

money to buy rank forthwith at Peking. For weeks after his anecdotes and little indiscretions about that quaint 'Civil Service' of the New Dominion which he knew so well, with all its glitter and foibles, were more lively than ever.

It was very hard to say good-bye to P'an Ta-jên for good. So I, too, indulged in a sort of sanguine self-deception by promising to return once more when my Mandarin friend will himself be Fu-t'ai at Urumchi! It is not for me to foresee what official wisdom may yet hold in store for P'an Ta-jên. But can I hope for the freedom to fulfil my part of the promise?

After sending off Lal Singh to the mountains due north I moved up the valley of the Taushkan Darya, the main feeder of the Ak-su River, and after three pleasant marches through almost continuous cultivation (Fig. 311) reached by May 8th the picturesquely situated small town of Uch-Turfan. I found it full of interesting Kirghiz folk from the valley higher up, and from the grazing-grounds on the high T'ien-shan range overlooking it (Fig. 303). The latter forms the boundary towards Russian territory around the Issik-kul Lake, and is crossed here by the Bedel Pass, over which since ancient times an important route has connected the Tarim Basin and Western Turkestan. I had here the satisfaction of visiting the last bit of ground in Chinese Turkestan trodden by Hsüan-tsang, my patron saint, which I had not previously seen. In addition I was able to use a brief stay here for interesting anthropometrical work among the Kirghiz, who have supplied so important an element to the racial composition of the present population in the Tarim Basin, especially in its north-western portion.

From Uch-Turfan I made my way south across barren and yet remarkably picturesque hill ranges, practically unsurveyed before, to the little-known oasis of Kelpin. In the Uch-Turfan Valley I had heard vague stories about ruins of some mysterious town which was said to be sighted on clear days far away in the mountains, but to disappear whenever search for it was made. When on May 11th a thirty-five miles' march in a broad and arid