

CHAPTER XII

STAY AT KÖK-YAR

IN the early dawn of July 7th I started from Karghalik southwards. There was just light enough as we rode through the Bazars to observe the gaily decorated cook-shops and a stately Mosque and Madrasah with polychrome woodwork. Karghalik once again reminded me of some small town in Kashmir, probably on account of its fine trees, the abundance of running water, and the plentiful use of timber in its houses (Fig. 43). Scarcely two miles from the town we left cultivation behind us, and were moving over the bare gravel Dasht of a huge alluvial fan which slopes down unbroken from the foot of the outer hills. Only along the canals fed from the Tiznaf River and the stream of the Ushak-bashi, on the right and left of the route, but too far to be clearly sighted, stretched patches of fertile ground. A dreary landscape like this, made drearier still by a glary haze, was easy ground for the plane-table.

It was also singularly adapted for taking peregrinating lessons in Chinese from my worthy Ssü-yeh. With nothing to distract attention it seemed easier to grasp the explanation of phrases, grammatical matters, etc., which he never tired of pouring forth in an uninterrupted flow of Chinese and the queerest of Turki, almost as difficult to follow as the former. But his lively talk and expressive gestures and the intuitive contact created by common philological instincts helped me in comprehension, in spite of the difficulties arising from the eel-like perplexity of Chinese phonetics and the terrible snares of tonic accents, so hard for unmusical ears to distinguish. My own efforts