



*Crossing the river Ili
on a ferry*

employ of a Sart. A broad road, well wheeled and trodden, leads westward to Qulja, the suburb of which begins about 2 miles from here. On the left the ground is flat until it drops steeply into the bed of the Ili. From the high bank of the river you have an excellent view of the whole valley to the south, its scattered villages being marked by clumps of shady trees. A line of mound-like hillocks runs on the right of the road. They are called «Dzimdin sy» which means «the silver roof or head». Rumour has it that a rich Kalmuk Buddhist temple once stood here. Small Buddha images of clay are still found here and many pieces of glazed tiles in blue, green, yellow, brown and black lie scattered over a large surface. At the foot of these mounds is a shady garden, Gulehambagh, a kind of public garden, used by the inhabitants for holding «tomashas». The suburb is only 3 or 4 years old and is inhabited exclusively by Kashgarliks, who come here in large numbers annually. It is preceded by many orchards and gardens that continue between it and the actual outskirts of the town. The road is very dirty, the horses sink deep in black filth, the stench of which is mixed with the strong smell of brandy, evidently from a distillery on the outskirts. The houses on the outskirts are worse built, or at any rate far more dilapidated than in the new little suburb. The street makes a couple of bends and the shops are better stocked and begin to look more prosperous. Suddenly on the right a broad cross-street opens up with Russian signboards on the shops, a kind of fire station, a Tartar mosque and a bazaar in the form of a single-storeyed gallery-like building with shops next to each other. This unpaved street with its rows of houses and Russian signboards has a decided resemblance to a Russian provincial town. The mandarin's yigit guided me along this street and another, also with Russian signboards. I caught sight of the agency of the Nadejda Transport Company, the Singer agency, the branch of the Russo-Chinese Bank, the Post and Telegraph Office and so on.

After my three months' journey from Kashgar it was very pleasant to be once more in such a civilised and, above all, such an important place as this. We stopped before a sarai, so filthy that I hesitated about staying there. A «flat» that I was shown in a private house