

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW CROSSING OF THE KARA-KORUM SYSTEM.

So far as to a point situated 17 km. W. N. W. of *Camp CCLXXX*, I had followed the famous caravan road of the *Kara-korum* Pass, the same one that I had used on my return journey from India in 1902. Thus leaving the road of the *Saser Pass* to our left and the valley of the *Shayok* River with the *Kumdan* Glaciers, situated at a short distance to the N. W., we entered, on *December 17th* 1907, a little side valley coming from the N. E., obviously the one in which the so called *Murgho* road passes, which is used at periods when the common, more western, road is closed by the *Kumdan* Glaciers. This tributary valley to the *Shayok*, joining the latter from the left side, is very curious. It is a narrow gorge, bounded by steep, sometimes perpendicular, rock walls, and winding in all directions. Its whole floor, from one side to the other, was now filled with compact ice, sometimes transparent like glass, sometimes white like milk. Only occasionally there is a little stripe of coarse sand or gravel at the sides which has not been reached by the ice. The fall of this valley is so gradual, that the ice-sheet seems to be nearly horizontal. Only at one single place, open water was seen. The cold was severe after being -24.6° in the night, and everything was frozen. Finally we enter a little side valley from the left, also filled with ice. On the slope at its right side, where the region is called *Long*, we had our *Camp CCLXXXI* alongside of a caravan from *Yarkand*. Here the height was 4,663 m.

On *December 18th*, we marched 11.3 km., E. S. E. To begin with, we have to cross a little flat threshold, east of which there is a pool. The road to *Yarkand* is clearly visible nearly everywhere, and even if it were not, it would betray its existence by the 63 dead ponies, most of them fresh, which we passed in the course of the day. North of the road is a wild red rocky ridge with cliffs and peaks and stripes of snow. E. S. E. of the pool, is a second flat threshold 4,731 m. high and called *Chong-tash* or »The Big Stone». To the south is a more rounded and less rocky dark range. On its northern slopes, there was a good deal of snow. From the second threshold, a narrow, dry watercourse, between terraces, goes down to the