

## CHAPTER V.

### CROSSING THE ARKA-TAGH.

August 1st. It took us a whole day to get across the next mountain-range, a parallel range of the Arka-tagh system. It was not until we reached the top of some of the secondary passes by which we crossed it that we were able to distinguish the main range of the system. We encamped beside the dry torrent I have spoken of, and in the morning it contained a tiny rivulet, which, originating after rain or the melting of the snow, had by this got down so far. After starting again we passed several similar rivulets issuing from springs, as for instance in the first small side-glen from the south. This we followed until it brought us to a secondary pass. On the other side we descended into a larger side-glen, which likewise joined the main glen; by this last we ascended. My guides had now reached the limit of their topographical knowledge, nor had any of my attendants ever penetrated farther south than this. Consequently we had henceforward to find our way as best we could.

The glen we now essayed likewise led up to a secondary pass, and immediately to the east of it was yet another, the highest we noticed during the course of the day. From this last pass a glen goes down due east, gradually widening as it proceeds, until at the distance of about 4 or 5 kilometers it joins a broad main valley, which gleamed grey against the foot of a mountain-ridge. Whether this main valley is identical with that in which we pitched Camp No. XVIII, or is different from it, I was unable to ascertain. If it is a different valley, then it runs north, gathering torrents from both sides, pierces the chain we were just about to cross, and probably disappears under the drift-sand, giving rise to the springs of Kum-köl. The sand protects the water against evaporation, so that a greater proportion of it reaches the depression than otherwise would do so. On the Kum-köl sheet of the accompanying atlas we ought to have entered this valley as an independent system east of the Pitelik-darja. It would be very interesting to make a thorough exploration of this region as far as Schapka Monomacha and the springs of Tschulak-akkan.

From the same pass another side-glen goes down towards the north-east, it too being no doubt destined to join the main valley. To have followed either of these side-glens would have served no purpose. I was afraid I might lose myself amongst these deceitful foot-hills, as I did in 1896, when I went up and down a great number