

CHAPTER XXX.

ACROSS THE SATSCHU-TSANGPO AND BACK AGAIN.

Camp XLIV was for a time an important point in our journey, in that I selected it as the base from which to make an attempt to penetrate as far south as possible, as far as Lhasa if it could be done. The story of that attempt I have written in my more popular book, and accordingly I need not dwell upon it further here. All I will now say is, that the journey was carried out under exceptionally difficult circumstances: in addition to the hindrances placed in our way by the ground and the weather, we had also to keep a perpetual watch against men, for sooner or later, judging by the difficulties that other travellers had encountered who had attempted to penetrate to Lhasa, we knew we should be forcibly turned back. The circumstance that, during the nine days I travelled towards the south-east, I travelled in disguise, and was obliged to preserve my incognito, interfered to a great extent with the geographical and topographical results of the journey. In point of accuracy and general value the observations which I made during this excursion cannot therefore be compared with the results obtained under normal circumstances. And this is more especially true of the tracts inhabited by the nomads, where the taking of observations would infallibly have aroused their suspicion and guided it in the right direction. In consequence of this my notes were brief, and were only jotted down under conditions of the utmost secrecy. But as they fill up, however imperfectly, a gap in our knowledge of the country, I will reproduce them here. It is only during the last few days of this trip that my route coincides in part with Bonvalot's, but my sketch-map is more detailed than his. By way of instruments I took only such as were absolutely indispensable, and such as could easily be concealed — watch, compass, aneroids, thermometers, and writing-materials.

We started on 27th July, travelling down the narrow, winding glen, between the steep, abrupt hills that shut it in. By that the river had swollen considerably in volume. It keeps for the most part to one inclusive channel, with steep terraced banks, which at the bends especially become high and vertical; though lower down in various expansions of the glen the river is divided into several arms. Soon after starting, we forded the stream nine times, and then kept for some distance to the slopes on its left side, though this compelled us to cross over several deeply trenched