

March to
Yärtunguz
river.

on the Yärtunguz river, and that further guidance might be secured there. So led by him and a half-crazy devotee of the shrine who claimed to have paid a visit to those ruins, we set out eastwards on February 15. Two miles beyond the Mazār all vegetation was left behind. Then we crossed two steep Dawāns rising to about 150 feet in height, and toiled on through high sandhills for about six miles in a south-easterly direction, until large patches of gravel soil were struck where camels and ponies could march with ease. A supply of ice brought along from the Mazār enabled us to camp that evening at a spot where low tamarisk scrub and some Kumush supplied fuel. On the following day the march was resumed with a general bearing to the east-south-east. After crossing a Dawān about 100 feet high, and next a low gravel-strewn swelling of the ground traversed by occasional dunes, we passed at a distance of about six miles a belt of living Toghraks, which probably receives underground moisture from the marshes subsequently seen thirty miles southwards near the Bileklik Lake. Some five miles further a broad depression was reached with plentiful scrub and Kumush, which our guides called *Suzüje-Daryā*. It was said to receive water through occasional summer floods, manifestly coming from the stream and springs which feed the Sizütke Lake, passed on the Charchan route. After crossing another high Dawān we struck a broad tamarisk-covered belt, which was clearly marked as an old bed of the Yärtunguz river, but now completely dry. It was at once succeeded by a high sand ridge such as usually accompanies these desert rivers, and for the sake of our tired animals I was glad when, from its height, the glittering ice of the stream came at last in sight.

March
down
Yärtunguz
river.

On February 17 we followed the Yärtunguz river, which higher up near the mountains is known as Tolanguja, down to the area where it is absorbed by the sands. Its breadth, some thirty yards near Hēlyabēg, the grazing-ground where we had camped, gradually diminished in the many short bends which form the river's course northward. On the other hand, the strip of vegetation accompanying the banks, narrow at first, gradually widened, until at a distance of about six miles below our camping-place close Toghrak jungle was entered. A short distance further down, at a point appropriately called *Arik-aghzi* 'mouth of the canal' (misprinted Irik-aghzi in map), and marked by many fine trees, lies the modest *band* which helps to guide water into the small canal irrigating the fields of Yärtunguz-Tārīm some thirteen miles further north. The stream, now only some ten yards broad, turns from here to the north-north-west, evidently cutting its left bank further and further into the sandy ridge westwards. Two miles lower down its flow during the winter months seemed to cease. The wide expanse of forest, through which we continued our march due north, and which maintained a breadth of at least three miles, is still reached by the summer floods. Through it lies the old main bed of the river, which we found empty except for occasional shallow depressions still retaining frozen sheets of water. At Kala-sulaghi were passed the first clearings for cultivation, now again deserted and overgrown with young shrubs. About two miles further north we entered the present oasis known as Yärtunguz-Tārīm, with its holdings scattered amongst extensive fields, chiefly of wheat, Indian corn, and cotton.

Terminal
oasis of
Yärtunguz
river.

From Abdul Karīm, an intelligent and manifestly well-to-do 'Dehkān', who welcomed me at the substantial farm of Jigdalik-bulung, I learned that the small colony had been formed only during Niāz Hākīm Bēg's *régime*. His father had come from Faizābād in Badakhshān on a pilgrimage to Imām Ja'far Sādiq, and on settling down received a grant of land here. He, with the help of some other families of settlers, made the canal, the head of which we had passed at Arik-aghzi, and their descendants still own whatever land has been brought under cultivation. They are sufficiently well-off to employ twenty to thirty labourers, and to the number of hands