

At Miragram, a hamlet as pretty as its name sounds, I found a delightful camping-ground in the large orchard of the Sub-Hakim of the uppermost Yarkhun Valley (Fig. 19). By the side of Obaidullah Khan's house, with a shady stone-paved praying platform, I pitched my tent on a sward that, strewn with fallen plum blossoms, looked as if sprinkled with snow. The evening air was still and mild, and all aided the illusion that I was once more in one of the favoured little oases by the edge of the Turkestan desert. Obaidullah's house, modest rubble-built hovel as it looked from the outside, within proved a museum of local architectural ornament and household art. There were delightfully quaint bands of fresco decoration in terracotta, black and white, on the walls of verandahs, with motifs of the lotus, the Chakra, and four-petalled flower, looking exactly as if derived from the frescoed walls of the ancient halls I had excavated in 1901 at the Niya site. The parlour and living-room of the house showed panelled walls and carved pillars of excellent workmanship, with a display of graceful Aptabas, Chaugans, and other household utensils such as I had never suspected behind the modest exterior (Fig. 20).

What with Chitral and Badakhshan carpets, an old inlaid flint-lock, and other details, I had before me a picture arranged as it were by the brush of an old Dutch painter. I did my best by camera and notes to retain a record of all that went to make up this old-world interior, while Naik Ram Singh's pencil was busy in sketching the antique designs reproduced in the wood-carving. Gladly would I have acquired the whole of this state room, if only I had had the means to move the *ensemble* and somewhere to set it up again. But to accept the carved Mihrabs, which the owner was ready to remove from the panelled walls when I examined and admired them, would have been an act of vandal destruction. For this self-restraint I had my reward when my host, evidently prompted by his women-folk who were watching from behind screens, proceeded to exhibit before my eyes the contents of the family jewel-box. The amulets, ear-rings, necklaces, etc., all showed how faithfully the silversmith's art had retained in these