

worked hard and shivered much during thirty days or more on a diet of tea and bread, while we had sustaining tins of sausage and pork in various other forms; also dreadful Russian fish. The folded valley in which we saw the yaks contained a bit of grazing, which would have been relished by the ponies, but we had to retreat from its impassable sides and regain the broader desert in which our course had been held. Even here occasional gazelles browsed invisible grass, and invariably flung away, rejoicing, from our long-range shots.

Except for these things, the lakes, the yaks, and the gazelles, yes, and the sunshine, and the solitude and the snow-tops around us, I can think of nothing agreeable in connection with the long valley which stretches across the Aksai Chin. Except for these, life there was but a constant strain of search for water, for fuel of roots or dung, for a bit of grazing, and always for a trail that never was found, because it never had been.

Now, ahead of us the mountains closed the way. They were not ugly heights; we felt that they could be climbed, or a way threaded between them. The portentous question was, which way? We had evidently passed beyond any opening, if it existed, that would lead us by short line to Rudok. Might we not be near Lanak Pass? That is on the map. Several explorers had crossed it. Indeed, Mohammed Joo now took courage and declared that he recognised the black mountain there in front. We microscoped the rumour-made maps more closely than ever and then plunged into the heights which confronted us. Soon we were up again to eighteen