

Pusha Valley, the flooded condition of all streams was a source of great risks to both men and baggage. If only for the sake of fuller descriptive details, I greatly regretted that my K  k-yar work and other reasons had prevented my sharing this tour. But Ram Singh's topographical work had been effected very thoroughly, and the plane-table sheets he brought back left little to fill up in the blank space which my previous detailed map of the Khotan region prominently displayed in its south-west corner.

For the sake of giving Ram Singh and his plucky myrmidon Jasvant Singh a minimum of time for rest and the many repairs which their sadly battered equipment required, I had to extend my stay at Khotan to five days. The manifold preparations I had to push on, both for our expedition into the mountains and for the archaeological campaign to be commenced in September, made these days seem far too short. Only for an hour or so could I emerge in the evening from the busy workshop of Nar-bagh. In one of the tanks in its arbours we put together and successfully tried our raft of inflated skins (Fig. 53). There were constant interviews with 'treasure-seekers' whom Badruddin Khan had hunted up to gain information as to any possible sites awaiting excavation. Since my explorations of 1900-1901 the ancient profession of searching for 'treasure' in the Taklamakan seemed to have languished.

Even old Turdi, my faithful guide of that winter, was said to have only once subsequently visited the desert; some three years before my return he was so ill advised as to smuggle a Beg of Khotan, who had reason to fear the wrath of the Amban, through the desert to the lower Keriya River. The malcontent Beg thence pluckily made his way right through the Taklamakan to Shahyar, only to be caught there by his pursuers and brought back in ignominy. Poor Turdi himself naturally fell into disfavour for this exploit. For six months he was kept imprisoned on a trumped-up charge of cattle theft in which he got implicated through some relatives of shady character. What knowledge, if any, he had of the latter's doings human justice will never clear up; for Chinese criminal procedure in these parts knows no elaborate *dossiers*, and my honest 'treasure-