

Beyond we struck a thin belt of cones with dead tamarisk which seemed to promise some shelter, and there I had camp pitched. Our reckoning would make us within eight miles of Hedin's big 'Pao-t'ai' ruin, and eagerly I scanned the horizon from the top of a large sand-cone with my prismatic glasses for that or any other landmark. But in vain.

The men from Charklik had started with a heavy heart and many misgivings at the outset. Now the exposure and fatigue of six weary marches over ground which seemed steadily to get worse, had increased their dejection. If I did not succeed in guiding them within a day or two to the ruins which I had definitely announced as the goal of this trying expedition, they would despair altogether and be likely to give trouble by attempts to desert or force a return. So I thought it right to show a face of sanguine confidence, though I knew well that on ground such as this, and at the rate we were obliged to move, no amount of care in taking our bearings with forward and backward rays, etc., could be absolutely depended upon to assure a true course.

The night was made miserable by the violent gale which swept down from the north-east about 1 A.M. and nearly blew my tent down. I had previously got the outer tent-pegs secured as well as we could. But under the strain of the rapidly swelling blast one rope broke, then another, while the inner fly of the tent was bodily lifted off the ground, together with the iron nails which fastened it down. I woke up half-smothered with sand, and not until I had piled up large lumps of clay all round the edges of the outer fly, with the help of the men brought from their distant camp-fires by my shouts, was a precarious stability secured for my shelter. It was as well that with my heavy woollen underclothing, intended for semi-Arctic wear, fur-lined vest for night use, and big fur boots of 'Gilgit' type, I was equipped for such outings. The men were all well provided with sheep-skins, padded 'Chappans' of cotton beneath, and felt socks and leather 'Charuks' which never came off their feet; but had it not been for the plentiful fuel supplied by the bleached tree trunks, they would