

I succeeded in unearthing from a hovel and enticing outside by the promise of a glittering silver piece, I had regained the high road thick darkness spread round about me.

Slowly I groped my way onwards, my worn-out pony stumbling in the ankle-deep dust. Grateful I felt for such guidance as the trees of the avenue gave with which we came in collision, and for the slight glimmer of light which at fitful intervals filtered through the murky air from humble booths occasionally passed by the roadside. The desolation of this great thoroughfare, which I remembered so busy in daytime with traffic between the 'New' and 'Old' cities, seemed almost uncanny and its length never-ending. At last when I had safely crossed the Kizil-su bridge and was getting among the silent suburbs of the 'Old Town,' the force of the Shamal slightly abated. Too wary now to trust to short cuts in such darkness, I kept steadily on till I struck the city walls—just on the side most remote from the Macartneys' residence. The city gates had been closed hours before for the night, and but for the howling of the dogs it might have been a city of the dead along the walls of which I was wending my way.

With the poor pony almost collapsing from fatigue and myself fairly worn out by the long day and the choking dust, I found myself at last, about 10 P.M., in the lane leading between gardens and fields to the Macartneys' house. What a relief it was when I recognized the familiar gate of Chini-bagh and found it still open! My shouts in the spacious outer court were soon answered by Turki servants who remembered me well, and a few moments later the heartiest welcome greeted me from my friends who had waited and waited and given me up at last. It took some time before I could clear off sufficiently my crusts of dust to allow me to sit down at a civilized dining-table, and midnight had long passed before the steady flow of news and talk after such long separation would let me seek rest. Yet it was cheerful, then and since, to look back on the hard ride which had brought to a fit close that journey of six weeks' 'rush.'