

CHAPTER XCVII

FROM THE KUN-LUN TO LONDON

NEXT morning, September 23rd, I found myself suffering from severe pains in my feet, and quite unable to move. The serious results of my accident and the urgency of surgical help were only too evident. I could not disguise from myself the symptoms which made it probable that the frost-bite had affected not merely the flesh but the bones, too, in some of the toes, at least on the right foot. My mountaineering manual, in which the subject was discussed at some length, plainly indicated that in such cases gangrene would set in, and recommended that "the aid of an experienced surgeon should be sought at once."

The advice was excellent but scarcely reassuring. For how could I secure such aid in these inhospitable mountains—and meanwhile might not gangrene spread further? So all my thought and energy had now to be concentrated on a rapid journey to Ladak. For only one day could I halt in that bleak camp under the frowning rock-walls to gather a little strength. I used it for sending Lal Singh to reconnoitre the gorge eastwards where we now located the approach to the Yangi Dawan. But he found it after a very short distance completely choked by snow and ice, and had to return. Evidently the advance of a glacier had here obliterated all trace of the old route.

The pains in my feet had increased, and next day when the start was made back to our main camp, I found that riding on a yak, owing to the low position of the feet, caused cruel suffering. The Kirghiz, whom many generations of life under conditions of constant hardship have made rather callous, absolutely refused to lend a