

öghil, where Ismail proposed to find a ford, the ice-crust lying over the extensive mud banks proved too thin to carry men. But they were safely crossed all the same by Ismail and the Charchan man whom I had taken along to push my cyclometer for road measurement. Then the two men waded pluckily through the two channels of swift-running water, each approximately fifty yards broad and nearly four feet deep in the middle. To look at their shivering bare legs, cut by the ice cakes in more than one place, as they tried to warm themselves by a fire after returning from their reconnaissance, made me think of the French pioneers who, working to their waist in the ice-filled Berezina, built the bridges that were to save the fleeing remnants of the Grande Armée. Ismail, in spite of his trying experience, volunteered to carry me across, and, feeling much in doubt as to whether my feet were equal to such a passage, I gladly accepted his offer. The crossing on my hardy mount was effected in safety though not without trouble; for when Ismail came to climb the steeply cut bank towards the shallow which divided the two channels, he failed to secure a foothold on the slippery ice and came down on his face and hands, giving me a fair ducking. So I, too, had something to dry by the roaring fire which the men kindled amidst the thick reeds of the opposite bank.

The 'Tim,' found quite close to where we had crossed and only some hundred yards off the river-bank, proved to be the ruin of a small square structure in solid masonry which in all probability had served as a Stupa base. The extant portion was only eleven feet long, standing at a height of about seven feet above the present ground level. The great size of the bricks and their careful setting attested the antiquity of the structure. Its interest lies in the fact that it proves the existence of a Pre-Muhammadan settlement in the immediate vicinity of the present river course, and thus supports the presumption that the latter has changed less in its main direction than the many dry branches and lagoons met with on either side might otherwise lead one to suppose.

The route, where we regained it after this excursion,