

help and attention, and his wish that we may meet again found sincere response in my heart. But was it to be at Khotan or somewhere far away in the north where my energetic Amban friend might be looking out for early promotion?

A large posse of Begs accompanied me across the Yurung-kash to the boundary of the newly established sub-district of Lop, formed out of those cantons of the old oasis which are watered by canals on the right bank of the river. There I bade farewell too to honest Islam Beg, in whose eyes I could read true regret that he was not to share my wanderings farther. Directing my heavy baggage in charge of my Chinese secretary to Yurung-kash Bazar, I myself set out northward. A ten miles' ride took me through the fertile village tract of Jiya to the edge of the desert near Suyu. There ponies for the baggage and supplies for the next few days awaited me. Roze Akhun, too, had collected there his band of labourers who were to take their share in prospective excavations.

The bare gravel Sai with high dunes on either side on which we emerged almost immediately after leaving the shady groves of Suyu and Imam Asim's Mazar, looked strangely familiar, in spite of the five and a half years since I returned here from my Rawak labours, and the total absence of landmarks. The cloudy grey sky, so rare in this region, had been the same then, and this exact reproduction of the atmospheric conditions largely accounted for the feeling. The broad gravel belt, clearly marked as an ancient bed of the Yurung-kash and still known as 'Kone-darya,' offered easy going in spite of occasional low dunes. Yet it was dark long before I could hope to reach Rawak. So we camped in the desert by a small brackish well which 'Otanchis,' or men bringing fuel from the riverine jungle farther north, had dug by the roadside. Next morning we struck due north and, after crossing for some six miles a belt of steadily rising dunes, I sighted once more the white brick pile of the ruined Stupa of Rawak.

My thoughts had dwelt often on this imposing old ruin and the fine series of sculptures brought to light by