



*A group of Bukharians at
Zirabulaq railway station.*

wheels, carriages broiling in the sun, dirty and tattered seats, ill-fitting doors, everything gave one an impression of disorder and lack of organisation.

The line runs along the seashore for hours through a barren sandy plain. Here and there you catch a glimpse of Turkomans riding their tall, beautiful horses, reminiscent of English thoroughbreds, or swaying on their camels, whose rolling gait is distressingly uncomfortable. One or two earth-caves or »yurts» (tents) appear on the endless plain, but you look in vain for any trace of agricultural or other activity. Some insignificant flocks of sheep, a few camels with saddles on their backs, grazing on ground where there is scarcely a blade of grass to be seen, are the only signs of life visible.

On Tuesday we reached Ashkhabad, a little town in a green oasis. The horses are strikingly beautiful and elegant. The Turkomans are tall and thin and wear high sheepskin caps and long »khalats» (gowns) of subdued colours. From Ashkhabad the railway runs in a south-easterly direction along a valley with chains of hills in sight to the north and south.

*July 17th.
Ashkhabad.*

On the following day we passed through Sukara, a fertile district with villages and towns surrounded by shady gardens and groves. The people wear turbans, one end of which hangs over the left ear. Their »khalats» and other garments are in bright and beautiful colours. The men are tall and stout and wear long, well-trimmed beards. Evident prosperity, larger flocks of sheep. The horses are in good condition, big, but of an inferior breed. In Samarkand, where we arrived at dusk, the Turkoman Khan, deposed by the Russians, boarded the train with his brother, who was dressed partly in Russian Cossack uniform. A band of inquisitive idle Bukharians followed him to the carriage and grouped themselves round the windows.

*July 18th.
Sukara.*

On Thursday morning the train arrived at Tashkent. In a comfortable carriage, drawn by a pair of horses, I drove along shaded avenues with a few, one-storeyed houses on either

*July 19th.
Tashkent.*