

breaks through. The river had cut its bed too deep to be visible; but the valleys of all its tributaries on this, its middle course, lay before us in perfect clearness. The march down the valley was delightfully easy. Its almost flat bottom, about three miles broad, was covered with plentiful coarse grass, and its slope was so gentle that, when after eight miles or so we pitched camp in a little amphitheatre of rich meadow-land at the foot of the range northward, the aneroid still showed an elevation of over 12,100 feet. Ever since crossing the watershed we had seen many wild yaks grazing in the ravines just below the snow-beds. Now we had good reason to feel grateful for the relics left lower down of their presence at other seasons; for the only fuel to be found was their dung which abounded about our camping-ground.

The following day, August 7th, we crossed the To-lai-shan range. I was anxious to make the passage as far west as possible, and consequently felt much pleased when the only man of our escort who had ever been so far in the mountains confessed to knowing a pass approached from a point farther down. He called it Huo-ning-to. Grateful as I felt for the chance it eventually gave of completing the survey towards the Pei-ta Ho without descending the valley farther, yet I should have hesitated in taking this track had I guessed its difficulties. We had scarcely left the down-like slopes of the main valley and ascended for about a mile over steep grassy meadows, when there came a succession of scrambles, most trying for the laden animals along rugged cliffs where the ravine debouched from the pass. It would have been a good day's work for a sapper company to turn this mile of rock ladders into a safe bridle-path. In the stream bed itself huge boulders blocked the way. A series of terraces, high above the stream on the left bank and covered with luxuriant Alpine pasture, afforded a brief respite to the animals. Then the ravine contracted again, and we had to ascend by a breakneck track at its bottom. At last after a mile and a half's ascent in the boulder-filled bed, and then over precipitous shingle, we reached the bare detritus slope at the head of the little valley.