

CHAPTER XV.

KASHGAR TO INDIA.

“ And o’er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cashmere, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs.”

SHELLEY.

WE left Kashgar on July 22, 1891, Macartney riding out a couple of marches with us, and then returning to Yarkand. We had been together for a year now, and the greater part of the time by ourselves. It does not always follow that two men who have never seen each other in their lives before can get on together for a year at a stretch without a break, and with scarcely a change of society. I felt myself particularly fortunate, therefore, in having for a companion a man who was not only a first-rate Chinese scholar, and extremely tactful in dealing with the Chinese, but who was also even-tempered, and willing to give and take, as travellers have to be. Mr. Macartney has since that time done very valuable service in arranging with the Chinese authorities for the release of slaves from states under the protection of the Government of India, who have been sold into Chinese territory. Many such have now been released, and have returned to their homes in Gilgit, Baltistan, and Chitral, and a good work has been successfully accomplished.