

## CHAPTER VI.

### ACROSS THE GOBI DESERT.

“ But here—above, around, below,  
On mountain or on glen,  
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,  
The weary eye may ken.”

—*Scott.*

THE auspicious day, April 26, having at length arrived, I had reluctantly to say good-bye to my kind and hospitable friends—the last of my countrymen I should see for many a month to come—and take my plunge into the Gobi and the far unknown beyond. We might have been starting on a voyage; all supplies for several weeks were taken, and everything made snug and ready as if going to sea. Ours was a compact little party—the camel-man, who acted as guide, a Mongol assistant, my Chinese “boy,” eight camels, and myself. Chang-san, the interpreter, had gone back to Peking, feeling himself unable to face the