

already noticed by Dr. Hedin. The supply of water furnished by these wells was decidedly scanty for so large a party, and since the freezing of the damp soil overnight stopped it altogether spare water had to be collected in the evening in two of my iron tanks and stored as ice for use on the next day.

Climatic
conditions.

The winter of the desert had now set in with full rigour. In the daytime while on the march there was little to complain of, for though the temperature in the shade never rose above freezing-point, yet there was no wind, and the delightfully pure air of the desert, and its repose (which nothing living disturbs), could be enjoyed without discomfort. But at night, when the thermometer would go down to minimum temperatures from 0° to -10° Fahr., my small Kābul tent proved a terribly cold abode, and all my fur clothing was needed. Fortunately the ample fuel allowed big fires to be kept up by the men, who crouching around them in closely packed circles passed the nights safely.

Guidance of
Turdi.

On the evening of the fourth day after entering the desert, as we were pitching camp amidst desolate dunes covering dead tamarisk roots, two of the men sent on ahead returned with the report that Kāsim's party had failed to trace the ruined site we were in search of. It was now the turn of old Turdi, my 'treasure-seeking' guide, to prove his knowledge of this dreary region. He had only once in his life approached Dandān-Uiliq from this side, but he had on the march several times told me that he thought the track followed under the guidance of the Tawakkēl hunters was leading too far north. On the plain avowal of their inability to discover our goal I could see a gleam of satisfaction pass over his wrinkled face. A short conversation with the returned men sufficed for him to locate the point reached by Kāsim's party, and early next morning they were sent back with full instructions to guide Kāsim into the right direction. The guidance of our own party was now taken over by Turdi, who, with an instinct bred by the roamings of some thirty years and perhaps also inherited—his father before him had followed the fortunes of a treasure-seeker's life—found his bearings even where the dead uniformity of the sand dunes would to ordinary eyes seem to offer no possible landmark.

Approach to
ancient site.

On December 17 we skirted the foot of several higher ridges of sand or Dawāns, reaching approximately to 25-30 feet above the level of the depressions between them and stretching usually in the general direction from north to south, until in the evening we reached a belt of ground where dead trees were seen emerging from heavy sand. Shrivelled and bleached as they appeared, Turdi and the men could recognize among them trunks of the Toghrak or wild poplar, and some other jungle trees, unmistakable proofs that we were in an area once reached by water. Turning now to the south-east we came, about one and a half miles further, upon stretches of bare loess with an extensive line of hollows, curiously resembling a dry river course, yet undoubtedly only a result of wind erosion. In one of these steep-banked hollows we succeeded in digging a well, and thus saved ourselves a search in the dark for the spot which alone, according to Turdi's knowledge, offered water in the immediate vicinity of the ruins. On the following morning, December 18, after turning a great Dawān, this one with a main direction from north-east to south-west, Turdi guided us to the isolated remains of a much-decayed small structure to be described hereafter, and a little over two miles further south I found myself within view of the ruins which mark the site of Dandān-Uiliq.

First view of
ruins.

Scattered in small groups over an area which my subsequent survey (see the plan in Plate XXIV) showed to extend for about one and a half miles from north to south, with a width of close on a mile, there rose from among the low dunes the remains of buildings modest in size but of manifest antiquity. Where the sand had blown away, the walls, constructed throughout of