

peripheral characteristics are less accentuated; but from Schejok onwards it has to flow, like the Indus (into which it empties), parallel to the chains which run from south-east to north-west. It is in this way that the sharp curve in question has arisen, compelling us to sweep round in a half circle.

At the same time the valley contracts and its bottom becomes filled with detritus. Twice more we had to ford the stream, namely in a little sharp bend, owing to the current there hugging closely the precipice on the right side. In the summer this spot is impassable, as indeed the English map warns us; the bottom of the valley will be then completely filled with water in the narrower parts. We travelled next along the right bank, keeping close to the tumultuous stream. In sheltered places we found balghun bushes growing in great numbers. On the other hand grazing was scarce, though during the latter part of the day kamisch made its appearance, especially in those localities in which the balghun bushes were growing luxuriantly. The mountains on the right descended almost precipitously to the bottom of the valley, and there were signs showing unmistakably that when in flood the river, or at all events a branch of it, reaches close to the base of the cliffs. The bed of the stream is not seldom full of holes, which contain water, then however partly frozen; whereas on the river was there no ice. At these spots the bed consisted of sand, former sand-banks which have become bound together by bushes. The region was absolutely lifeless; we did not perceive a solitary sign of animal existence.

One of these expansions of the valley, with sandy ground, bushes, and kamisch, is known as Tschong-jangal or the Big Vegetative Tract. The Tibetan name of this place is Rangsa-dunmo, and its altitude above sea-level is 3757 m.

April 14th. In the morning the sky was heavy with clouds, and all day the light was diffused, so that all the lights and shades were toned down and the relief features were indistinct. A fresh breeze was blowing from the south, bringing with it fine drifting dust, which covered everything, making both faces and clothes grey. Nevertheless it was a mild and pleasant day; we could not complain of being too cold nor yet of being too warm, as we had recently been when crossing the Tschang-la.

We then travelled due north, the glen running for some distance inconceivably straight, so that it became lost in the blurr that obscured the distant horizon. This made the scenery monotonous, for we missed the variations that are associated with a winding glen and bold rocky buttresses and headlands. All along this stretch the breadth remained fairly constant at 200 to 300 m. Of the total area of the flat and level glen floor only a relatively small portion is occupied by the river; but its dry watercourses and the sharpness of their margins convey some idea of the enormous masses of water which pour down the glen of Schejok in summer on their way to the Indus. In fact, the road by which we were then travelling becomes impassable in the end of April. In Leh and Drugub we had been warned not to put off our start too long, and we were told that, if the weather continued to be warm and bright, the floods would begin to come down about the 20th April, and after that the river would be too swollen to admit of being forded. The volume which we encountered on the 14th April was as much as ever people on foot could get through, though it occasioned no inconvenience to mounted men.