

On *September 13th* the direction is E. S. E., 14.5 km. to *Camp XII*, where the height is 4,981, or 45 m. above *Camp XI*, *i. e.* a rate of 1:322. The weather again was very unfavourable, and as a rule nearly nothing was to be seen of the mountains on the sides. Clouds and showers of snow and hail were continually driven up the valley. From this point of view as well, the panoramas are important. They complete the map where the view has been hidden, since panoramas are sketched, of course, only at hours when the air is clear.

The ground is now covered with coarse, grey sand. There is still sparse grass at some places, and a plant with a hard, wooden stem, called *jer-baghri*, in Turki, which is excellent as firewood. The hard clay ground is often traversed by narrow cracks and fissures of different appearance. Sometimes they open in the level ground, sometimes they are situated in minimal depressions, or between two small walls. At other places they cross small cupola-shaped upheavals of the ground itself. They had been seen at other places farther west as well. It is difficult to account for their formation. Perhaps they are simply local phenomena of shrinking or dilatation caused by changes of temperature and moisture and desiccation. But they may as well stand in some relation to orogenic agencies still working in these high regions.

Marching eastwards for several days in such a gigantic valley as this, one continually expects to pass a transverse threshold sooner or later, and perhaps without noticing it. This could easily be the case in such weather as now, when nearly nothing is to be seen except the immediate vicinity, and when the ground to the eye seems to be perfectly horizontal. I knew how very low such thresholds were, separating self-contained basins in the great latitudinal valley I had travelled through in 1896 and situated far east, just north of the valley discovered by Wellby and Malcolm, the latter being the eastern continuation of the one I now followed. But it proved that the basin draining to the Lake of *Aksai-chin* was an unusually extensive one, and that we had still a long way to its eastern boundary. A journey along such a longitudinal valley as this, necessarily becomes extremely monotonous, especially in weather where all the details of the surroundings are hidden. One day's march is like the previous, and the only variation is the character of the soil and the appearance of grass and erosion beds. The only interest is in waiting for a transverse threshold, at the eastern side of which a quite new landscape will be seen.

*Camp XII* was pitched at the foot of a rounded mountain spur between two rather large transverse valleys from the northern or *Kwen-lun* side. Here grass, fuel and water were to be had. The water appeared in the form of a spring in a little depression. The living rock at the place consisted of greyish green calcareous sandstone. During the whole day one snowstorm succeeded the other, though the snow did not remain long on the ground which did not even become white. During