

fragments lumped-up. Of course, I took care to supply him with a quantity of tiny chips to adjust slight differences. It took hours before such a settlement was completed. But I could go on with other business, and nobody else seemed much to mind about his own time. Everybody went away satisfied, but I wondered what further efforts it would cost each group to settle their mutual reckonings!

I scarcely could tell now how that single day's halt in Tun-huang, on April 4th, sufficed for all the manifold preparations for my main campaign on the remains of the ancient *Limes* in the desert westwards. But I managed somehow to raise a month's supplies, twelve fresh labourers, additional camels for transport, and even as many Ketmans as by fair words and high prices I could get hold of among the Muhammadan refugees at Tun-huang. Experience had shown me how much more useful for excavation those broad Turkestan hoes are than the spades and shovels of the Chinese settled in the oasis.

In the morning Ramzan, my faithless cook, turned up to make an unconditional surrender. His sudden return alone had, as expected, excited suspicion at Tun-huang, and he would have been obliged to await my own arrival under arrest at the Ya-mên had not Zahid Beg agreed to bail him out and keep watch over him. So the shifty, intractable Kashmiri realized that he had little chance of escaping from his contract even when near a great high road, and sulkily asked for his desertion to be forgiven as a sort of mental distemper brought on by the air of the desert. It was the story over again of Sadak Akhun, my queer cook in the winter of 1901, and the Jins of the Taklamakan. In the afternoon I spared time for return visits to the two Ya-mêns, and on my way, noting the excellent wood-carving and ornamental brickwork on the gates of dilapidated old houses, again rejoiced that Tun-huang town at least had escaped the utter havoc worked by Tungan ferocity elsewhere.

My plan was first to move south-west along the foot of the mountains to Nan-hu, a small oasis where Zahid Beg's information and Roborowsky and Kozloff's map indicated the existence of ruins. From there by going due north I