

most of these seemed to come from the south or south-south-west, parallel to the river bed, we thought it best to continue in that direction. We had not gone more than a mile when shouts from some of the men who had spread out in line for a wider search told us that the track had been picked up again. This time the footprints led close along the traces of two camels, and as the camels' feet had left depressions in the sand less easily effaced, the tracking once more became easier. So the chase went on quite merrily for miles. The camels and their pursuers had followed no straight line, but crossed the old river bed again and again. The dunes which had in most places smothered this made heavy going; and what with the many climbs up steep slopes of sand and the hard marching of so many days with scant rations of water, our human pack became sadly straggling. Only Ibrahim Beg kept steadily up with me.

A curious change in the colour of the dunes in and along the river bed, now more greyish than yellow, at first roused hopes that the real river was near. Just thus the high sand had looked near Kara-dong and along the Khotan Darya near Rawak. But this illusion vanished as the number of live Toghraks steadily decreased on the banks. Amidst the dead forest extending on the east bank we came at last upon a sign of life, but of life which might have passed away long centuries ago. Three Toghrak stems roughly cut as if for supporting a roof probably marked an old shepherd's shelter. But the posts were quite white and fissured with age and exposure. Close by the men discovered on a patch of ground, left bare of sand, what seemed to be cow dung. But there was no antiquarian test to gauge the age of such relics and the period when herdsmen had lived here.

After about nine miles we again came upon a group of fine old Toghraks still alive. Here we lost the hunters' footprints, and when my breathless human pack had spotted them again, the track to our dismay took a decided turn to the south-east amidst barren dunes. There was no 'Kötek' here to shelter the footprints, and the search for them became so difficult, and the look of the sandy