

CHAPTER XIV

OVER THE KARA-KASH RANGES

OUR previous survey, including the expedition up the Yurung-kash gorge, had cleared up the important question as to the true origin and course of the main feeder of the Khotan River. The next and equally interesting task was to map the headwaters of the streams which drain the portion of the Kuen-luen range south and south-west of Karanghu-tagh, and are manifestly the principal tributaries. In the course of my inquiries from the Omsa herdsmen about dominant points that would enable me to sight again the series of magnificent glaciers which feed the Kash River, I had ascertained that there was a difficult path just practicable for laden yaks crossing the transverse range north-west to Karanghu-tagh. It was said to lead to the Nissa Valley, whence a track could be found to the mountains on the upper Kara-kash River. I was delighted at this intelligence. For it showed not only, what the Karanghu-tagh people had carefully hidden from me, that there was a connection with the outer world besides the route viâ Pisha, but also that this connection would take me into a region which had so far remained an absolute terra incognita.

The start for Nissa, on which I accordingly decided for the morning of October 30th, was attended with some difficulty. The Yüzbashi of Karanghu-tagh, who had before proved obstructive, evidently did not cherish the idea of helping us to follow a route the knowledge of which he seemed anxious to