

comes lost in the sandy desert. Hence the hydrographical value of the three passes which we last crossed over is as follows. The Kara-korum separates the Schejok from the Jarkent-darja; the Suget-davan is the water-divide between the Jarkent-darja and the Kara-käsch-darja or Chotan-darja; and the Sandschu-davan the water-divide between the last-named and the Sandschu river. This stream, which in point of extent cannot in any sense compare with the first two, nevertheless carried, as we found, incomparably the bigger volume; this is because its drainage-area falls for the most part within relatively lower parts of the mountainous country, in which the snows were just then melting rapidly, whereas it was in its source-region that we struck the Jarkent-darja and whilst deep winter still prevailed, but we struck the Kara-kasch in the middle of its course, where also it was again cold.

The glen of Sandschu gave the impression of being very prosperous and well-to-do; the soil, which consists of hard yellow loess deposits, is undoubtedly rich. Against the everlasting yellow background the trees offer a sharp contrast with their thick, fresh green foliage. Amongst the willows grow many fruit-trees, and here and there we caught glimpses of the vivid green of meadows and fields. Thus the glen is, as it were, braided with two ribbons of green and between them flows the river, with the life-giving element, which imparts to them of its superabundance through the instrumentality of innumerable irrigation channels. All the people were looking forward to a copious harvest, and everybody was glad.

At the village of Kurghan we left the river, and at Dung-tscheke we changed the direction of our march from north-east to north-west. By this the glen had already opened out trumpet-wise and lost its mountainous character, as it now sloped with increasing gentleness north-eastwards down to the villages of Sandschu. We climbed up over the hills on the left side of the glen, though we hardly saw them owing to the thickness of the haze. They are composed entirely of soft material — gravel-and-shingle detritus, reddish yellow very spongy clay, and sand. The road then ran on the right-hand side of a watercourse that breaks abruptly down to the river. This stream issues below Dung-tscheke and only carries water after rain. Soon we reached the top of the little secondary pass Savu-davan, having an altitude of 2206 m. On the other side of it, or to the north-west, extends a sort of flat plateau, with stretches of very low hills running from south-west to north-east. It is in fact a slightly undulating steppe without a drop of water, very often indeed with dry watercourses: there is not a single rill to show that it ever rains. And yet there was a sprinkling of steppe plants, and the antelopes sometimes flitted like phantoms through the haze, leaving a long trail of dust behind them. There was a good deal of sand on the surface of the ground, and here and there we observed the first small beginnings of dune formations.

A path leads off to Ghuma a short distance north-west of the top of the pass; but it was swallowed up in the haze; indeed so thick was this that there was nothing to suggest the proximity of the lowlands. We had now left behind us the rich and luxuriant vegetation of the banks of the Sandschu river, which had been invisible to us since we left the pass, and had emerged upon the actual desert. And for a pretty considerable distance our surroundings continued to be the same, the uniformity of the route being relieved by only two stone »signposts» at places