

## CHAPTER XIII

### ALONG THE FOOT OF THE KUN-LUN

ON the morning of July 25th I said farewell to Kök-yar and its obliging people just as the dawn broke. I had thought to have taken leave of my 'Ta-lao-yes,' too, the evening before. But, lo, as I approached the outlying farm of Üjmelük Langar, where the valley turns to barren Dasht, I found them awaiting me with a farewell Dastarkhan of tea and eggs, spread out on red felts in orthodox fashion. Considering how averse Chinamen of easy circumstances seem to be from early rising, I was pleasantly touched by this final mark of goodwill and politeness. In return I wished my Chinese hosts the speediest progress on the official ladder up to the Futai-ship of the 'New Dominion.'

Instead of the high road leading from Karghalik along the edge of the desert, I had decided to make my way to Khotan by the little-known route which passes through the barren outer hills of the Kun-lun, and would give me a chance of fresh surveys. Our first march was easy and pleasantly varied. After surmounting the bleak conglomerate ridge eastwards near the little Mazar of Saskan Khoja, there spread out before me the fertile debouchure of the valleys of Yül-arik and Ushak-bashi, with a cluster of long-stretched oases along the streams which are fed by the snowy range about the Karlik Dawan. As we crossed one fertile strip after another, Yül-arik, Rowush, Yawash, and Ushak-bashi, I feasted my eyes on beautiful groves of fruit-trees and rich fields between. Yül-arik and the neighbouring villages are famous for their apricots, melons, and walnuts. Even grapes ripen in sheltered places in spite of the elevation of about 5800 feet. Dastarkhans