

CHAPTER IX.

THE MUSTAGH PASS.

“The palaces of nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps
And throned eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around those summits, as to show
How earth may reach to heaven, yet leave vain man below.”

—*Byron.*

THE Mustagh Pass, which we were now approaching, is on the main watershed, which both divides the rivers of India from the rivers of Turkestan, and also the British from the Chinese dominions. Peaks along the watershed, in the vicinity of the pass, had been fixed by trigonometrical observations from the Indian side at 24,000, 26,000, and as we have seen in one case at over 28,000 feet in height, so I could scarcely doubt that the pass across the range must be lofty and difficult. It