

land, and the Kalmuck (Mongol) pilgrims used to make it a halting-place. We still continued our uncomfortable journey through these shallow and densely overgrown lakes. One of them bore the name of Julghunluk-köl or the Tamarisk Lake. Immediately south of our route lay Tschaj, with 8 ujlik and 51 inhabitants, to whom must be added 48 more who live at Tscharklik during seed-time and harvest. In 1896 the same village counted only 6 families, but at the present time it is considered to be the largest village of any in the lower Tarim lake district. At Semilaku-tekgen the alluvial deposits stretch a long way in every direction, though principally towards the south. Beyond that point the river gathers itself, as it did in 1896, into a deep, narrow channel, bordered on both sides by belts of reeds growing upon pier-like ramparts or embankments of silt. Outside of these the country consists chiefly of mud-flats, in places still wet, and inclosing occasional islands of kamisch, though every now and again this is interrupted by extremely shallow sheets of water. This is what remains of the lake of Kara-buran, which covered such a wide area in Prschevalskij's time. Since his visit the lake has continually shrunk in area, though it still becomes filled to some extent at the period of high flood. By the middle of August it is said to be completely dry, not even one abandoned pool being able to survive through the summer. But from the middle or end of October, when the autumn flood reaches this quarter, it gradually fills again.



Fig. 195. NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE TSCHERTSCHEN-DARJA.

We were now close to the confluence of the Tschertschen-darja. This river, which approaches from the S. 20° E., presents precisely the same appearance and the same characteristics as the Tarim in the same neighbourhood, and like it flows through a sort of corridor or avenue of kamisch, while on both sides stretch horizontal deposits of sediment. Although it appeared to be a powerful stream, its current