

»During the night of the 2nd July some snow fell. . . . We passed through a very barren, sandy country, so much so that it was no surprise to us at not finding the remotest trace of any one ever having been there before. . . . We passed through a sandy, stony country, with low ranges of hills on either hand, and further off another large range running as usual almost east and west.» The 4th July they travelled down a pleasant grass-grown valley.

During the succeeding days they travelled mostly towards the east through the big latitudinal valley; the country was desolate. By this the number of caravan animals had dwindled down to fifteen. Camp 49 was made near a salt lake, elongated as usual from east to west. Farther on we read: »I went on ahead, and so bare was the aspect that it looked as though we should never see any water or green again; everywhere the ground was incrustated with salt; all the nullahs were white with it, and to all appearance we were leaving bad for worse.»

One or two days later they approached »the bed of a salt lake partially dried up.» The animals almost perished in the soft marshy ground. »It is impossible to picture such a barren land as we were in, and it seemed as though there would never be an end to it as long as we pursued our eastern course.» They endeavoured therefore to strike a more northerly route, but only succeeded in finding a fresh salt lake. At last however they did discover grass and water.

At Camp 51 on the 10th July, strange it may sound, Wellby abandoned one or two of his men and a horse, as well as all the provisions they were able to do without. He states that his reason for doing this was, that the men were unable to keep up with him any longer. Farther on his other attendants, except three, ran away from him and were never heard of again. I subsequently found these men in a very reduced and exhausted condition in Tenkar, where they were supporting themselves by begging in the streets. I allowed them to return with the men whom I dismissed in Tenkar, and having procured Chinese passes, they travelled along Chinese routes back to East Turkestan.

After that the country proved somewhat more favourable for the travellers and occasionally they came across water and grazing. On the 13th July they rested beside a couple of small freshwater pools. On the following day one of the mules was very nearly suffocated in the soft ooze around a freshwater lake. Very often they had to cross at right angles over a number of small watercourses (nullahs) streaming down off the mountains to the north or south. Occasionally we read about violent tempests from the north. I also experienced similar storms in northern and eastern Tibet, although they form an exception to the usual wind, which blows from the west. At Camp 56 they found good grazing. The ground was frequently made still softer by the snow that fell. The shores around the lakes in that part of Tibet are at that season of the year, the latter half of July, often very soft. For instance we read, »We halted by a lake whose water tasted very nearly fresh, but the banks were so treacherous that it was a hazardous undertaking to get close to it, and after our precious experience we preferred digging instead. One characteristic trait of the climate of the highlands, a trait which I also observed on several occasions, is that you can often see the storms, with their dense masses of cloud, drifting past you to the north or to the south without their touching you. Wellby, speaking of