

empires, had somewhat suffered from the drawbacks of honourable isolation. Now the presence of those rival dignitaries supplied a stimulating sense of diplomatic competition, besides society of some kind and increased responsibilities.

For myself I had reason to feel grateful for the newly built official rest-house by which the latest nominee to the Sarikol Ambanship had marked his desire for public improvements. A little Bazar, too, consisting of a row of mud-built booths just below Sher Muhammad's modest house, attested the Amban's good intentions. But their execution, plus certain financial recompenses exacted for his official exile in such a region, had cost money to poor Sarikol, and just then the Amban had found it prudent to take leave to Kashgar and meet local complaints before higher authority in person. So when I returned at the Yamên the visit his secretary had paid me, I had to content myself, instead of the Amban's presence, with viewing the proofs of his up-to-date tastes in the shape of photography, Russian colour prints, a gramophone, and the like. Strangely out of place they seemed in the grim and confined fort quarters; but manifestly the world was moving, even on the Pamirs.

I gained brighter impressions when I went with Sher Muhammad to pay my respects to Captain Bobusheff commanding the Russian garrison. The space inside the small post, a sort of defensible barrack square, was here confined enough. But the captain, a fine-looking, fair-haired young officer, and his lady, who did not seem to have suffered much from their exile in such depressing surroundings, gave me the friendliest welcome. The mid-day meal I shared with my hosts and the 'Feldscher' or military assistant surgeon, passed very pleasantly; for luckily the captain and myself could make up for our mutual linguistic deficiencies by fluent conversation in Turki. The captain was looking forward to be relieved from this solitary post in a few months. Yet in spite of all the privations in the way of comforts and society to which they had been exposed for over two and a half years, neither he nor his wife seemed to bear Sarikol a grudge.