

eventually attempting something desperate. With the food-supply running short there was time neither for rest nor for a needful reconnaissance.

So by noon we set out to ascend the valley at the head of which I hoped to find a practicable pass. But what if my professed assurance failed to be realized? Well, serious trouble would follow, and I prepared the Surveyor and Chiang for it. For a mile or so there was a well-marked track along the stream. But this disappeared where the grassy slopes ceased on the left bank. We continued in the broad stony river bed for three miles more, but found ourselves stopped where this contracted to a narrow rock chasm only about four or five feet broad, in which it was quite impossible to advance with the ponies. With great trouble we managed to drag them up a precipitous rock spur on the west, and to ascend in the detritus-filled gorge. The barren slopes above and the low-hanging clouds made up a very sombre picture.

At last we gained a saddle whence we viewed an easier slope with a small glacier at its back. The gorge still continued very narrow, and my relief was intense when on reaching the actual watershed, some 14,600 feet above sea-level, I found that the glacier kept just clear of the pass; though descending some 500 feet lower, it left us a steep but relatively easy slope to descend by on its side. Near its snout we caught sight of a wide green valley northward which could only be that of the Kan-chou River. Then the gorge widened, luxuriant grass appeared on its lower slopes, and at last, at an elevation of about 12,500 feet, we could pitch camp on a delightful Alpine meadow with abundant scrub to yield fuel. The sky, too, cleared in the evening, and even our Chinese pony-men showed signs of reviving hope.

Our march on August 18th down the Kan-chou River valley justified this good augury, and men and animals, now refreshed, found the ground doubly easy. Where the alluvial fan from our side valley merged in the broad riverine flat a large herd of wild asses was skilfully stalked by three men of the escort, who managed to bag one of