

CHAPTER XIV.

THE AJAGH-KUM-KÖL AND THENCE TO PASCHALIK-SAJ.

On 18th November we paddled diagonally across the lake, steering S. 53° W. from Camp LXXXIII, towards a small glen in a low range of hills that stood a considerable distance back from the lake. The breadth of the lake along the line we steered was 19,9 km. During the first half of the journey we came into contact with an ice-field, which reached unbroken all the way to the southern shore, to which it was fastened. The whole of the eastern part of the lake was covered with similar ice. Where we came into contact with it, the ice was at the most 1 cm. thick, though generally less; while sometimes it consisted simply of small pieces piled one upon the other, making a soft ice-slush, which moved as the breakers moved. Prschevalskij called this lake Nesamorsajuschtscheje or the Non-Freezing. In the light of my own experience this name is not quite appropriate. At its eastern end the lake is entered by the river Kum-köl-darja, which issues out of the Bash-kum-köl, bringing with it the spring-water with which this last is fed. The fresh water spread itself out in a thin sheet over the salt water of the Ajagh-kum-köl and froze, the freezing being no doubt facilitated by the drift-ice, which probably just at this season travels by the Kum-köl-darja into a lower lake. When the wind is in the east, this ice will be carried a pretty long way out into the lake, and so will render easier the freezing of the fresh surface-water between the separate ice-fields. At that time the water out in the middle of the lake had a temperature somewhat under 0, namely — 0.3, while the water at the bottom, at a depth of 14 m., was $\pm 0^{\circ}$. It may be accepted as pretty certain, that the eastern part of the lake freezes every winter, provided the weather is not too stormy; when it is, the ice is broken up time after time and driven back towards the mouth of the river by the usual westerly winds. The outside edges of the ice-field that we now struck against broke readily under blows from our paddles, but towards the southern shore the ice grew thicker. Generally the entire field will no doubt during the course of the winter increase sufficiently in thickness to withstand the westerly gales and the heavy »seas» they produce, as they drive from end to end right across the lake. My boatman, Tokta Ahun, declared, that he had heard hunters say, that later on in winter the entire lake becomes frozen over; and his own opinion was, that it only needs a couple of days' wind from the east, followed by calm weather and severe cold, for that result to