

Our course was S. S. W., while the mountains ran towards the north-west and the colours grew more subdued as we moved farther away from them.

Later in the afternoon, with a westward course, we sighted poplar groves; and at a quarter past five we were at Sai-cheke, which we passed without stopping. The Konche-darya was for the most part hidden behind dunes, mounds and trees, and when we turned to the north-west we lost sight of it altogether.

Farther on we drove by an old watch-tower on the ancient Silk Road. We passed tamarisks sometimes in ones and twos, sometimes in clumps; and at Gerilghan we drove through a dense growth of reeds, poplars and scrub. I had travelled this road with camels in 1896.

The Yar-qaraul watch-tower had a shattered *mesa* as its foundation.

At a second Suget-bulaq we got so badly stuck at 9.30 p. m. that we deemed it best to stay the night, having covered 134 km.

IN KORLA AGAIN

It was a little after two on the afternoon of the next day when we stopped outside the headquarters of the Russian garrison in Korla. After a short talk with Captain DEVIASHIN, the pleasant commandant, he accompanied us to ABDUL KERIM'S house, where six soldiers had been keeping guard over our property all the time we had been away. The captain now proposed that both the motor-lorry and the packing-cases be removed to the Russian headquarters, where they would be safer. Certain vital parts of the engine were at camp No. 70, and the lorry was therefore dragged away by thirty soldiers on the morning of June 3rd, the clothes and provisions we should need in Urumchi having first been removed. As we had feared, there was not a drop of oil or petrol in Korla, and a letter to the authorities in the capital had not yet been answered. A trip to Urumchi was an absolute necessity.

We bought rice, tobacco and a number of other things for those who were left behind at camp No. 70; and I wrote to HUMMEL and BERGMAN, sending them 4,000 taels.

The captain informed us cheerfully that the main road to Urumchi was anything but safe, and that on several recent occasions merchants and other travellers had been attacked, robbed or killed by Kirghiz and Mongol robbers. He therefore insisted that we take a Russian officer as escort. I said that we had no room in the small car, and that we meant to travel so fast that no robbers could catch us. But he was inexorable, and introduced our escort, a second-lieutenant named YAROSLAVEV, as big as a smallish elephant and armed to the teeth, but otherwise good-natured and helpful. When all the baggage had been stowed away and the baby elephant had taken his seat I was so squashed that I could hardly move.