

at Kashgar during the preceding autumn, I could rest content with what my glasses showed me.

The ride back in the evening was delightful. Even before we reached the oasis, the weary desolation of the baked grey Dasht was relieved by the steady flow of mounted village folk returning from the Kashgar Bazar day. As soon as we passed the edge of the irrigated area, all senses felt revived by the fresh air, the brilliant colours, and the life pulsating around us. As I rode in the grateful shade of big poplars and mulberry-trees along the winding high road, my eyes never stopped feasting on the pictures which the yellow expanses of ripening corn, broken by deep green groves of orchards and the gleaming white cupolas of half-ruined cemeteries (Fig. 41), presented in the warm glow of the evening sun. The endless succession of villagers' parties riding gaily homewards on ponies and donkeys seemed like a rippling human stream, and the road, which traffic has worn into the soft loess soil to a depth of several feet below the adjoining ground-level, like a canal specially made to receive it. To the hardy little animals, which in the morning bring to market their masters mounted above heavy loads of country produce—for no Turkestan cultivator ever walks if he can help it—this return home in the evening with much-lightened burdens must seem a positive treat.

Of course, market day in town is the right occasion for the display of fine clothing, and the large proportion of well-dressed figures among the peasants, and especially their women-folk, was a striking proof of the prevailing prosperity. The bright red gowns of loose cut which local fashion favoured among these Kashgarian ladies, supplied splendid patches of colour, and the fine peaked fur caps in more sombre hues which completed the costumes looked both picturesque and imposing. But I could not help pitying their wearers on such a trying summer day. The young folk manifestly shared my feelings; for wherever the road crossed canals we saw them full of frolicsome children splashing in the chocolate-coloured water. The Tümen River, where we forded it in view of the Russian Consulate grounds, spread out its evening