

CHAPTER XVI

My friends the Kirghiz—Rejoining the caravan—Return of Islam—Second Christmas at Zad—Down the Kulan Urgi valley—Tir revisited—Ice still too weak—Excursions from Tir—Cold bivouacs—Frozen rivers—The Kuramut Dawan—Apathy of natives—Guide frost-bitten—Ghosts—Down the Yarkand River—News from Kashgar—Alarm about plague—Annoying natives—Langar—Tashkurghan River—Narrow escape of caravan—Rotten ice—Bridging—Donkeys escape cold bath—Description of valley—Short of money—Bad part of track—Cutting ice-steps for animals—The Kesin Pass—Surveying under difficulties—Evicting animals from house—Unpleasant surroundings—No water—An unexpected meeting—Crossing the Teriart River—Waterproofing my garments—Curious cavities in rocks—Sending news to Kashgar—Task completed—Back to Chumdi—Up the Asgan Sal valley—Robbery by Chinese official—Completion of journey—Return to Yarkand.

AT Issok Bulok Agzi it was necessary to halt for a day that the men might repair their cherooks, which had become quite dilapidated. So lofty and precipitous were the walls of the narrow valley that the winter sun was visible only for about three hours a day, but there was abundance of firewood, and we cheered ourselves with blazing camp-fires. I now obtained a much more satisfactory chronometric value for the longitude of the place than I had formerly been able to obtain, and I was anxious to revisit Zad, to check the longitude I had assigned to that spot, and also that of Bazar Dara, which was connected with Zad by triangulation.