

significant that the "printed matter" of this manifest forgery showed a close resemblance to the formulas of certain "block-prints" contained in the Calcutta collection. In fact, my inquiries indicated a close connection between the person from whom the Armenian had purchased the leaves and Islam Akhun, the treasure-seeker whose alleged places of discovery I had vainly endeavoured to locate about Guma. Local rumour credited Islam Akhun with having worked a small factory for the production of "old books." But at this time he was keeping away from Khotan, and there were reasons to postpone personal investigations about him.

On the day preceding my start for the mountains I was cheered by the opportune arrival of my Dak from Yarkand. The contents of my home mails, despatched via India, did not come down later than the 17th of August. But the evening before I had received a letter sent to Kashgar through the Russian post and thence forwarded with the official Chinese Dak, which had been written as recently as the 19th of September. No more convincing proof is needed of the comparative proximity to which the advance of the Russian railway system has brought even this distant corner of Turkestan, described by Sir Henry Yule in 1865 as "the most inaccessible and least known of Asiatic States." The quotation is from the great scholar's "Cathay and the Way Thither," a work which followed me everywhere on my travels, and the reading of which never failed to provide both learned guidance and amusement.