

a Begship at Charklik, had sought here an asylum from his Turkestan creditors. Like the versatile person he was, he had kept an eye open everywhere for 'Kone-shahrs' with possible treasure. So he was able to tell me of ruins he had seen to the north-east of Tun-huang; of a walled town which lay half-buried under sand near Nanhua, to the south-west, and so on. Vague as much of this information necessarily was, it helped in forming my plans, and was a perfect godsend when compared with the exasperatingly stolid and steadfast declaration of utter ignorance which met every enquiry addressed to the Chinese of Tun-huang.

But the most urgent task on hand was the preparation of the detailed accounts which I owed for long months past to the Comptroller of India Treasuries and the Indian Survey Department, and which I was anxious to despatch safely through the last of the Khotan Dakchis I had kept by me. Ever since the preceding summer there had been no rest available for dealing with this accounts' incubus which I had to face single-handed. What its weight was may be gauged from the fact that it meant not merely extracting all and sundry items, however small, from my general cash record into properly balanced 'Monthly Cash Accounts' in due official form, as if I were my own 'Treasury Officer,' but also dividing all entries relating to transport and the like according to whether they were to be debited against the Government grant or the Survey of India's subsidy meant for 'the Survey Party,' or, finally, against my own personal purse, which would in due course recoup them from authorized 'Travelling and Halting Allowances.' No wonder that for five or six days I felt as if condemned to living more or less in the atmosphere of an Indian Office room—though an uncommonly cold one.