

Early on the morning of January 15th I started again down the Charchan River with the intention of making eastward for Miran. We had left behind the point where the track to Charklik branches off southward, and were moving across a level scrub-covered plain towards the grazing-ground of Koköl-satma, where we were to halt for the night, when our caravan was caught up by a mounted messenger despatched from the Charklik Ya-mên. The cover which he brought proved to be a telegram from Macartney, sent to Kara-shahr in reply to my letter of November 15th, informing me that the sum of 1500 Taels in Chinese silver, which I had asked him to place at my disposal through the good offices of the Tao-t'ai of Ak-su, was to be available for me, not at Charklik where the local administration was manifestly unable to raise such a sum, but at the treasury of Kara-shahr.

Now this place, the headquarters of a district situated on the great high road from Kashgar to Urumchi and into China proper, lay some three hundred and fifty miles away to the north. The telegram had taken over a fortnight to reach me from there, and while I fully appreciated the saving of time effected by the use of the wire between Kashgar and Kara-shahr, I could not help feeling disappointed on finding from an accompanying Chinese-Turki epistle that the prefect of Kara-shahr, evidently fearing risks about the transmission of the silver, had left it to me to arrange for fetching it. It was practically impossible to achieve this without returning first to Charklik; and as it was important that I should receive my reserve of Chinese silver horse-shoes before setting out through the desert for Tun-huang, I decided to make my way to Miran *via* Charklik.

A number of other reasons also urged this change of route. Ram Singh, the Surveyor, had reported his arrival at Charklik, but added that increased rheumatism wholly incapacitated him from work. Several of my men had suffered severely under the hardships of our desert work; Muhammadju in particular had never ceased groaning for some days past, complaining of pains which suggested pleurisy—or a creditable imitation of it. A few days' rest