

From Chumdi I despatched Raju, the caravan bashi, to Yarkand, to give the Chow-Kuan definite information as to the date of my arrival at that town. In Chinese Turkestan (or Sin-Chiang) the European traveller should, for his own sake, inform the authorities beforehand concerning his movements. In that country, which is regarded as the Siberia of China, good rest-houses are not numerous, and are not habitually kept clean and habitable. If the traveller neglects to inform the head officials of his approach, he will probably find no decent lodging ready to receive him, and no supplies for his caravan.

Trustworthy estimates of distance were important, and I was exercised in discovering the significance of native methods of indicating distance. Words were vague, and were seldom used for this purpose. The tone of the voice, a shake of the head, a movement of the hand or arm were deemed sufficient to enlighten the traveller both as to direction and distance. A little practice enabled me to attach a meaning, more or less definite, to each gesture, but the matter was often complicated by the manifest inaccuracy of the estimate which was offered.

At a distance of a few miles from Yarkand, I met the postman who goes twice a month to Kashgar and back, carrying letters of Indian traders, which pass by the Taghdumbash Pamir and Gilgit. A little nearer the town, the chief interpreter of the Chow-Kuan, accompanied by the Beg in whose district I was to stay, presented his chief's red card and the usual civil messages. Further on, Mr. M. Backlånd, a Swedish missionary stationed at Yarkand, met me, and thus, pleasantly escorted, I passed through the outskirts of the Yangi Shahr to the quarters prepared for me. I found my place of rest outside the old town, in a good-sized fruit garden known as Kolkachi. The house was