

CHAPTER XI.

A KANJUTI STRONGHOLD.

ON September 30, after a day's rest at Suget Jangal, we resumed our journey down the valley of the Oprang River, and halted that night at a fine patch of grass about a quarter of a mile long, to see which was a welcome relief after the never-ending snow and rocks usually met with. Our next day's march was a very disagreeable one, as a bitter wind, which brought with it clouds of gritty dust, was blowing straight in our faces up the valley. My pony to-day, although he had been left at Suget Jangal while I was exploring the glacier, and although he was a hardy Yarkandi, had now become so weak that three men could not drag him along, and at last he sank down by the way, and as we could not get him up again, I had to shoot him.

We made another march down the valley of the Oprang River, and a very trying one it proved, for we had to cross the river eleven times, and, as it had now become more than waist-deep, and very rapid, running over a bottom covered with boulders, it was at times dangerous work. As I rode the only pony without a load, I used to do the reconnoitring for fords. But even when a place fairly passable had been found, it was hard to keep the ponies straight to it; they would drift away with the current into deep places, and the packs got horribly wet. The crossings were most exciting work, everybody shouting with all his might at the ponies, and throwing stones