

and to the west and N. W. is the greater plain with which it stands in uninterrupted communication. To the N. 37° W. is a very small round or oblong lake, the water of which is salt as can be seen from the broad white ring all around it. It must be extremely shallow as the surrounding ground is quite level. In its N. W. continuation there are two small round patches, now without water, as probably would soon be the case with the first-mentioned lake. To the N. E. there is still another small lake, the outlines of which could not well be discerned. It looked as if it had been divided into two basins, though this may be an effect of the mirage, or of low hills on its shore. At some places on its shore the ground was white with salt. The *Yurung-kash* Mountains of the *Kwen-lun* now appeared a little nearer than on Pan. 21B. Just beyond the last-mentioned lake they were partly hidden by nearer lower hills.

On *September 10th* our route goes 17.5 km. E. N. E., east and E. S. E. The height at *Camp IX* is 4,914, or a fall of only 2 m. since *Camp VIII*. The ground of the plain may, therefore, be regarded as practically level. The day was like a summer day, without clouds and wind. Still the air is not absolutely clear, though it is difficult to tell why. Because of the strong and intense insolation the ground becomes rather hot and above it one sees the fine vibrations of the air like those above a heated boiler. The hot air has a tendency to rise, and perhaps these vertical currents take some of the finest and lightest particles of dust with them. If this be the case the dust, however, does not reach very high into colder layers of the atmosphere, for it is easy to see that the upper parts of the mountains are sharper and clearer in outlines and colour than those near the base. Layers of air of different temperature may also cause the very common mirage. Very often the mountains seem to be reflected as from the surface of a quiet lake, where no lake exists. Parts of the caravan marching at a distance appear double, as if they were marching on the shore of a reflecting lake. The same seems to be the case with kyangs and antelopes, which now are more common. The whole country appears in light, aerial tones. No bright colours are to be seen, except the marine blue lake of *Aksai-chin*, which soon becomes visible to the east, and the limestone hills to the south, which are red. Otherwise the colours are softened and diffused. To the right of our route the limestone hills continue, as steep as before and with more or less projecting spurs. At one of them a curious pillar was standing and looked as if it had been built by men, though it was only a result of weathering and erosion.

To the east the view is free and open as far as the eye reaches. We have entered one of these characteristic longitudinal valleys which I knew so well from regions farther east. This one is remarkable as it is in connection with the more meridional Plain of *Aksai-chin*. It has been visited by Crosby and Anginieur in 1903, and one day's march farther east, by M. A. Stein on his journey in 1906—8.