

ever quite crisply, but came in gusts from every conceivable quarter. Hitherto on our way up to this lofty pass we had been favoured with the very best weather possible; all the same we approached it with a feeling of respect. The actual saddle of Kara-korum is in one regard different from other passes that we had hitherto become acquainted with, in that the acclivity leading up to it stretches over such an extent of country that the rise is quite insignificant. We climbed up to the higher regions step by step, each successive camp all the way from Schejok being one step higher than its predecessor, and we had now reached such an altitude, that there could not be very much of a climb left to the summit of the actual pass. Curiously enough, I felt no inconvenience whatever from the stupendous altitude at which we were moving. I was able to sleep and eat and breathe quite normally. The few days that I spent in Leh had provided a seasonable transition from the lowlands of India to these regions 5000 m. above the level of the sea.

The country that we travelled over was especially favourable, the surface consisting for the most part of hard sand, consolidated dust, and in some places gravel. There was again a smaller quantity of snow and we marched for long distances across bare ground. But the snow was still deep in the gullies, water-courses, and hollows, often a meter deep, and was so hard and strong, that usually it would bear the weight of a man, though not of a horse. We felt it cold in consequence of the wind, and it was not possible to keep ourselves warm by walking, for owing to the rarefaction of the atmosphere we soon suffered from shortness of breath. The Ladakis however seemed not to feel it, for they marched along as easily and as unconcerned as if amongst their native mountains.

During the course of the day it became clear that we were travelling along a frequented road, for it was literally strewn with the dead bodies and skeletons of horses. We had indeed come across some the day before, though in far fewer numbers; perhaps this was because they were in great part buried underneath the snow. Now however they became very numerous, and we were constantly passing skulls that lay and grinned at us from the roadside. Only a few of them still retained their skin or portions of the flesh: there were ravens in the neighbourhood and no doubt the opportunity is one that other creatures of prey do not neglect. There were also skeletal parts of asses and camels, though they were far less common. The great accumulation of bones in this particular locality seems to suggest that the caravan animals when coming from Jarkent generally succumb after they have exhausted their strength in surmounting the passes of Sandschu and Kara-korum. Unless they are exceptionally strong, they do not appear able to get any farther than this region. A small portion of the skeletons belonged, it is true, to animals that came from Leh; but, as we have seen, the track on that side is not especially difficult, even though the Tschang-la is always a hard nut to crack. In any case the most difficult and the most sterile part of the entire journey is that which comes north of the pass, not the least cause of this being the rugged character of the Kwen-lun mountain-system.

We next travelled north-east. After crossing over the ice-sheet of Japtschan, we slowly ascended over undulating ground, amongst low mountains of red, soft disintegrated material and relatively so insignificant in height that they were more