

## CHAPTER XCIV

### ACROSS TIBETAN PLATEAUS

A BUSY evening and morning at Ulugh-köl were spent over selecting the fittest of the spare donkeys, and making up reserve loads of supplies and baggage. It was encouraging to note how well the brave donkeys, which struggled through with us, had stood all their trials. The less fit-looking animals were sent back to Polur, as twenty donkeys would now suffice for the reduced stores; for these and the hired ponies we retained the five sturdiest of the 'Kirakash' men. The little band of gold-miners who had proved so helpful were discharged to Zailik with ample reward and adequate food for the journey. Of all the motley company there were to remain with us only Pasa and one of his fellow-hunters, the former newly equipped with a good fur-coat which I bought for him as a present off the back of a returning pony-man.

Then we started, on September 4th, under the farewell blessings of those who were glad to escape the hardships still before us. My object was to follow the great snowy range, which flanks the Yurung-kash head-waters on the south-east and south along its southern slopes westwards, until we reached the uppermost valley of the Kara-kash River, and thus to complete our survey of what had now proved to be the true main chain of the Kun-lun. For this purpose we had first to march by the Polur-Ladak route to the elevated basin, more than 17,000 feet above the sea, where the Keriya River rises.

The five marches we made along this route took us over ground already surveyed by Captain Deasy, and my account of them may, therefore, be brief. On the first