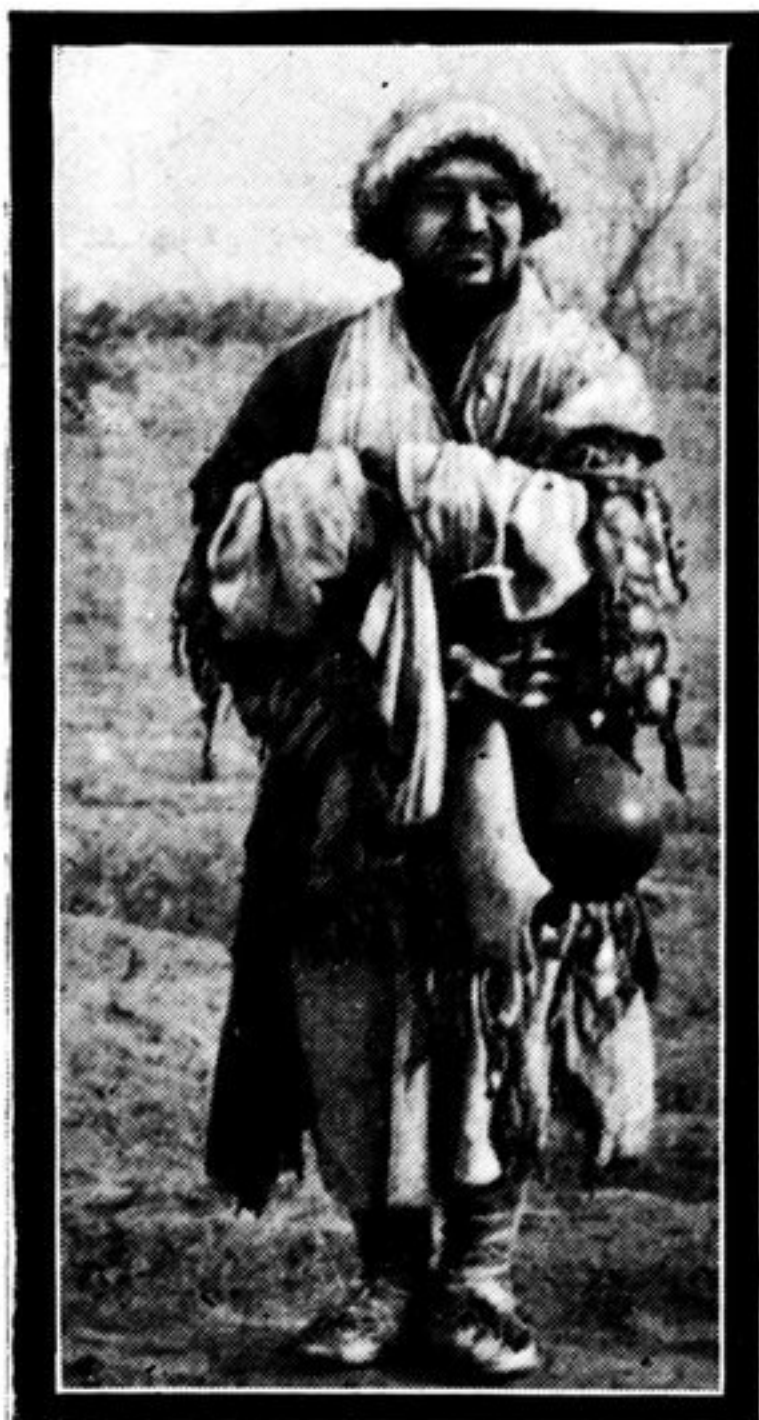


and other strange finds. But the inhabitants, when closely questioned, knew nothing of such sites and still less of such discoveries. So assured of the negative result of my inquiry I turned back to Guma. We took the track across the sand to Töwen-Bazar, one of the more northerly villages which merges imperceptibly into Guma Bazar. It was pleasant to ride in the shady village lanes, with a peep again and again into homely little fruit gardens. The profuse growth of melons and cucumbers was a characteristic feature of all. I passed several open-air paper factories, the pulp, prepared from the bark of the mulberry-tree, drying on little sieve-like screens.

I also met a troop of fantastically clad 'Diwanas,' or beggars, bent apparently on collecting in alms their share of the villagers' harvest. The lanes of the main Bazar through which I returned to camp looked singularly empty after the busy life witnessed on the preceding market-day.



MENDICANT, OR 'DIWANA.'

When I left my cheerful Guma camp on the morning of the 6th of October the sky was of radiant clearness, with scarcely a trace of haze. So when I emerged from the shady lanes of the southern part of the Guma oasis on the open Dasht I was not surprised to find parts of the great snowy range distinctly visible. The snows I saw glittering

far away over the dark lines of the outer mountains evidently belonged to the main range about the Karakorum Passes. Distances seemed to shrink strangely when I thought that behind those stupendous mountain ramparts lay valleys draining to the Indus. Mist and clouds hung over other