

half-way to the Yartungaz stream, while low tamarisk scrub and some Kumush supplied fuel.

Marching south-eastwards on the following day over gravel-covered slopes and low sand dunes, we crossed a wide belt of tamarisks and reeds which was said to be reached at times by a small stream known as the Suzüje Darya. Three miles west of the present course of the Yartungaz stream an older bed of it was passed, completely dry. It was at once succeeded by high sand-ridges, such as usually accompany these desert rivers, and I felt heartily glad for the sake of our tired animals when at last in the evening the glittering ice of the stream came in sight, which meant for them rest and water.

On February 17th we followed the Yartungaz River, which at our camping-place had a breadth of about 30 yards, down to the point where it is absorbed by the sands. It was a march of some eighteen miles, all through a belt of jungle which gradually widens out to a breadth of three or four miles. Everywhere we saw the tracks of sheep, but met no living creature until we emerged on the clearings which have been made by a small colony in the fertile area marking the furthest reach of the summer flood water. There is ample land and probably also irrigation water available for several villages. But only four families of agriculturists have established themselves here during the time of Niaz Hakim Beg; and though they are sufficiently well off to employ labourers, no more ground has been cleared than twenty to thirty hands are able to cultivate. Even thus, it was a strange feeling for me to ride once more past fields and irrigation channels. Our excellent Darogha had marched ahead. So Abdul Karim, the foremost 'Dehkan' of the little settlement, a fine-looking old man, was ready to welcome us. His father had come from Faizabad in Badakhshan on a pilgrimage to Imam Jafar Sadik, and on settling down received a grant of land here. Abdul Karim was evidently proud to air what little knowledge of Persian he retained and to do the honours of this forlorn outpost in the desert.

For the last five or six years the Yartungaz stream has shown a tendency to shift its final course westwards. Hence the present