

CHAPTER XIV

Description of valley—Height of mountains—Return to Nosh Tung—Hiring yaks—The Sargon Pass—Dangerous descent—Pichanyart—Grombchefskey's route—Frozen rivers—Jungle—Shamtagle—Difficulty of observing—The Tugadir Pass—Awful track—Meeting with Pil men—Dangerous corner—Pil—No petroleum—Suspicious about me—Unable to descend the valley—Arrival of supplies—Borrowing more money—Departure from Pil—Chadder Tash—Accident to donkey—"Drop" on track—Anxiety about animals—Slow march—Pilipert.

AS we retraced our steps next day we suffered considerable inconvenience from the vagaries of Jack Frost. The Mariong River, three days before, had been easily fordable at a point where now the water was dammed up by ice. The ponies could not wade across, and, as the water was cold and even frozen over with thin ice, the camels would not do so until force was used. Fortunately, we found, lower down, a ford which, though awkwardly situated, was not impassable. We had to clear a path to it through high jungle; on the up-stream side was a deep hole which seemed to have a strange power of attracting the ponies, while on the down-stream side rocks abounded. The ponies were afraid to attempt the passage, and gave much trouble, especially one, which when half across turned and made direct for the deep hole. I tried to put him right by throwing stones, but, unluckily hitting him on the forehead,