

way to Achchik showed that we were approaching the edge of the desert. But Achchik itself proved a cheerful place. The Yüzباشي, or village headman, had prepared his house for my reception. The rooms looked inviting with their freshly-plastered walls and the plentifully-spread carpets of Khotan felt. But the light and air were rather scanty, and so I preferred to pitch my little tent in a neighbouring field, where the lucerne crop had just been cut. It was a delightful evening, with a distant vista over fields of wheat and Indian corn, hedged with poplars and mulberry-trees. Like many a rural view of these parts, it carried me back to the fertile Alföld of Hungary.

At Achchik I heard of a 'Kone-shahr,' *i.e.*, a ruined site of some sort, that was said to be on the edge of the desert to the south-east. My informants were unable to give any idea of its exact distance, but believed that it could be reached by a detour the same day while my camp moved to Ordampadshah. A short visit seemed all that was needed, as no buildings were said to be extant, only scattered heaps of bricks and patches of ground covered with potsherds. So I directed my caravan to start with one guide straight to the desert shrine southwards, while I myself with another guide and the Sub-Surveyor rode off at eight o'clock to take Baikhan, the old site mentioned, on the way. Soon beyond Achchik cultivation ceased, and we entered a wide, scrub-covered plain of sand and loess. Neither beast nor man was seen until we reached Khuruz, a miserable hamlet, about four miles to the south-east. A little watercourse allows the lonely dwellers of the few scattered huts to irrigate some fields. Another four miles' ride over a similar waste brought us to Nurunam, where some shepherds live in a couple of wretched hovels. Every tree forms a distinct landmark on this dreary plain. So we had no difficulty in fixing our position on the plane table as we moved along. By midday, when the heat grew intense, we reached Bekhtauruk, another col-