

CHAPTER IV.

THE KODAJ-DARJA AND THE KASCHGAR-DARJA.

October 18th. The level remained unchanged during the night. The transparency was 24 cm. at 7 a. m. and 20 cm. at 1 p. m. This decreasing transparency was due to the hesitancy of the stream, which caused it frequently to alter its course. As a consequence of this, the banks consisted in many places of fine, loose material, which, not being yet consolidated and held fast by tree-roots, is constantly being washed away by the current. Add to this the effect of the wind, for the water is always more turbid on a blowy day than on a still day. The stationary reaches immediately below the banks were broken into waves, and these, playing upon the loose material behind, caused it to crumble, and so 'muddied' the water. In windy weather, too, we noticed that there were more drift-wood, and larger quantities of reed *débris* and broken branches, floating on the surface than at other times. These were partly *disjecta membra* blown off the banks into the river, partly materials which had become fastened in the bottom, and were now loosened and set adrift again by the combined action of the wind, the movement of the waves, and the counter-currents of the surface.

Generally speaking, the river in this part of its course gives the impression of being less at home than hitherto. At intervals we passed, now on the one side, now on the other, deserted banks lying quite high and dry, though some of them are obviously reached by an arm of the river at the period of high flood. Otherwise they are as a rule separated from the existing channel by a thin belt of steppe. Towards both banks the river-bed contains vast deposits of alluvium, more or less exposed and dry. Poplar forests were by this become extremely rare; indeed, we only saw them on the deserted banks. Their place was taken by tamarisks and steppe scrub. The beautiful headlands, with their shady groves of poplars, which are so general where the banks are more permanent and the woods have had time, as it were, to order and arrange themselves, and so grow up quietly, enjoying the advantage of a regular supply of moisture — these had now virtually ceased. These open reaches are, however, especially exposed to the effects of the wind in the way I have just described. Wild-geese were now very common; every day we saw numerous flocks wending their way up-stream. Wild-duck were also met with.