

that easy-going young man did not move far beyond the neighbours' houses, but left the task to some myrmidons of his who managed to mistake the place and never came to help the belated party. When another hour had passed, Islam Beg and Tila Bai were sent out into the night. But it was not until about 10 p.m. that the unfortunate camels turned up at last. An attempt had been made to send on one of the animals that carried my tent and bedding, with the result that it slipped in crossing a canal and gave a thorough ducking to its load. When dragged out of its bath, this camel with the rest had to be taken by a great detour round the heads of the two ravines. The late arrival of the party was thus accounted for; but the explanation did not exactly console me for a half-wet tent, and bedding that had first to be dried. It was nearly midnight when dinner appeared, and some of the rugs had been made fit for use.

The ravines which proved such an obstacle to my clumsy camels had little claim to my regard. And yet my archæological conscience felt grateful to them; for without the formation of one of them, known as the 'Yotkan Yar,' that has cut through the fields of the village of Yotkan, the remains of the old Khotan capital might have been left buried for ages to come. From the statements of the old villagers which I tested with care in the course of my stay, I ascertained that no finds of any kind indicating that an ancient site was buried here below the ground had been made, until the time of Niaz Hakim Beg, the first governor under Yaqub Beg. Two or three years after his appointment, which took place about 1866, the small canal conveying water from the Kara-kash River for the irrigation of the Yotkan fields began to cut for itself a deeper bed in the soft loess, that is, to turn into a 'Yar.' This is the origin of the ravine which begins about one and a half miles to the west of Yotkan at the village of Chalbash, and joins the Yars of Kashe about a mile to the east of the site presently to be noticed. A small marshy depression ('kul') formed a little to the east of Khalche, as that portion of Yotkan is called which lies to the north of the excavated area, and there the villagers accidentally came across little bits of