

ourselves were enclosed within walls and ranged on two opposite sides. A third side was covered in by a raised verandah through which were doors leading to a spacious kitchen and out-offices. In another quadrangle was an open court and covered stables, with mangers for one hundred horses. Altogether the arrangements were very good, and as we found in our subsequent travels similar accommodation at nearly all the chief halting places, this detailed description will answer for all.

I may here also notice the system of hospitality which is such a marked feature in Eastern Turkestan. It is said that in England we never can transact business satisfactorily without dining over it, but here in the East it seems as if good living and perpetually entertaining one's guests were the chief end of life. The *dastarkhwan* (literally table cloth) generally a gaudy chintz-lined coverlet is spread at each village of any size, under some clump of trees or, if in winter, in a house, where a good blazing fire offers a warm welcome, and the guests are invited to dismount; cups of hot tea are handed round, and then a number of trays varying from 20 or 30 to 100 laden with fruit, delicious bread, and sweets and cooked meats are brought in. No matter what be the hour of the day, or how frequently similar halts may have been made previously, it is a point of honor for the local magnate to lead the travellers to this feast, and it is equally a point of honor for the traveller to show his politeness even at the risk of ruining his digestion, by drinking numberless cups of tea and dipping his hands into the steaming dish. One part of their customs struck us with surprise and unfeigned pleasure; be the host Turk or British, he and his guests eat alike from the same dish and hand food to the surrounding attendants, who are troubled with no scruples of caste to interfere with their hearty appetite. It is the duty of the guest first to break bread and present a portion to his host.

We halted one day at Kargalik, and on the 7th November marched to Posgam 25 miles, most of the way across a highly cultivated and populous plain through which flows the River Tisnaf. This we crossed at about the fourteenth mile, and a little further on came to Yakshamba Bazaar, a considerable village, where as the name implies a market is held every Sunday mostly for the barter of farm produce. Here we alighted for a *dastarkhwan* at a newly built rest-house, on the same general plan as that at Kargalik, but smaller. Here too the Turkish officers, who had come from Constantinople in the suite of the Atalik's Envoy, made their appearance in military uniform and somewhat puzzled the curious villagers as to their identity, for their Turkish is almost as difficult of comprehension to the people here as is their own vernacular in the form we not unfrequently offered it to them.

From this place to Posgam and from that on to Yarkand the road lies over a thickly populated country, highly cultivated and freely irrigated by numberless small canals drawn off from the Zarafashan or Yarkand River. We crossed this river at a few miles from Posgam. It was even then a large stream, and in summer is only passable by boat.

Beyond the river, at about ten miles from Posgam, we alighted at Zilchak, where some tents and a *dastarkhwan* had been prepared for us. Whilst here the Yussawal Bashi or Chamberlain with a party of the Governor's body-guard\* arrived with messages of welcome from the Dadkhwah. The *dastarkhwan* disposed of, we brushed the dust off our uniforms and set out towards Yarkand, five miles distant, in two parties closely following each other—the returning Envoy with his Turkish suite and the British Envoy with his staff of officers. As we approached the city, we were met by successive troops of citizens and merchants, who saluted us in a very friendly way, and, joining our cavalcade, soon swelled it to upwards of three hundred horsemen. And so we went on to the city, observing here and there that the road had been levelled, holes filled in, pools and puddles covered with earth, and “eyewash” generally put on pretty thick.

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\* The guard consisted of 30 men, and their mode of salutation was somewhat singular. They came forward in batches of five, and knelt on one knee. This appears to be the true Eastern Turki fashion, for M. Remusat in his History of Khoten says—“Quand ils se recontrent ils s'agenouillent, c'est à dire qu'ils mettent un genou en terre.”