

effect a footing, his ever kindly and urbane presence being evidently welcome as a set-off against the invasion of us bearded barbarians. He made friends at once with the children, who were hugely enjoying all the unwonted bustle. Two large but ruinous rooms took in the Surveyor and Naik, with honest Jasvant Singh, who was glad to do his cooking under a roof even though half of it had fallen.

The spacious central hall ought to have offered me shelter. But there was no trace of a fire-place or stove to warm it, and with gaping fissures in walls and roof it would have been quite impossible to overcome the freezing chill of the place. So it was allotted for the keeping of my boxes and the reception of official visits. I myself vastly preferred my cosy little tent outside among the leafless fruit trees of the garden. There was relative peace and plenty of fresh air, with a chance of warming oneself in the sunshine whenever the dust haze would allow this to break through. It was dusk before I could seek a little peace and warmth in my tiny travelling homestead. There had been trouble enough in settling down, quite apart from the long search for quarters. To secure the badly needed supplies for men and beasts proved a serious business.

We had indeed arrived in the centre of a prosperous large oasis, but there was no obsequious Beg to take orders and produce what we needed; nor was it of any use to despatch the Ya-mên attendants to the town for what was most urgently wanted, unless they were provided with cash for immediate payment. And what a trouble it took to produce that cash in a form suited for local use! Nobody in Tun-huang would on any account take payment in the coined silver of the 'New Dominion,' and all the silver bullion I had brought consisted of big 'horse-shoes.' The expedient of sending one of them to the blacksmith to be cut up into chips for 'small change' did not dawn upon us that first day. At last one of the few Turki traders came to the rescue by changing a few Taels of silver into long sausage-like strings of copper 'cash' at a rate which suited his fancy.

Even then it took hours before fuel, fodder, etc., arrived;