

course, but, as we advanced, the chosen point was intercepted by dunes or ridges which had to be circumvented, and, when our prospect was again unimpeded, it was impossible to identify the former landmark. As we walked back, patiently following the track of our outward march, one of the guides confessed to Raju that he had never been so far into the desert before, and expressed his satisfaction that the order had been given to return. To escape the heat and to mitigate the discomfort they experienced from the want of water, the guides scraped the hot sand from the surface and embedded themselves in the cooler layers beneath, where they remained till near sunset. On reaching Kara Targaz, Islam Akun, the chief delinquent, was nowhere to be found, the two local men being left to suffer whatever penalty might be awarded. These two were merely dupes of Islam Akun, and having detained them two days in fear and dread, I let them go without further punishment; but on reaching Guma I induced the Beg to take means to secure the arrest of the chief offender.

Having made satisfactory observations for the determination of the rates of the chronometers, I resumed my journey towards Khotan. It lay mostly through desert, where, now and then, a little scrub relieved the monotony of the sandy waste. We passed through several oases, in all of which, owing to the scantiness of the winter snowfall, there was scarcity of water for irrigation. The annual rainfall is very slight, and it is to the melting of the snow on the Kwen Lun range in the spring and summer, that the inhabitants look for water for their crops.

On May 5th I reached Khotan, where a cool and roomy house on the north side of the street, and a few hundred yards east of the Yangi Shahr, was prepared for me. As a dwelling, this house was excellent, but the garden