

concerning the country by any member of the caravan except Leno.

Pike's reconnaissance revealed the unpleasant fact that for many miles there was not a trace of vegetation, and in all probability water would not be met with in the very open country east of Camp 20. Our animals were now in such wretched condition that we would most likely have lost many of them in trying to penetrate through this unknown, barren, and waterless country, so we reluctantly decided to go back one march and seek a feasible route in the direction we had previously thought of attempting. To people who have not travelled in Tibet or other countries where an equally clear atmosphere prevails, it is very hard to believe that, after a little experience, one can discern vegetation at a great distance. With the help of good field glasses it is possible, when on a commanding situation, to be almost certain of the presence or absence of vegetation, which in this part of Tibet takes only the form of grass or boortza, at a distance of about twenty miles, and, under very favourable conditions, nearly twenty-five miles.

At the foot of the range south of Camp 19 several very dark spots were noticed, which on closer examination proved to be the outlets of some evil-smelling gas, probably sulphuretted hydrogen. So powerful was the odour that in some instances our nasal organs were the first to inform us of the existence of these natural outlets, close to which the dead bodies of some insects, and I think one or two birds, bore testimony to the poisonous nature of the gas. Though the return march to Camp 19 was only about ten miles, Ramzan pleaded excess of work for the caravan men as an excuse for not sending out for an antelope which Utam Singh had shot near camp, but which he had not handled as he was a Hindu.

The caravan men were, in fact, so well fed without any