

Thence, passing on through street of shops, we came to an open chouk or square, where a crowd of people was collected round two Durweshes, who sang with not too melodious voice some song which afforded much amusement. From the earliest times all travellers who have visited these countries have been impressed with the gay merry character of the people and, though the present ruler has enjoined a more severe demeanour, there is still much of the old love of gaiety left. We then proceeded through a covered bazaar where all kinds of wares were displayed—here and there China cups and articles of jade, English and Russian chintzes, broadcloth from India, &c. Taking another turn to the right we found ourselves in what is called the Shám or evening bazaar where, as its name indicates, crowds of men and women collect every evening round booths and stalls at which boots, caps, dresses, and other articles of daily use are exposed in large quantities for sale. Everywhere the people treated us quite as of themselves, though of course they collected round us in good humoured curiosity to examine closely the first Europeans they had ever seen.

On no single occasion throughout our whole stay in the country did we ever meet with the slightest rudeness or incivility; no scowling looks nor angry taunts were levelled at us; on the contrary, wherever we went we always found people pleased to meet and converse with us.

The cloth merchants live in the chief bazaar which is larger and altogether of a superior description, being covered over as in Cairo or Stambul and the shops presenting a very similar appearance to shops in those cities.

Immediately beyond this is the bakers' street, where every shop is for bread or food of some kind. There was a restaurant which particularly attracted our notice from its extreme cleanliness and the neatness of all its arrangements. In front was the cooking range, with a fire below, over which a large cauldron was placed; the steam from this passed through a series of sieves in each one of which was meat or vegetables or other food, which was thus cooked to a nicety by steam. By the side were the vegetables cut into shreds ready for cooking, whilst a man was busy preparing flour for pastry. Inside we saw forms and tables at which the customers sat. I have been in similar restaurants in Stambul, but have seen nothing so clean and tempting as is to be found in Yarkand or Kashghar. In the streets we saw wheel-barrows with trays, on which patés, rolls of bread, fruit and cooked vegetables were hawked about, exactly as apples and pies are sold from carts in the streets of London. The bread rolls are made of the finest white flour and are pleasant to the taste as to the eye.

There was an air of comfort even among the lower classes, and a something decidedly more in common with our ideas than is encountered elsewhere in the East. To see the poorer people going to a shop and buying loaves of bread and meat pies, was pleasanter than seeing each individual seated separately on the ground cooking an indigestible-looking chupattee in selfish solitude as in India.

One curious sight witnessed by some of our party deserves mention here. At intervals the Kazí of the city goes round the shops inspecting weights or measures. On this occasion he detected a butcher using short weight. The culprit was at once seized, his neck and legs bound together, and repeated blows were laid on his back with a thick broad leather strap; on another occasion a man detected in using false measures had the measure tied round his neck and he was flogged through the chief bazaars and streets. There is no Penal Code in Yarkand but, if it be allowable to offer a suggestion on such matters, I think Indian society would rejoice if the Yarkand method of summarily punishing such rascals could find an appropriate section in the Indian Penal Code.

I have here given my first impressions of a ride through the city, but there is much more of interest which will be detailed hereafter in another part of this report.

Various rumours were spread abroad about the ultimate destination of the mission; one day we heard we should have to go to Aksu; again it was said that the ruler of the country was coming to see us at Yarkand on his way to Khoten; then it was that we were to be hurried off to Kashghar. Finally the truth came out that His Highness the Atalik Ghazi having determined to receive us with all due honor, had caused an entirely new suite of buildings to be erected for our accommodation, and as they would not be ready for some days, the fact of it