

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RETURN JOURNEY FROM ARGHAN TO JANGI-KÖL.

In this chapter I shall relate the incidents of our return from Arghan to Jangi-köl. I prefer to pursue here the course of actual travel, and mention all the geographical names and detailed facts which were successively noted down, and then afterwards (see vol. II) take a general survey of the whole of these intricate and involved waterways. But it would be impossible to follow either my narrative or my reasoning without the map which I laid down during my different expeditions, and which, after being properly worked out, is reproduced in the accompanying atlas. Possibly it may occur to some, that I have entered too much into minute detail, and that it is impossible to see the wood for the trees; but I am persuaded it is important to have these minute data put on record, so that in the future comparisons may be made and conclusions drawn from them.

On 19th February I left Arghan, and pursuing a route that was absolutely unknown, proceeded west, north-west, and north through kamisch steppes, through forest, across what were formerly extensive lake-basins. Having crossed the Tschivilik arm, we followed first its eastern branch, known as the Jemischek-kok-ala (see p. 192 and 193), crossed over this, and then kept on between it and the western branch, which is known under the names of the Jätim-tarim and the Kok-ala. At first the two branches flow quite close together, though afterwards they gradually diverge. At Tschaptschimal there are old, but sound, poplars, and plenty of dead timber. To the south-west we saw the forest which accompanies the Tarim, and beyond it in faint outline the high sand. Then the track turns back to the Jemischek, striking it at a point where it was for a short distance open, and where the water, clear and of a blackish green colour, issued foaming, with considerable velocity, from underneath the ice. After that we crossed by turns kamisch-fields and forest, this last ancient, overgrown, and tangled, with thick, short tree-trunks; and yet it did not look to be so old as the forest beside the Tschertschen-darja. Dead trees and others blown over by the wind, and often matted together in dense thickets, were quite numerous. Shortly after that we grazed an eastward loop of the Jätim-tarim. On the right of the track, though not visible from it, lies the little lake of Sopus-dughan-köli. The next district is Tala-tschorok; and at Tschartma-kotan there is a hut. In the high-water season the extensive and open kamisch-fields of this region are said