

thither my party was to be conducted. It meant a day's delay on the road, but I did not grudge it; for the route from Zawa to Kara-kash was new to me and proved an excellent sample of all that these rich tracts watered from the Kara-kash river could offer in rural beauty.

The whole of the cantons of Kuya, Makuya, Kayash through which I rode in succession, looked like a big park, with fertile fields to take the place of pastures. The love of the Khotanese peasantry for fine avenues to line the roads and for shady clumps of trees to mark off each small holding, has always appealed to me as a mark of old-established civilization, and the scenery passed on to-day's route illustrated it to perfection (Fig. 47). With every bit of ground intensively cultivated, this concession to the picturesque in rural surroundings seems doubly deserving of note. The road led through thickly populated tracts. Yet so plentiful is the tree growth that only rarely could the eye of the passing traveller catch sight of the cultivators' mud-built houses scattered in small hamlets. But open vistas were provided by the green valley-like stretches where the big canals of Kuya, Makuya and Bahram-su rolled their muddy waters northward between deep-cut loess banks.

At the 'Wednesday Bazar' of Borache, a local market town as yet undiscovered by me, Roze Beg owned a country house. So a liberal Dastarkhan awaited us here as a matter of course. Gaily-coloured cloth canopies had been stretched across the road and hundreds of villagers thronged in front of them, evidently happy to take their share in the festive reception. The house was quite new, and its Aiwan with clean poplar-wood roofing and neatly plastered walls made a delightfully cool retreat. Melons of all sorts, peaches and grapes formed the bulk of the collation to which my travel-stained followers settled down in most business-like fashion. I always enjoy seeing animals—or men—absorbed in hearty feeding, and knowing that feasts of this sort would not come their way every day, I did not grudge my people the time needed for a thorough disposal of all this hospitable treat. When they emerged from the side room where they had conducted operations, their