

CHAPTER XXVI.

FROM THE SUGET-DAVAN TO JARKENT.

On the 27th April we again had brilliant sunshine, and it was with a feeling of pleasurable relief that we approached a less rarefied atmosphere and a more hospitable climate, more plentiful vegetation, and inhabited districts. Although rather narrow, our glen grew increasingly better defined: on the left it has vertical or precipitous walls of rock, while towards the opposite side it is occupied with gravel-and-shingle detritus and fragments of granite, with here and there a terrace-like platform. The snow, which had vanished so rapidly below the pass, now increased again in quantity; but this was for the most part accounted for by the glens inclining towards the north-east and east-north-east and so lying deeper in the shade. From the left debouches the side-glen of Suget-rongo, and there we found a spring. Shortly after that a rivulet made its appearance, and the bottom of the glen was for a considerable distance filled with continuous sheets of ice. The snow lay decimeters deep on the ice, though the gravelly portions of the glen-bottom were quite free from it. Next came, on the right, the side-glen of Suget-aghsi, and in an elbow below it quite dense thickets of balghun bushes were growing amongst the ice-sheets, and under the latter we heard the water rippling. Nevertheless the track is rough in consequence of the masses of stones of all sizes that are intermingled with the gravel. Grass now began to make its appearance.

At length the glen widened out and we approached Suget-karaul, a small square fortified wall, of which a couple of Kirgis were in charge. The fort stands on tolerably level ground between the Suget brook, which hugs closely the cliffs on its left all the way, and the large Kara-kasch-darja, which issues just there. In the evening the Kirgis bek of the district arrived to inquire what number of baggage animals we needed, as also to gather materials for a report about us to the amban of Jarkent. He was amazed at our having been able to cross over the pass at that season, and told me, he did not remember that it had ever been done before. In his opinion the pass would then be for some time closed, until the sun was ready to begin its spring work in earnest. At the next camp we left our Ladakis; but they would have to wait two or three weeks until the climb over the pass became easier. Under ordinary circumstances most snow is said to fall in the beginning of