

one's self still lives among those scenes. This was now my happy experience. Already late on the previous night a messenger brought intelligence to my camp that arrangements had been made for over a week past to receive me at Tarbogaz, the lonely Langar which forms Khotan's frontier watch-station, as it were, westwards. So I was not surprised when, on my passage through the curious sand-hills which stretch east of the 'Pigeons' Shrine,' I was met by quite a cavalcade of Beks sent from the Amban's Ya-mên with their attendants. In one of them, Roze Bek, I recognised the favourite interpreter of P'an Tadjên who five years before had been deputed to escort me on my departure by this very route.

Green and smiling looked the rural scenery from Tarbogaz onwards. Land that I well remembered as a sandy waste with scrub and reeds, had been reclaimed for cultivation by a new canal; a reassuring proof at the outset that the old oasis could still carry on its fight against the desert—in spite of 'desiccation.' I had much to ask from my escort about old friends, big and small; and before I had finished my queries, I found myself riding past Zawa-kurghan, the quaint quadrilateral stronghold by which the last 'king of Khotan,' Habibullah 'the Haji,' in 1864-66 had thought to ward off all invasion. In the Bazar close by all looked gay and cheerful, just as when I had bid farewell here to honest old Turdi, my desert guide,—as Fate willed it, for ever. For over two years now the old 'treasure-seeker' had gone to his rest, alas! from the prison gate. The absence of his familiar figure was the only shadow cast on this bright day.

At Zawa I found the neat little official rest-house by the road-side gaily decked with red cloth, and refreshing tea and fruit ready on the raised central platform of the courtyard. Fresh evidence, too, of the Amban's attention came in the form of pony-loads of fodder for my animals and provisions for myself, offered as a special sign of regard at my entrance into the district. The Kara-kash River, now swollen by the melting snows, could not be crossed on the high road that leads straight to Khotan town. Boats were to be found only at Kara-kash town, some ten miles farther down, and