

## CHAPTER X

### THE LAND OF WITHERING RIVERS

**AFTER** visiting the Chira ruins, I had come to the conclusion that on the Yartungaz River, east of Niya, there must be ruins like those found on other rivers. Accordingly, at Niya I had told Ibrahim and the local Beg to find a man who could guide us to them. After much inquiry, the two men were told that a certain old man, named Abdur Rehim, knew the place. They brought him to me in triumph, but he asserted that, though he had hunted for ruins at the lower end of the river in the sand, he never had found any. Ibrahim and the Beg of Niya, nevertheless, insisted on his telling the truth and concealing nothing. Finally, he confessed that nine long days out in the waterless sand, he had found an ancient site marked by a little pottery, but without the slightest trace of houses. We laughed his nine days down to three, and were so pleased with ourselves that he dared not change his statement further. So now, ten days later, when we returned to the shrine of Imam Jafir, he joined us according to agreement. His spirits were extremely depressed. None of Ibrahim's promises of meat and rice as good as those of the Sahib himself, not to mention tea and sugar, and a camel to ride when he was weary, had any cheering effect. The fact was, as we became absolutely convinced the next day, that he had been telling the truth at first and lying later. Out of fear of the Beg's displeasure, he had made up his tale of ruins, hoping that their