

To Captain Chapman, in addition to his work as Secretary, had fallen the duty of providing the carriage and making all other necessary arrangements such as are comprehended in the Quarter-Master-General's department, and it is only due to this officer that I should prominently notice the complete success of his careful management. He thoroughly equipped Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon's party for the Pamir expedition, and aided by Tara Sing laid out all supplies and provided animals for our return journey to India. Owing to the judicious care taken of our baggage mules and ponies, and the strict supervision exercised, we were able to bring our animals over the severe passes to Ladakh, not only without serious loss, but even in fair condition, thus proving that this journey, though unquestionably one of the most difficult undertakings, can be accomplished without any of the disasters which render the Karakorum route so generally abhorred.

During a month's stay at Yangi Hissar, we visited all the places of local interest in the vicinity, and on one occasion Dr. Bellew accompanied me on an excursion to Oordum Padshah, one of the most celebrated places of pilgrimage in the country. Riding for three hours in a N.-E. direction through a well cultivated country to the village of Saigoon, we suddenly were plunged into the great desert. Our route then lay over hilly ground and wide plains. Here and there we saw small wells covered over with huts to protect them from sand storms. The water in all was very brackish. At one well there was a large tomb and kind of hospice, where the man in charge, following the usual custom, came out with a large loaf of black bread on a trencher, and offered tea. At 5 P.M., after a ride of 35 miles we came to the shrine of Huzrat Begum, said to be the daughter of a 'Rúm' Padshah. Here we found a regular hospice, with an inner court-yard and four or five rooms for the better class of pilgrims. Outside are numerous rooms in a spacious court-yard for common folk, and a separate cluster of houses for the servants of the shrine. The Sheikh, or head of the establishment, is Shah Muksood, an old man of 87, very hale and jovial looking. He said he had never been beyond the first village in his life, and certainly therefore could never have tasted a drop of sweet water.

We learned that there was a ruined city not far off which belonged to Tokta Rashid, an Uigur Chief, and which had been destroyed by Arslan Khan more than 800 years ago. Starting next morning with spades and pickaxes, we determined to see what remains of former civilization could be dug up, and after a weary search found broken pieces of pottery, bits of copper, broken glass and China, and two coins, one of which is partly decipherable, and appears to belong to a very early period. The discovery of glass here is remarkable, for there is none used now-a-days, and the art of making it seems wholly unknown. We then rode in a N.-W. direction for about 12 miles to Oordum Padshah. Our route lay first over a low sandstone ridge, whence we descended into a genuine sea of sand. The billows of sand, sometimes 50 and 70 feet high, flowed like a storm-tossed sea over the hard desert; here and there dry land as it were, in the shape of hard soil, appearing. The invariable direction of the sand was from N.-W. to S.-E. About half way we came to a deserted 'Lungur,' or traveller's rest-house, partially buried in a huge sand hill which was gradually creeping over it. This Lungur was built about 90 years ago, and has been abandoned for 30 years, but has all the appearance of having been used and kept in fresh repair till lately.

Further on we passed one or two more rest-houses with wells of brackish water, and many buildings partially buried in the sand. Arriving at the shrine we found a spacious oorda, or royal caravanserai, built of bricks and lime, with white-washed walls. This had been erected by the present Amir. Here we had excellent accommodation provided for us by old Sheikh Muksood, who told us many interesting tales of the olden time. He informed us that the sand came from the N.-W. in one steady unvarying line, and was gradually advancing over the country. A serai which he had built some 30 years ago had been completely buried in one of these sand waves. Arslan Khan is buried here with all his army, who were killed fighting with Tokta Rashid, the Uigur Chief, more than 800 years ago. At that time there were habitations and cultivations, now all one sea of sand. It is said that as these sands progress in their course, cities become buried, and after centuries of entombment reappear as the sand wave passes on.