

it half-swamped by an excess of irrigation such as this thirsty soil is, no doubt, in periodical need of. But the raised avenues between the cross rows of poplars were above the water and at one point left room enough for my tent. So the pleasure of being among trees and green hedges overcame all sanitary scruples, and when the camels arrived by nightfall I felt quite pleased with my new quarters. The moonlight glittered brilliantly on the water-logged ditches and fields, and around ruled a delightful silence, a foretaste of the desert that lay so near.

On the following morning I started with quite an imposing cavalcade for the ancient site. A mile to the east of my camp all cultivation ceased, and a little further all trace of vegetation disappeared. At a distance of about two miles the low ridges of hard-baked loess were covered with fragments of old pottery, glass, and slag, unmistakable evidence of ancient habitations. But no other indications remain of the buildings; the walls of mud or sunburnt bricks of which they must have been constructed, have long ago disappeared, mainly, as subsequent experience showed me, through the erosive action of wind and sand. The people know this ruined waste by the name of Hasa-Tam, and suppose it to have once been the capital of a 'Chinese Khakan' until 'Hazrat Sultan,' *i.e.*, Satok Boghra Khan, destroyed it.

In the middle of the pottery-strewn area, where the ground is slightly raised, I found a tent pitched by the Hsien-kuan's order and a fresh Dastarkhan spread. But it was too early to indulge in such comforts, and the hopes of my guides for a continuation of yesterday's picnic series were doomed to disappointment. The view from the rising ground displayed to the south nothing but a desert plain hidden on the horizon by an ominous dust haze. But to the east and north I could make out a few mounds rising high above the low banks of loess and sand. Sop Niaz Baba, the fine-looking old Aksakal of Beshkarim, who knew the neighbourhood well, spoke of