

past the old 'Iron Gate' to Samarkand and Bukhara, those centres of Sogdiana all through history. But in order to shorten the journey and see something of the mountains which separate Hissar from the arid steppes of Bukhara I chose the track leading north-westwards past Tash-kurghan to Shahr-i-sabz. It led first through narrow cañon-like gorges and higher up past picturesque forest-clad mountain slopes up to the Karkhush pass already under snow. Beyond it we descended over down-like plateaux, with rich grazing much frequented by nomadic Özbegs, down into the wide and abundantly irrigated valley which drains towards Karchi. There I reached the large town of Shahr-i-sabz by October 20, and on the following day a long and dusty drive on a jolting Russian tarantass carried me across the Takhta-karacha pass and the wide Zarafshan valley to Samarkand.

In this great busy city I felt that my long journey on ancient Central-Asian tracks has reached an appropriate terminus. There were the huge debris-mounds of Afrasiab to be visited to the east of the present city, marking the site of the ancient capital of Sogdiana, the Marakanda of Alexander's historians and well known to the Chinese records. Nearer still were to be seen the noble monuments with which the Emperor Timur had adorned this centre of mediaeval Mughal greatness. But the Russian part of Samarkand appeared to have grown greatly since my first visit fifteen years before and looked even more than before like a town of Eastern Europe.

There was much in the streets of the Russian town to call to mind the sad fact of the great struggle shaking the foundations of modern Europe. There were signs also