing out of the southern side-glen, constitutes the principal drainage artery of the latitudinal valley, for it picks up and absorbs the channel of the latitudinal valley which we crossed over just north of the detached mountain. It is also joined by several watercourses from the mountains on the north. This main channel we followed towards the north-west and west-north-west. The valley thereupon contracts a little, and the watercourse crosses it diagonally; the northern range grows lower and lower, and finally terminates in a rocky promontory. On the north of it opens a fresh important latitudinal valley, which effects a junction with that in which we