

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE KARANGHU-TAGH MOUNTAINS

ON the morning of August 24th it took three long hours to pass our baggage piece-meal across the Kash River by the wire rope. It included this time also my lively little terrier tied up ignominiously in a bag; for he could not possibly have crossed the so-called bridge, and none of the Taghliks felt plucky enough to carry him over it. Then one by one we clambered over the frail beam. It swung uncomfortably towards the middle, and the other tree was too low down to afford a firm hold for one's hands; but in the end all of us were safely across.

A walk of two miles, mainly along cultivated terraces, brought me to Karanghu-tagh, the collection of some forty mud hovels which during the winter months shelter the majority of the herdsmen and select malefactors from Khotan banished to these forbidding mountains (Fig. 62). The look of these habitations was quite as wretched and uninviting as when I first saw them in October 1900, and the changed season could not affect the depressing barrenness of the bleak steep slopes of rock or detritus shutting in the valley. But there was at least the green of a narrow band of oat fields and the foliage of a few poplars to give temporary relief from the gloom of what the exiles called their 'town.'

I found neither supplies nor transport ready in the village. So I preferred to move my camp a few miles farther down to Khushlash-langar, where the Kash River is joined on the right by the stream from the Busat Valley. Our survey of 1900, effected from a considerable distance, had shown this valley to terminate at its head in a large glacier branching out like the spread fingers of a hand