

There was nothing to detain me at the place. Apart from some pilgrim shelters, a tumbled-down Madrasah or *soi-disant* college and trees decked with thousands of rags, votive offerings of pilgrims, there was to be seen there only a curious hillock composed of stony detritus overlying an outcrop of rock-salt. From a little lake into which the water of the small terminal channel of the river is dammed up before it finally disappears, we filled two galvanized iron tanks brought from Calcutta as well as improvised sacks and nets with ice. This was to provide the indispensable minimum of water while my camp, counting from forty to fifty people, was pitched far out in the desert.

I cannot stop to describe how the belt of luxuriant jungle of wild poplar trees and tamarisks passed below the Mazar gradually changed into a wide expanse of low sand-cones overgrown with scrub, groups of dead trees, gaunt and twisted by age, rising between them. Towards the end of a second easy march we passed a belt of more open ground where remains of broken pottery, an enclosure made of thickly packed rushes, a line of trunks of dead fruit trees and planted poplars, suggested the site of some ancient farm. Soon we arrived at the first two 'houses' our guides had spoken of (Fig. 35).

They stood on what at first sight looked like small elevated terraces. But subsequent observation proved these to be merely portions of the original loess soil that had escaped the erosion which was proceeding all round. The mode of construction was materially the same as at the dwellings of Dandan-oilik, but the dimensions were much greater and the timber framework of the walls, rising above the sand which filled the rooms, far more elaborate and solid. The