

As it was blowing pretty hard it suited us excellently to land at the ferry-place, on the left bank. A few canoes lay on the shore, and the ferryman came and bowed to us as we landed. He told us that our motor-convoy had lain at the entrance to the Shindi valley for three days, whence they had sent letters to the *begs* of Tikenliq and to me. He had left BERGMAN's letter to me on the right bank, so he crossed the river in a canoe in a bitter wind to fetch it. He was soon back; but on looking for the letter inside his *chapan* and his belt he could not find it. The wind and stream had evidently carried it away!

CHEN wrote to the *begs* of Tikenliq in Chinese, asking them to send to us at Yardang-bulaq 900 *chin* of flour and thirteen sheep.

At dusk a man arrived with a quantity of flour for us from Tikenliq. He told us that the village had been almost without food since the passage of a hundred Turki soldiers and later five hundred Russians, bound from Turfan to Korla. We ourselves had witnessed the arrival of the latter in Korla. The Turkis had not paid for what they had taken, but the Russians had given 260 *liang* for 100 *chin*. The price had now fallen to 250. At Bugur we had given 45 *liang* for the same weight of flour.

April 22nd was calm and clear after a stormy night. The river widened to 200 m, and the maximum depth for the day was only 3 m. But the stream was in most parts very shallow. The double canoe that carried our store of flour, and that had only one paddler, ran aground on a bank. The paddler pushed with his blade with all his might — the boat slid off, but the paddle stuck, so the man lost his balance and fell. There he stood on the sandbank, solitary and abandoned, while his boat continued its downstream voyage on its own account. We roared with laughter at his misadventure, and one of the others came gliding by and took him off. My boat, too, went aground, and CHEN's craft, bearing swiftly down upon us, collided. We swung round in a circle and got off. The carcass of a black cow was stranded in the middle of the river.

I asked a young shepherd on the bank what the name of the river was. He replied clearly and distinctly »Qum-darya», »Sand River», not Quruq-darya or »Dry River», as it had generally been called on my previous visit, when there was not a drop of water in its bed. But he could not tell us where it went.

A few dead, withered poplars still stood on the bank like crosses on graves. On the left side a high terrace almost overhung the stream. My boat went by its foot without mishap, but just as the next boat was passing a huge block broke loose and plunged into the river with a mighty splash. The boat and its two paddlers got a regular drenching. There were yells, shouts of warning and excitement, but still more amusement and laughter.

The river ran straight for long stretches to the south-east and E. S. E. The sun was setting behind us, so that the reed-beds ahead appeared as yellow streaks, while the sand-dunes above them reared their heads like giant dolphins.