

CHAPTER XVI.

LATITUDINAL VALLEYS OF THE CHANG-TANG.

On *January 6th*, our march goes E. S. E. for 16.4 km. The way to the pass is 8.8 km. and the rise 228 m., or as 1:39; from the pass to the next camp the ground falls 340 m. or from 5,488 m. to 5,148 m., a fall of 340 m. and a rate of 1:22.4. This pass had, therefore, nearly the same altitude as the previous one, the difference, according to my instruments, being only 3 m. These figures show that the floor of this part of the extensive latitudinal valley is rather undulated and that it has not yet assumed the great evenness which we had found farther east on the *Chang-tang* proper. On both sides of the pass and at *Camp CCXCVIII*, the rocks consisted of greyish white dense limestone. The minimum temperature was -33.4° . As seemed to be the rule at this season, the day began with eastern wind, which gradually went over to S. W. and continued during the night.

We cross the basin diagonally to the E. S. E., also several beds and dry water-courses, all converging in the direction of the comparatively broad, transverse valley, which pierces the northern moderate hills of comparatively rounded forms. In its background, a smaller snow-covered ridge is seen, belonging to the *Kwen-lun* System, the principal ranges of which are not visible. The sources of the small watercourses are situated at a few kilometers' distance, among the wild southern mountains sketched on the last-mentioned panorama. Farther on, the limestone rocks to our right show extraordinary formations, standing in long rows of nearly perpendicular screens, being broad when looked at from the side, but like needles when seen in a foreshortened perspective. Between these picturesque red and yellowish rocks, we enter the valley coming from the pass. As we proceed, it becomes narrower and steeper. Its floor is gravel; the ground is covered with snow.

From the height of the pass the landscape to the east looked favourable. The valley going down to the E. S. E., opens out into a plain from which there seemed to be easy passages, both to the E. N. E. and S. E. To begin with, the fall is steep and the slopes full of sharp-edged gravel, but lower down, the rate is gradual and the gravel fine. We cross the plain where the ground is perfectly even to the eye.