

Preface

present time, which I have gathered from reliable sources since my return.

When we started for our four months' tour we had no intention of extending it to Turkestan, but finding that a railway line connected it with the one on which we were travelling, and that it could be reached in three days from Samara on the Trans-Siberian line, we decided to include it in our programme and so vary the journey home. It proved to be of extraordinary artistic interest, not to mention its historical importance both as the centre of Moslem learning and of Russian experiments in civilizing Central Asia. Russia looks with a jealous eye upon the traveller, and a special permit has to be obtained in order to travel through Turkestan, even on the railway line. Not only is it necessary to apply for this through the British Embassy at St. Petersburg, but several weeks elapse before a notification can be received that the Russian Government graciously permits the traveller to cross Turkestan. We were informed also that when all these formalities had been duly observed, the traveller was still liable to be stopped by the police on the ground that they (the police) had not received official notice of the traveller's coming, and in that case he would be ordered to return by the way he came. Despite this discouraging information we determined to try our luck, and in due course received a "note verbale" from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at St. Petersburg, addressed to the British Embassy, permitting us to visit Tashkent, Samarkand,