

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TARIM TO KARAU.

In the preceding chapter I have dealt with the broad features of the hydrographical relations of the Tarim basin. In a later chapter I shall discuss its absolute and relative altitudes. In the present chapter I will bring together as succinctly as possible those of its physico-geographical characteristics which may be regarded as being most conspicuous in those parts of the river's course which I explored. In other words, what I am about to set forth is a brief general *résumé* of the information conveyed in detail in vol. I. It will facilitate the use of the map if, instead of citing the geographical names as points of intersection, I use the different encampments we made. I begin therefore with Lajlik, on the 17th September 1899. There the river makes two big bends, contains an abundance of alluvium, possesses a couple of rudimentary boldschemals, and the forest on its banks is young and scrubby. The extent to which the river subsides in the autumn was plainly indicated by steps in the mud-banks formed during the high-water period. From this point and for a long way down the river fishing is not prosecuted owing to the muddy condition of the water; the people live by breeding sheep, and to a slight extent by agriculture.

18th September. The course was straight, except for a couple of bends. In the straight reaches the bed is narrow, the current and the depth uniform, the alluvial formations slight; in the windings the breadth increases, as also do the area of the alluvial deposits and the maximum depth. In places the forest is rather more abundant. The great caravan road to Maral-baschi runs along the left bank.

19th September. A big bend; the forest grows rather denser, though the trees are seldom more than 4 m. high. The high-water reaches Schäschkak on 20th July, and the ice begins to form in the beginning of December.

21st September. In places copious forest, the trees being of medium height; the river sinuous; the depth reaching 5 to 6 m.

22nd September. The river partly straight, partly winding, and narrower than hitherto. In places the forest is fairly thick and vigorous.

23rd September. The bed rather winding and narrow, full of drift-wood, the poplars frequently falling into the stream in consequence of the banks being under-