

peace as I needed. So it was a double gain when I could despatch my transport to convenient grazing-grounds a march or so up the valley, where the animals could have rest and grow fat—without cost to my exchequer. After a couple of days' topographical work in the neighbourhood Rai Ram Singh, too (Fig. 44), left me with a qualified Darogha and guide for surveying tasks along the Kun-lun main range between Karghalik and Khotan. There was a real *terra incognita* to be mapped in the difficult mountain region within the great bend of the Kara-kash River, and it cost me an effort not to set out for it myself.

With some little trouble a place had been found where my tent could be pitched, under the closely planted apricot trees of the garden, and thanks to their shade I could work there the whole day without feeling the heat too oppressive. Almost every afternoon a strong breeze swept up from the plains to bring refreshing coolness—and a load of fine dust which descended steadily in layers for hours after the wind had subsided. I could not have had a better demonstration how all the loess beds forming the fertile bottom of these valleys had originated, and that they were still growing by such aerial deposits. On either side of the green irrigated strip of ground which extends for some four miles between the extreme points of the Kōk-yar oasis, there was nothing to be seen but barren yellow hills with broad pebble slopes skirting their foot. On them there was neither moisture nor vegetation to retain the fertile loess dust which the winds let fall on them daily.

On my evening walks I soon saw how confined was the cultivation which, aided by the flourishing felt manufacture, maintains the two hundred odd homesteads of Kōk-yar. Nowhere more than about a quarter of a mile broad, the oasis can easily be content with the single road, mostly shaded by fine willows and poplars, passing up its whole length. Seeking for variation I tried many a by-path along the little 'Ariks' which distribute the water between the fields, only to find that none was really practicable in comfort for Chiang, the regular companion of my walks. Peripatetic Chinese lessons were the motive necessitating