

have enabled two among them to effect recently the expensive pilgrimage to Mecca. Talking to these worthy Hajis about their experiences on their long journey *via* Samarkand, Baku, Constantinople to the Red Sea, and thence back *via* Bombay, Kashmir, and Ladak, it was pleasant to hear them expatiate on the comforts of Indian travel and on the good treatment they had received on the wonderful 'rail.' The numbers of pilgrims from Chinese Turkestan is rapidly increasing each year, from Khotan, perhaps, even more than from other parts; and I wondered inwardly what gain in the way of enlarged ideas, experience of Western comforts, etc., was being carried back to the country in return for the financial drain which these constant pilgrimages entail. Sums equal to rupees 200-300 were named to me in different places as the cost of the Haj even to pilgrims of the humblest class.

Two days after my arrival I despatched the recalcitrant Yüz-bashi to Khotan under the escort of a Darogha and one of my own men, who was to report to the Amban the story of local obstruction. At the same time I sent the Surveyor to follow a new route to Khotan, skirting eastwards the slopes of the outer range known as Tikelik-tagh, which we had not previously mapped in detail. I myself set out on September 5th for the same goal by the direct track which crosses a western spur of that range over the Ulugh Dawan. I had followed it already in 1900, and so need not describe the four rapid marches which took me down to Khotan. No 'Sahib' of any sort had since travelled through these arid hills and gorges (Fig. 68), and consequently I was not surprised to find every little incident of my former visit faithfully remembered at the few scattered 'Langars.'

Even in such uninviting surroundings, where the water-supply is of the scantiest, I noticed a distinct increase in the small patches of cultivation. At Bizil where the Yurung-kash River leaves the hills for the great alluvial fan of the Khotan oasis, I was greeted on the morning of September 8th with a cheerful Dastarkhan including a profusion of long-missed fruit. But the river there at its debouchure was still far too high to be forded.