

or coined pieces of silver, were, indeed, freely circulating and readily taken at Hami; but the real medium of exchange was still the small Chinese copper 'cash,' and the discount between a Tael in this copper coin and in silver was considerable enough to require attention. I soon found out that fully twenty per cent could be saved by making all payments by means of local bankers' notes. Of course privileged people like my own followers could claim their dues in coined silver.

By the morning of October 24th I could at last commence my short tour in the district. Enquiries about old remains had elicited that certain ruins to be found west of Hami had already been partially explored by German archaeologists, Dr. A. von Lecoq and Professor A. Grünwedel, working from the side of Turfan. So, as survey work was to be done in the mountains, I decided first to visit the remains of some old 'Karauls' and shrines at the foot of the Karlik-tagh, that easternmost rampart of the T'ien-shan. Guided by a pleasant old Beg whom the Wang had attached to my camp, I started off with a light equipment. The day's march led almost due north, and for the whole length, close on twenty miles, over the bare gravel of a great alluvial fan.

Almost as soon as we emerged from the dirty Bazar of the Chinese town this dreary waste was entered. The green marshy Nullahs, in which the water of the snow-fed streams comes to light again in the form of limpid springs, were soon left behind. Far away to the west the ruins of some abandoned forts showed clearly above the flat horizon. There was nothing in this dead plain to distract the eye from the long snow-capped range northward. Its last massive offshoot to the east had looked quite imposing from Hami. Though its height does not much exceed 13,000 feet, perpetual snow-beds and even small glaciers streaked the slopes of the main peaks, and were lit up in rosy tints by a blazing sunset. The length of the twilight reminded me how far northward I had moved since the previous autumn.

Some fourteen miles from Hami we reached the big lonely tower known as Akchik Karaul, which was guiding us