

## CHAPTER III.

## BACK TO PEKING.

WE now turned our faces homewards. We had reached the limit of our journey, and now had to hurry back to the coast at Newchwang. Mr. James went by a short cut to Kirin, while Fulford and I, with the carts, travelled round by Ninguta to meet a man whom we expected with letters. On November 11 we left Hunchun, and now winter had regularly set in. The thermometer was at zero or a degree or two above or below it, and snow was beginning to fall. At Ninguta we found the river, which we had three weeks before crossed in a ferry, and which was about one hundred and fifty yards broad and with a by no means slow current, now frozen over so completely that we could run our heavily laden carts over on the ice. Here at Ninguta we met our man, and at last received letters. We had not received a single batch since we had started on our journey six months before, and, after all the hardships and the frequent *ennui* of travel, the delight of getting in touch again with one's friends and inhaling one soft breath of air from our native land was intense and almost bewildering. It made us forget all the hard part we had gone through; that all seemed a dream now, and just that touch from outside put enough new energy into us to have started us contentedly on another fresh journey if need had been.

Fulford and I met with no incident on our road to Kirin, though we passed the body of a man who had on the previous day been murdered by brigands; and on November 26 we rejoined Mr. James at Kirin. The great Sungari was now