

extended over miles of this strange silent valley, flanked by big 'Dawans' of dunes rising to two hundred feet or more, and looking over this flat expanse like chains of true hills. Ibrahim who stood by my side had vainly searched this great Nullah and others west of it for several marches in the hope of more ruins. Here was clearly the depression into which the flood-water of the Niya River had once been diverted below the head of the canals irrigating the ancient settlement. But certainly it had seen no water for long ages. Over all this strange ground desiccation was most plainly written.

Though the minimum temperature of the night before had fallen to 20 degrees Fahrenheit below freezing-point, the sun at mid-day shone with such force as to make the tramp across the dunes by the side of the parched-up river quite trying. So a short rest after our return to the southernmost ruin was welcome. As I sat by the side of the small tank in the shade of its bleached and splintered trees, I thought the time opportune for securing a souvenir of those who laboured with me at this oasis of the dead. So a group of my Indian helpmates, with the most familiar figures from among our Niya diggers, was quickly formed under the trees which seventeen centuries of desert storms had failed to uproot (Fig. 101). Worthy Ibrahim Beg was made to sit in the centre swinging an ancient rod, as was his wont in urging on the lagging. 'Kardash Beg,' my little terrier, who seems always happy to pose before the camera, was, of course, by my side showing his interest in the proceedings.

The ponies summoned from Tulküch-köl then met us, and the ride back to Imam Ja'far's Mazar through the forest, first dead and then gradually changing into a sylvan wilderness still alive with all the glow of autumn tints, was delightful. Never had I seen in Turkestan such blazing colours under a deep blue sky. With a feeling of respect I passed the deep 'Yars' furrowing the jungle. Might they not have seen floods that had once brought water into the distant desert valley I had toiled through that morning? The trees about Tulküch-köl seemed giants, a picture of what the dead trunks of the ancient colony may