

remote and cut off from the restlessness and turmoil of the world than most other towns in Asia.

This singular town now lies before us with its castle, its walls, and its towers, and the tall minaret rising like a beacon above the whole. Not a living soul can be seen, not an idler or a traveller, and it seems as though the great highway led to a slumbering town. To the left of the road stands a tamarisk with two trunks, the largest of the kind I have ever seen, majestically grand, and defying the desert alone, close and compact in its mantle of dark-green foliage, a blessed tree, which affords cool shade in summer to those who come out of the desert and would rest a moment to look from its refreshing vault at Tebbes, and the snowfield of the Camel hill in front. We, too, rested here, for the tamarisk was worth a couple of photographic plates. Seen through its boughs and stems, the town has a quaint appearance as of a desert mirage, a dream-picture which has sprung up under the wand of a magician out of the niggard ground.

The last bit of road remains to be traversed. We ride straight towards the round towers on the outer wall, and see the towers of the citadel within. The desert stretches right up to the wall, and not a tuft of grass grows without the bounds of the oasis. Four horsemen come spurring towards us on half-wild, well-groomed, and richly decorated horses, with saddle-cloths and costly saddle trappings. They dismount and salute respectfully, and the principal brings me a greeting from the Governor, bidding me welcome to his residential town, and asking me to accept the garden he has put at our disposal. One of the fine horses is offered for my use, but no outward pomp and state and no solemn entry into the town can induce me to neglect my map. I therefore remain on my quiet camel, where I have both hands free and a more extensive view.

With these horsemen as heralds we turn round the northern bend of the wall and enter an outer street, where cotton is being cleaned and linen dyed dark blue in open booths and shops. Long webs hang across the street as if it were decorated with flags to celebrate our tinkling