

obstruction and half filled the court area with the loose sand of its substance; whilst the other two not so obstructed continued their steady advance in unbroken form by the side of the tenement.

In illustration of the carelessness with which we found this accustomed danger treated it is worthy of note that we saw the house thus threatened with submergence actually occupied by its tenants, although the sands had approached to within a few feet of its verandah. Doubtless had the sand dune met the back of the house and broken over its roof, instead of over its front court wall, the occupants would have been entombed in their dwelling, as were those of Katak, according to the veracious statements of the unsophisticated shepherds of the country.

These wanderers about Katak further state that the houses, &c., of the buried city which they have seen reappear from under the sand are no longer to be found when they again visit the place in their migrations, though their position is recognized by the minaret tops projecting from the fresh sands under which they have passed. This, too, is easily to be understood if we remember that the sand travels in wave lines the rows of which follow each other at intervals of twenty or thirty to a hundred yards.

The first line will break over an obstructing house and bury it; but, the wind continuing, its loose particles are driven on and resume their original form on the clear ground beyond; whilst the submerged house reappears from under the advancing wave till it is again buried by the one next following it; and so on with the successive rows until the whole of the moving sands have passed on beyond its site.

Consequently, in process of time, provided the sands be limited in extent, the buried cities of Lob and Katak ought to reappear in the world much in form of their first state when submerged some four hundred years ago. With the requisite data an interesting calculation could be made as to the period when this resurrection might be expected to occur. Unfortunately for this we have no knowledge of the extent of the moving sands in their vicinity. Those of Kúm Shahídán extend across the plain in an unbroken series of wave lines for about fifteen miles from east and north-east to west and south-west and have a width of about eight miles more or less from north and north-west to south and south-east from Ordám Pádshah towards Yángí Hissár; and within these limits they cover an area of about a hundred and twenty square miles. Till all this has moved on to the east of the site of Ordám Pádshah the shrine is not free from the risk of submergence—the fate that has long since overtaken the city of that name which is said to have been buried eight hundred years ago; though we could get no history of the occurrence. Whilst on the spot we could find no traces of this buried city, but as the sands extend many miles eastward of the shrine on to the desert they may be there, inasmuch as we were assured there was such a buried city albeit none of our informants could indicate the site.

*Swamp.*—This natural division of the country with the next that is to be described forms one of the characteristic features of the general aspect of the preceding division or desert tract, and taken as a whole constitutes no small portion of its general area.

The swamp or marsh land is principally concentrated on the course of the Tárím River in the eastern part of its course before it joins Lake Lob. Little is known regarding this tract, owing to its inaccessibility, beyond that it extends over two or three hundred miles of country from west to east, and that the Tárím River passes through it to Lake Lob. It is described as a vast expanse of impenetrable reeds fringed by a forest belt of poplar and tamarisk trees. The people of Lob are said to move about the swamps in their boats, and find a way through them in five days to the lake. They are said to yield great abundance of fish, on which the people mainly subsist, and to swarm with water-fowl of all sorts, as well as musquitoes and venomous gnats, together with other horrid insects and snakes. The white swan and a species of otter are also found here, and their skins are articles of barter between the Lob people and the traders of Kúchá and Karáshahr. A certain number of otter skins also form part of the annual tribute paid by these people to Káshghar.

There is no cultivation here nor any fixed settlement. The people live in transportable reed-frame huts or in boats, and possess great herds of horned cattle. The produce of these