

have suffered even more from exposure than they did. The gale lessened somewhat after daybreak, and once the driving of sand ceased, it was remarkable how quickly the atmosphere cleared. But, of course, what food I got that morning was permeated with sand—as on many occasions thereafter.

It was nearly nine by the time I had got my convoy started, and we had not marched far before the sun broke brightly through the dust haze. Yet with that irrepressible wind steadily catching us from the north-east the cold seemed to grow more intense as the day wore on. Even a double supply of my warmest caps and gloves failed to keep head and hands warm. But if that day the conditions felt Arctic, there was exciting expectancy to keep the heart warm. We had advanced only three and a half miles northward across Yardangs and low dunes when in quick succession three Chinese coins of the Han type were picked up along our route. They, with some bronze arrow-heads and small fragments of metal objects of uncertain use which now cropped up, were a clear indication that we were nearing a site of the historical period. After another four miles, we struck a broad and well-marked depression running with a slight bend from west to east and lined with rows of dead Toghraks and decayed tamarisk cones. Mullah, without hesitation, recognized in it the ancient river course which he remembered having seen south of Hedin's ruined sites. Once beyond this belt the eye ranged wider, and soon the outermost low range of the Kuruk-tagh, all red and yellow barrenness, came into full view across a flat expanse terribly scoured and furrowed by erosion.

I had promised that morning a good reward in silver to the man who should first sight a ruin. Impelled by the hope of earning it and the wish to allay their anxiety as to the end of this quest, labourers and all were moving ahead with wholly unwonted alacrity. Great was the excitement therefore when, from the top of a plateau-like Yardang which he had climbed in advance, while his animals were halted and we were setting up the plane-table about a mile from the dry river bed, one of the