

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE DESERTS OF ORDOS, KUM-TAGH, KASCHGARIA, AND AK-BEL-KUM.

In the preceding chapters I have frequently had occasion to dwell upon the extension of the drift-sand and the sandy deserts in that part of Central Asia upon which our attention has been hitherto fixed, and I have endeavoured to convey some idea of the eternal warfare that is waged between the sand and the running water. It would, I am sure, be very interesting to compare and contrast critically the observations I have made with those recorded by other travellers in other drift-sand regions in the interior of the continent; but on the other hand such an investigation hardly falls within the scope of the task I have set myself in the present work, a task that is in itself sufficiently exacting without my deviating into side-paths, however tempting. The proper place for a comparative monograph of that character would be a handbook on the physical geography of Asia. As for my own observations, I must content myself with referring to the descriptions I have already given in the course of the present work, and to the account which follows of my journey across the Desert of Gobi between the Kara-koschun and Sa-tscheo, as well as to my previous treatise in *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, Ergänzft. No. 131, pp. 218—268.

However, with the view of showing that the part of the Desert of Takla-makan which I have called the Desert of Tschertschen is in respect of structure and relief quite unique, at any rate amongst the sandy deserts of Central Asia, I will here interpolate certain observations which other travellers, especially Russian travellers, have made about that part of the world. I have no intention of offering a complete survey of all that these travellers have written about the sandy deserts through which they have travelled. All I shall do will be to make a hurried selection from amongst the material at my disposal, and I will then close this section of the work with a brief comparison between the Takla-makan and other sandy deserts in those parts of Asia which will admit of comparison with it. And I may all the more readily do this because Potanin, in the account of his 1884—86 journey, has given a valuable and instructive survey of the distribution of the deserts of Asia. Accordingly I venture to begin with a quotation from his book. —