

On the day following our first interview, His Highness went out to pay his devotions at the shrine of a celebrated Saint Huzrat Afák, and, a day or two later, returned with the new dignity of Amir and title of Khan which had been brought to him by Syud Yakúb Khan from Constantinople. Henceforth then the Atalik Ghazi, Yakúb Beg, was to be known as the Amir Mohamad Yakúb Khan of Kashghar, coins were struck and prayers recited in the name of Sultan Abdul Aziz Khan, and on the name of the coin the words Zurb-i-Mahrusa-i-Kashghar 'Mint of the protected country of Kashghar,' were struck.

The 11th December having been fixed for the formal reception of the British Mission, Ihrar Khan came over from the palace with one hundred men to carry the presents, and himself to conduct us to the presence chamber. Her Majesty's letter, enclosed in a magnificent casket of pale yellow quartz clamped with gilt bands and handles and bossed with onyx stones, was carried by Sergeant Rhind, who was followed by the Havildar of the Guide Escort bearing His Excellency the Viceroy's letter in a richly enamelled casket, officers and escort followed in procession on horseback. On dismounting and approaching the gateway, all the Amir's guard stood up. The ceremony of approaching the Amir was the same as on the former occasion. His pleasure at receiving this mark of Her Majesty's favor was visible in his brightened countenance, and, as the letters were delivered, he frequently repeated Alhumdulilla, 'God be praised,' adding "you have conferred a great favor on me. I am honored by the receipt of a letter from the Queen. I am highly gratified." The presents were then passed before him in review and conveyed into an inner apartment. The usual dastarkhwan was spread before us, and in course of conversation the Amir remarked—"Your Queen is a great sovereign. Her government is a powerful and beneficent one. Her friendship is to be desired as it always proves a source of advantage to those who possess it. The Queen is as the sun in whose genial rays such poor people as I flourish. I particularly desire the friendship of the English. It is essential to me. Your rule is just. The road is open to every one, and from here to London any one can come and go with perfect freedom."

The Amir then desired us to consider his country as our home, and to do just what we liked without any hesitation; all his officers had been warned, he said, to show every attention to the royal guests. On my expressing a desire to see his troops, he said, you have only to name the day and you can see whatever you like.

On the 13th December we paid our first visit to the City of Kashghar.

The distance is about five miles through a cultivated and populous tract all the way. At first the road passes amongst a number of detached and semi-fortified enclosures used as barracks for the Amir's troops and their families. They are neat quadrangular structures, with crenellated walls and defensible gateways, and are capable of accommodating from fifty to sixty families each. Between them are corn-fields and parade-grounds intersected by irrigation canals and dotted in all directions by butts for musketry practice.

Beyond these the road drops in the wide bed of the Kizil Sú, or "Red River," and is here carried across a long stretch of water-logged land by a wide causeway built of faggots laid with earth and planted with willow trees. It conducts to the bridge across the river, a rough wooden structure supported on two piers between the banks and protected by railings on each side. Beyond the bridge the road lies over higher ground to the city, about a mile distant, and leaves some ancient ruins a little way off to the right. They attract attention from the height and massive structure of the fortifications of the old citadel, the outlines of which are still very fairly represented in the existing remains.

Aski Shahr, or "Ancient city" (the ruins, amidst which are gardens and orchards and huts)—in contradistinction to Kuhna Shahr, or "Old City" (the present town of Kashghar), and Yangi Shahr, or "New City" (the residence of the Amir and his Court)—was a flourishing seat of trade with China in the time of Wang Khan, the predecessor in these parts of Chengiz Khan. It was noted for the strength of its fortifications and for many centuries successfully resisted the attacks of successive conquerors. At this time the ramparts are about