

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LATEST PULSATIONS.

In the following chapters of this volume I will give a description of my own observations round and on the lakes. For the sake of the continuity of the chain, let it be sufficient to say that I found the channel between the lakes dry, except some stagnant pools of water and that I found no superficial water running out of the Rakas-tal. This was in 1907. The Lamas of Chiu-gompa told me the channel had been dry the last 4 years and a Lama of Dölchu-gompa told me the Satlej had been dry since 1863. Such information is, as a rule, very unreliable, as the natives seldom know even their own age. In 1908 the situation was the same, in spite of more rain.

It may be regarded as certain that the post-glacial desiccation is still going on. It proceeds very slowly and the question is not yet settled whether historical data suffice to prove the rate of desiccation. Nobody knows how long it will continue. But it will probably, sooner or later, reach a climax, after which a new wet period may set in with the same slowness. For the cause of the great ice age is still unknown, and a new ice age may set in in a distant future. So long as the desiccation still continues, our lakes must dwindle. But their dwindling is not gradual and regular. There is a second or third order of periods, so that the lakes occasionally rise again.¹

I did not believe that this presumption would prove to be correct, or at least partly correct, so soon as now seems to have been the case. For the first link in the broken chain has lately been joined again and was in function 1909 to 1911.

In the spring of 1911, I wrote to KHAN BAHADUR GULAM RASUL, the great merchant of Leh, who owns the monopoly of the Lopchak mission to Lhasa, and who every year sends caravans between Leh and Lhasa and has a branch at Gartok and Gyanima, — and asked him if he could provide me with some news about the

¹ »Trans-Himalaya», Vol. II, p. 187. With this view I wrote, as quoted above: Tso-mavang may rise so that its water may again flow through the channel to Langak-tso, and this lake at length may discharge its surplus water, as formerly, through the dry bed of the Sutlej.