

CHAPTER XLIX

THE UPPER TSANGPO TO CHÄROK.

The formation of the bed of the Tsangpo between my Camps 188 and 189 is very curious and irregular. This part of the upper course of the river is very level, open and broad, and more like a plain; the current is therefore slow. Eastwards from this tract the valley gets narrower, the relative height of the mountains more considerable, the river more compact and narrow and the current quicker, until the Tsangpo (and its valley) attains its maxima in all these respects on its way through the Himalaya.

Between the two above-mentioned camps we have first to consider the river itself, and then the lake-like expansions formed by one or several of its tributaries from the north.

The Tsangpo has a breadth of no less than 890m., is very shallow and very slow. The water is full of mud, while in the northern lake-like branches it is clear. The river-bed is mud and sand in which one sinks about 1dm. when crossing the river on foot. Along the banks, specially the northern, the river is so shallow that my boat could not be kept floating. The depth was measured at every 10th metre, at 88 places; the greatest depth was 0.74m., the average depth only 0.34m.; the average velocity 0.26m. a second, and the volume 78.67cub.m. a second.

The measurement was carried out on June 28th. On June 20th the river had carried 72cub.m. at Liktsé-gompa. At this distance the river does not seem to receive any tributaries worth mentioning.

Just below the measured line several branches enter from the labyrinth of lakes which still separated us from Camp 189. This is a most extraordinary confusion of water sheets, currents and sand-dunes. To make reliable measurements under such conditions would have been difficult. All I could do was to make measurements at the narrowest places in the six passages through which a current went to the Tsangpo. Except these the road crosses whole lakes in which no current at all could be observed. The dunes separating them from each other are generally 4m. high, more seldom 8 or 9m. Some of them are partly bound by some