

feeding value of his ancient straw, or rather, as I ought perhaps to put it from consideration for my honest "treasure-seeking" guide, that he was less of an authority on the keeping of live animals than on most matters dead and buried beneath the desert sands. So when, a day later, Ram Singh arrived with some of my camels that carried his baggage from the Keriya Darya, I had as much as possible of the little store of dry Kumush they had brought along given to the poor famished pony.

Turdi, still finding no purchasers, was now anxious to have it returned to Tawakkel, and, as the return of Kasim's small party made it easier now to spare men from the work, I arranged at once to have it sent back there in charge of two labourers, who were also to take my mail-bag for transmission to Khotan. I had, of course, great doubts as to whether the victim of Turdi's ill-fated experiment would be able to cover the sixty miles or so of desert marching to the river bank. Hence it was no surprise to me when the first arrivals from that side—two men who brought me news from the kindly Amban of Khotan—reported that the pony had succumbed to its sufferings two marches from Dandan-Uiliq.

The last I heard of the ill-fated animal was a request which Turdi addressed to me before I finally left the ruined site, and which showed how curiously the rules of the local administration would affect the quondam owner even far away in the desert. Turdi wanted to have at least the pony's skin carried back to Tawakkel by his companion and sold there. In order to save the tax which would otherwise have to be paid to the local Beg on account of this sale, I was obliged to endorse in due form the quaintly-worded and still more queerly penned Turki application setting forth all the sad circumstances of the case which Turdi got written out by the hand of Niaz, our 'Mullah.' I thought at the time how puzzling a document it would be for an archæologist who might have the good fortune to light upon it in the desert sand some two thousand years hence!