

CHAPTER XIII.

TO THE PAMIRS—1890.

THESE explorations, in 1889, had extended on to the edge of the Pamirs, and in the following year I was commissioned to travel round the whole of the Pamir region. At that time, though Russian parties had frequently toured through them, only one Englishman, Mr. Ney Elias, had travelled across the Pamirs since the time of Forsyth's Mission, when Colonel T. E. Gordon led an expedition through the Little and back by the Great Pamir. This was in the time of Yakoob Beg, before the Chinese had re-established themselves in Eastern Turkestan, and since then the state of affairs had very materially altered. The Pamirs form a sort of no-man's-land between the British dependencies on the south, the Russian on the north, the Chinese on the east, and the Afghan on the west. The waves of conquest which surged all round had not yet thoroughly immersed them, and the state of this meeting-place of the three great empires of Asia was, therefore, of interest and importance.

At the end of June, 1890, I left Simla for this remote region. No escort accompanied me, as on my former journey, but I was fortunate enough to have as a companion Mr. George Macartney, a son of Sir Halliday Macartney, the well-known Secretary of the Chinese Legation in London. Mr. Macartney spoke Chinese fluently and accurately, and his services as an interpreter would therefore be of the greatest value. Together we proceeded to Leh, and joined there two other travellers