

from Kashmiri immigrants, etc., passed me as it were in review.

The crossing of the Kara-kash river, now in full flood, took us a long time; for though there were two fairly big ferry-boats available for our party and baggage, the rapidity of the current flowing at over one yard in the second, and still more the sand-banks, sorely tried the modest skill of the 'Suchis' or watermen. We crossed about a mile and a half below the town, where the river flowed in two branches about 60 and 150 yards broad. The depth of the water in the middle and towards the east bank, where the current was setting, was up to eight or nine feet. As far as Khan-arik we crossed a well-cultivated tract belonging to the Sipa canton. Then followed a belt of marshy ground, and farther on towards Lasku the sands of Balamas-kum, an inlet from the true desert on the north which irrigation is now slowly reconquering.

It was in the midst of this glaring waste, where the thermometer at 10 A.M. showed a close approach to 100° Fahr. in the shade, that I was solemnly received by my old friend Badruddin Khan, the chief Afghan trader of Khotan (Fig. 50), and some representatives of the Indian community. It was a large gathering, showing curiously how much the general economic advance of Chinese Turkestan has brought Khotan also nearer. In addition to Afghan traders chiefly from Kabul, Pishin, and Bajaur settled here years ago, there appeared two Hindus, and even a full-fledged 'native doctor' in the shape of M. Abdul Aziz, late Hospital Assistant at Kashgar. The last, a much-travelled Muhammadan from the vicinity of Delhi, had during his temporary stay at Khotan found a big field for practice with all the varied chronic diseases prevailing in the oasis. But he complained, with good reason, no doubt, of the backward notions of his well-to-do patients, who were slow to realize that they owed him more substantial rewards than words of gratitude and offers of prayers.

But more interesting to me than this Aesculapius, who dressed in Franco-Turkish fashion—he had lived for some time in Mecca and Bushire—and talked English of sorts,