

reached the top level of the rampart. Besides a broad central gateway, closed by a massive wooden door of two leaves, there were two narrower passages flanking it on either side. I noticed exactly the same arrangement in the gates of all Yamens I visited. As the whole of this gate was filled up with sand to its ceiling, 14 feet above the floor, it took two days' hard digging before we had cleared it. Above the gate there once rose another storey, but of this there remained only a few posts and a thick earth flooring. Embedded in the layer of rubbish that covered this we came upon a little store of remarkably well-preserved cereals. There were a couple of pounds of 'Tarigh,' a kind of pulse still cultivated about Keriya, together with small quantities of wheat, rice, oats, another sort of pulse, some roots apparently used as condiments, and a capful of large black currants dried perfectly hard. I had a small quantity of the 'Tarigh' boiled, and found the antique porridge made of it useful for glueing envelopes.

While this excavation was still proceeding, we had a return of the Buran that greeted us on our arrival. Though the force of the wind, this time from the south-west, was somewhat less, the driving sand made it decidedly uncomfortable both in and outside the tent. As the supply of sufficient water for my comparatively large number of men was also a serious difficulty, I felt heartily glad when by the evening of the 17th of March our work at this desolate spot was concluded. Next morning I left Karadong, just as I had reached it, in an atmosphere thick with dust and quite oppressive by its haziness. The look of the desert harmonised with the mournful news conveyed in the small mail sent on from Keriya which met me half-way that day. A short letter from home transmitted viâ Samarkand and Osh, and a communication from Mr. Macartney based on Russian intelligence, informed me of the death of our Queen-Empress. I could see that my two Indian followers, to whom I communicated the news, understood, and in their own way shared the deep emotion which filled me. There were no details to distract attention from the momentous main fact, the disappearance from this worldwide scene of the greatest ruler England has known since her expansion over the seas began.