

CHAPTER XXV.

FROM THE KUM-KOL OVER THE ARKA-TAGH.

May 30th. We crossed south-eastwards over the wide space between our watercourse and that which proceeds from the Toghri-saj, being at the same time the main stream of the latitudinal valley. The ground was barren, and hard, consisting of coarse sand, furrowed at intervals by small rivulets. The watercourse of Toghri-saj comes from the S. 22° W., and proceeds onwards towards the N. 40° E., and gives every indication of carrying sometimes a considerable flood; though at this time its volume was only about 5 cub.m. in the second, and that was split up into a number of brown muddy arms distributed over its broad, shallow bed. This last is nevertheless contained within sharply defined terraces. In the east-north-east we saw the little foothills that rise at Ghischa, the place where the latitudinal valley contracts to its narrowest; though it also narrows towards Kosak-kakti in the west.

From the bottom of the latitudinal valley we slowly ascended by a transverse glen in the Piaslik range, the next glen on the east to the important breach of Toghri-saj, with which we became acquainted the preceding autumn. The grazing here was very scanty, and water also was wanting, while the quantity of snow was exceedingly small, only the loftier parts of the mountains being white. We pitched Camp X at a spot where jampak was growing, at an altitude of 4078 m.; thus we were at exactly the same altitude as the pass of the preceding day. The rocks consisted of a hard, fine-grained green schist, much folded, and of quartzite. On the whole however the mountains exhibit rounded outlines, and are built up of loose disintegrated material. The mountain scenery had therefore assumed an entirely different character. In the Astin-tagh, in the transverse glen of the Tscharklik-su, the scenery was characterised by wild, fantastic cliffs, bare hard rock, with a pronounced vertical relief. Here however it had assumed the aspect of the common Tibetan type, namely rounded outlines, long rolling undulations, slight vertical differences, a preponderance of soft disintegrated material, and but very little hard rock. Wild yaks and orongo antelopes now began to make their appearance, but apart from them hares and ravens only. It blew pretty crisply from both east and west, the sky was for the most part clouded, and sometimes snow fell, with a little hail.