

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SURROUNDINGS OF TONGKA-TSO.

On *March 10th*, we covered 14.7 km. S. S. W. In this direction the valley of the *Nagrong* brook fell only 16 m. or to 4,628 m. at *Camp CCCL*, being a rate of only 1:919. The minimum temperature had been at -19.7° , and the morning was perfectly clear and calm. We marched on the flat undulations on the right or western bank of the brook, pierced by several ravines and beds containing some snow. From here we now saw on the top of the little hill of *Camp CCCXLIX*, the two fine white *chortens* and two or three *manis*. On our way from the camp, we passed an extensive ice-sheet from a spring with some open water. Around it were several remains of camps, and such were seen at many other points in the valley, probably the encampments of the nomads coming to the fair.

The wind was blowing harder and at 11 o'clock a. m., the storm was again at its height. It is difficult to describe the gale that now began. We marched nearly S. W. and had the gale straight in the face. The ground descended in our direction, but, walking on foot, one had a feeling of going in three feet of water. The landscape that in the morning had been perfectly clear and sharp in the sunshine, was now completely effaced to our eyes. First dark yellowish red clouds of dust and sand were seen to the S. W., rolling, as it were, along the ground and gradually rising higher and higher and coming nearer and nearer. The sun disappeared completely, and the dust and sand clouds reached the zenith. All the surroundings disappeared. Only the very nearest patch of the ground was visible. But it soon became worse. We crossed the bed of the *Nagrong* brook, and approached the left or eastern side of the valley. Here the ground consisted of soft wind-driven sand which occasionally was arranged into small dunes, so low that it allowed the blades of grass to peep through. Here the whole ground seemed to move at an acute angle to our course. One's head turned giddy, and one had a feeling of suffocating. The pony refused to go on straight in the face of the sand storm. From time to time one has to stop and turn one's back to the wind. Half dead, one