

CHAPTER XVII.

ARPORT-TSO AND SHEMEN-TSO.

On *January 26th*, we continue to the S. E. for 14.6 km. descending 39 m. or to the altitude of *Arport-tso*, which is at 5,298 m.¹; the rate is, therefore, as 1:374. The minimum temperature was -22.2° . In the night it had snowed and the country was white again. The clouds were very dense and the S. W. wind increased in force in the course of the day. Comparing our experiences from the previous year, we had found that the W. S. W. and S. W. wind is a very characteristic feature of the winter in Tibet, and that calm days are exceptionally rare. Cloudy days are numerous, and it snows sometimes, though seldom much. To us the snow was a blessing, without which we would have had difficulties with the water question. It is hard work to make a map of a country at a temperature of -15.5° and a strong wind. The shortcomings of my winter maps will be understood if we remember the great difficulties under which they have been made.

We cross the latitudinal valley diagonally. The soil consists of reddish brown, fine gravel and sand. The *yapchan* plants are abundant everywhere and there are rabbits' holes by the millions. It would be impossible to tell in which direction the ground slopes, if we did not soon behold the surface of a very irregular lake which was recognized as the *Arport-tso*. Some shallow watercourses go down to its shore. We direct our course between the western shore and a red promontory standing there. The whole lake is frozen over and covered with snow, which is driven in clouds across the crystal-clear ice. To the S. E. there is a bay or inlet of the lake, on both sides of which capes and promontories fall, sometimes rather steeply, to the shore. In the prolongation of this bay, the yellow colour betrays the existence of grass on the plain which extends to the foot of the southern mountains. The latter seem to be ramifications from the high range sketched the day before, or, at any rate, to be in connection with its eastern continuation. On the eastern shore, some dark rocks form small peninsulas. The lake was oblong from north to south, and

¹ According to Rawling its height is 5,335 m.