

marshy plain till we reached the flourishing village of Kok Robot (Blue Post-house). Here we put up in the royal oorda, or rest-house. Next morning we pursued our way prepared as we thought to face the cold, but we had not gone above a mile into the desert plain before a keenly cutting wind proved that the ordinary winter costume of Englishmen was not suited to a Yarkand climate.

A few days before, when wandering about the Yarkand bazaar, we were offered for sale fur leggings, socks, and caps, which were not sufficiently tempting to induce us to purchase, whereupon the disappointed tradesman said, in a warning voice; you will want these and more before very long. Now we had to repent the little heed we gave to his words. For three hours we had to endure the most cutting cold. As we approached Ak Robot (White Post-house) which is a hostellerie in the desert much similar to one of the rest-houses in the Egyptian desert, we were met by Khal Mohamad, the Military Governor of Yangi Hissar, with 20 horsemen who had ridden out two days' journey to escort us in with honor. Khal Mohamad is a remarkably smart looking and as we afterwards found a very intelligent and distinguished officer, and the neat martial appearance of his men and the precision with which they wheeled round and trotted ahead of us excited the approval of my military companions. The uniform of these men consisted of green velvet caps with fur inside, yellow leather coats lined with fur and trowsers of the same, neatly embroidered. The officer had a curious patch of the fur on his back in the form of a heart. This is supposed to be a distinguishing mark to his followers when he leads in battle. On alighting at Ak Robot we found, as usual, a well carpeted room with a good fire to welcome us, and soon afterwards Khal Mohamad and his followers having doffed their uniform came in, bearing smoking dishes for breakfast, and waited on us. We were now in a land of surprises, but nothing perhaps was more striking than the versatility of the soldiers of the Amir's army. When not employed on actual military duty, they turn their hand to cooking, carpentry, or any work that may require to be done, and when they march they are encumbered by no heavy baggage train. Each man carries his blanket or choga tied behind his saddle, or, when boxes or saddle bags are necessary or cooking utensils have to be carried, they are slung across the saddle, on the top of which the soldier mounts and makes a march of 30 or 40 miles a day.

From Ak Robot we rode on over the desert tract, here and there meeting signs of habitation, till we came to the village of Kizil, where we put up for the night in the royal caravan-serai. As we entered the village we saw the furnaces for smelting iron which Mr. Shaw describes in his book. Dr. Stoliczka visited them; he found the ore much impregnated with lime which acts as a flux and renders possible the peculiarly simple process described by Mr. Shaw. Our next day's march was through cultivation, past the village of Toplok, and over the River Shahnoz which we crossed by a good wooden bridge built by the Atalik. Mills were worked by this stream, and here and elsewhere we saw water-power used for husking rice and other purposes. After crossing a low sandstone and conglomerate ridge, we entered the town of Yangi Hissar. The gardens and private houses here are surrounded by mud walls with crenellated tops, giving the appearance of fortifications. Passing through the main street of the bazaar, which resembles those in Yarkand, we came by the fort, which is in a plain about 300 yards from the town, and is built in the form of a rectangle, and presents a somewhat imposing appearance.

Leaving this fort to the right we were taken to a large walled garden, in which a comfortable set of quarters had been prepared for us, while Kirghiz tents were pitched inside the enclosure. The walls of the largest rooms had been neatly painted, good carpets and silk musnuds were on the floor, and tables and stools, covered with red baize and supposed to suit our English tastes, had been specially made for us.

We halted two days at Yangi Hissar, the Atalik having sent a special messenger to say that he feared we must be tired with our long march, and he therefore wished us to take rest. This was a polite form of letting us know that the arrangements for our proper reception at the capital had not been quite completed.

At Yangi Hissar we found ourselves close to the lofty range of mountains in which the Tagharma, Chish Tagh, and other towering peaks looked conspicuously grand and made us long