

instrument, since I had insisted on seeing them thoroughly cleaned with soap and hot water previous to the intended operation.

When at last on the forenoon of the 12th December the camels were ready with the freshly packed loads and my troop of labourers duly collected, half the population of Tawakkel seemed to be assembled to witness our departure. Those who had come to wish luck and a safe return to relatives among my party followed us to the northernmost hamlet. Then beyond, where cultivated land gave way to scrub-covered low dunes by the river bank, the Beg of



TAWAKKEL LABOURERS TAKEN TO DANDAN-UILIQ.

Tawakkel, who escorted me with two picturesque attendants carrying falcons as a sign of his dignity, took leave. A present of some Russian ten-rouble gold pieces was to reward him for the services he had rendered, not too willingly perhaps, but still effectively, and to assure his good will in keeping open our communications while we were in the desert. The first march was a very short one, to a deserted shepherd station ('satma') by the side of the river; for following the advice of the guides, I wished to let all our animals have a plentiful drink in the evening before entering the sands eastward. On the following morning we struck