

the structure; but, curiously enough, a few feet down the south-west slope a small refuse heap had survived, which yielded some fragmentary Chinese records besides the usual miscellaneous rags of silk and canvas.

The clearing of the ground which yielded those fine architectural wood-carvings was still proceeding when the dusk began to descend upon us. Absorbed by the interest of my find I was not as likely as the tired labourers to have my attention distracted by the approach of some men from the camp side. But suddenly I noticed a commotion among the groups of diggers, and shouts of 'Dakchi keldi' ('the Dak-man has come') struck my ears. I could not believe them. But as I looked up, my eyes fell in amazement upon the familiar figure of honest Turdi, wearily trudging towards me with a bag over his shoulder, and accompanied in great glee by Muhammadju, Jasvant Singh, and the strange figure of a Loplik hunter.

At first the sudden apparition of my faithful 'Dakchi' from Khotan seemed miraculous. On November 15th I had seen him last setting out from the Endere River with my mail bag, which he had strict orders to deliver personally to Badruddin Khan at Khotan. He had done so twelve days later. Since parting I had marched over 500 miles in the opposite direction almost without a halt—and yet here he was in the midst of this awful Lop Desert to deliver to me Badruddin Khan's devoted Salams and three Kashgar Dak bags tucked away into one! All work stopped at once, and in the midst of an admiring circle of labourers, grateful like school-boys for an early closing of class, honest Turdi was besieged with questions. Yes, he had trudged it to Khotan and duly seen the Khan Sahib; slept a night in his house, and been peremptorily sent off next morning with this fresh Dak, but mounted on a hired pony this time, and provided with a good fur coat. Twenty-one days had sufficed for my hardy postman to cover the thirty usual marches reckoned between Khotan and Abdal. There he found that I had left for the desert without instructions for any one how to follow me. With a mind which had more than the usual share of dog-like fidelity—and simplicity, he took this for a reason to push on and join me.