

## CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE CONFLUENCE OF THE AK-SU-DARJA  
TO INTSCHKÄ.

October 29th. During 35 hours the level rose another 2 cm. Twelve or fifteen days later, when the overflow from the irrigation channels should have reached the river, it was expected that it would begin to rise at a more rapid rate. At 7 a. m. the transparency was 12.2 cm., and at 1 p. m. 14.6 cm. The arm which cuts its way through the vast alluvial deposits has a double mouth, the two embouchures being parted by an island. After the narrow and relatively insignificant Jarkent-darja, the united stream makes quite an imposing flood. The woods are far off; the banks nearest to the river clothed with steppe and scrub. Generally speaking, only about one-quarter of the river-bed is occupied by the current. During the day the stream described one huge bend, and a couple of minor sinuosities. The velocity was rather unequal, very swift at first, though afterwards it diminished a little. Between it and the sluggish flow of the Jarkent-darja there was a very striking difference. Although the containing banks were, as a rule, not more than 1 m. high, they rose occasionally to as much as 3 m. The summer flood had been 1.3 m. above the level of that date (29th Oct.). The depth was even less than in the Jarkent-darja, and owing to the muddiness of the water our ferry-boat frequently ran aground upon the mud-banks. The first clump of poplars we came to on the left bank was called Top-toghrak, the current sweeping in close under its foot. Here, at Chotan-kemisi, the river is crossed by the trade-route between Chotan and Ak-su, that is to say, by the right branch of it, which then proceeds up the right bank of the Ak-su-darja to Matan. Meanwhile the left-hand branch, after crossing the Jarkent-darja, ascends the left bank of the Ak-su-darja to Avat. The former is the road habitually taken by the caravans, the ferry-boat at Chotan-kemisi (the Chotan Ferry) being big enough to transport six camels across at once. Formerly the big river was joined at this place by a branch of the Chotan-darja, a branch which as late as the time of Jakub Bek, or in the seventies, still carried a little water, though it is now dry and sanded up. The natives are of opinion, that this branch was once the main stream of the Chotan-darja, and that, like all the rivers of East Turkestan, it has since shifted its course to the right. In 1895 my route lay along a portion of this dry branch.