

beams. The only 'find' rewarding the clearance of it was some wheat straw embedded in the flooring, a proof that cultivation was once carried on here. It was of interest, too, to discover that a deeply cut channel took off from the river above Korgach and passed through the dense jungle to the north-west. Mihman declared that he had followed it to the vicinity of the abandoned fort village beyond Bilel-konghan, a distance of some eighteen miles.

It was late in the evening before I recrossed the river above the grazing grounds of Tokuz-köl, and found my camp pitched amid Toghrak groves and luxuriant Kumush beds at Kök-jilga-öghil not far from its right bank. There a mass of urgent correspondence, which needed despatch to Kashgar and India before I started on the long trek eastwards, kept me busy at work all next day. It was pleasant to feel that the halt meant a long day of luxurious ease for my men, with abundance of water and fuel, and unlimited grazing for my hard-trying camels and ponies. Four of the Endere people were sent ahead to clear the wells at our prospective halting stages.

Then on November 15th we set out for the journey to Charchan, which we were to cover in six marches, just as old Hsüan-tsang had done. It was the same silent uninhabited waste he describes between Niya and Charchan, with the drift sand of the desert ever close at hand. "The tracks of wayfarers get effaced, and many among them lose their way. On every side there extends a vast space with nothing to go by; so travellers pile up the bones left behind to serve as road-marks. There is neither water nor grazing, and often hot winds blow. Then men and animals lose their senses and fall ill." Nor was it strange for the pious pilgrim in such lonesome wilds to give credence to the stories he heard about demons which with their singing and wailing caused people to go astray and perish. But for those who like myself had already passed over worse ground, there were other and less forbidding features to observe along this ancient desert high road.

The greatest part of its length, some 106 miles from the Endere River to Charchan, and almost all bearing to