

CHAPTER X

Departure from Yarkand—Guma—The Takla Makan—Kara Targaz—Waste of water—Ignorance of guides—Lucky return—Punishment of guides—Return to Guma—Journey to Khotan—Khotan—Islam Akun rewarded—Run on the medicine chest—Diseases—Chloroform—Important operation—Departure for Polu—Chaka—Hazy weather—Escaping attention—Entertained by a Mullah—Polu—Stay at Polu—Negotiations with Chinese—Anxiety about Ladakis—Kiria—Delay there—Night march—Sorgak gold mines—Raju very lazy—Kara Sai.

THE weather was now comparatively warm, the temperature in the shade, at 2 p.m. on April 11th, having been 78° F., and I was desirous of getting over the short distance to Posgam before noon. So far as I could make preparation, everything was ready, but travellers in the East are dependent on Orientals in whose promises it is unwise to put implicit trust. The Aksakal had been deputed by the Chow-Kuan to attend to my wants while I was in Yarkand, and from him I had obtained the promise of a marpa, or small cart, which was to be ready at an early hour to convey the tanks as far as Karghalik. The hour came but not the marpa, and it was not till after mid-day that a vehicle could be secured. The driver set a high value on the service which was required, demanding a fare about four times that usually asked. In the bargaining, the Aksakal supported the driver, but the demand being ultimately reduced by about one-half, I agreed to