



Fig. 108. THE TARIM BEFORE ENTERING THE SANDY DESERT.

chain of lakes. In fact, this would appear to be the characteristic method by which the Tarim shifts its channel in this part of its course: although there is something like a repetition of the same thing in its south-east stretch below Karaul.

We passed on the left the lake of Tongus-atti-köl, which is connected with the river by a dry arm. The old bed of the Tarim, abandoned four years ago, and known, as usual, by the name of Kona-darja, also in this case of Tunnekis as well, is here a very long way from the existing river. The bank lower down is called Imam Naserning-uji-ak-kum, that is »Imam Naser's Homestead in the White Sand». Beyond that there is another Kara-akin, which, leaving the river on the left, rejoins it a day's journey lower down.

Meanwhile the drift-sand was closing in upon the Tarim from both sides, narrowing the belts of vegetation which accompany it and interrupting from time to time its still thick beds of reeds; at the same time the poplars became rarer and rarer. In fact, sand-dunes, with tamarisks growing on them, are quite common on the right bank. The transition, where the river does at length plunge into the desert, — East Turkestan's immense »ocean» of dunes — is exceedingly sudden. On the desert side of the boundary-line there is not a single poplar, they all stop short on the west of it. Equally, too, the kamisch comes to an end, and the bare barren sand-dunes shoot down steeply into the water. There are dunes, too, on the left bank, but they leave room for a narrow fringe of kamisch between themselves and the river. At intervals along the foot of the dunes are small strips of silt. Above