

Majestically beautiful in pink and violet shades, the Qarliq-tagh, now entirely snow-covered, loomed nearer and nearer. On the morning of the 18th we saw it in N. 22° W. Snow-filled wheel-tracks left by a passing cart bore witness to the presence of human beings. Here, too, were small cairns as sign-posts.

THE FIRST SETTLEMENT IN SINKIANG

On January 19th our long spell of solitude was broken. On reaching a stream that flowed along in a three-meter-deep erosion bed we saw, beyond a projecting promontory in the west, an oasis of willows and Lombardy poplars. We proceeded up the valley, following the stream, and presently passed a little temple on our left. On the dark hills near the route throned a *mazar* or grave of a Mohammedan saint with conical cupola and a wall. Grass and wild rose-bushes, yellow mud houses, enclosing walls. Here, near a little grove of willows, we pitched camp, after a march of thirty-three li. The Chinese name of this place was Miao-erh-ku. Not one of the two hundred soldiers who were stationed here at the time of MARSHALL'S visit, was now left. Only a few Chinese agriculturists and three Turks inhabited the spot. One of the latter, seventy-two year old KHODAYER, was the head of the nearby village Tal and owned half the camels that had saved LARSON'S baggage. He had heard that we were an army of two thousand men. It was a pleasure for me to hear Turki, that I had not used for nineteen years.

Here a sheep cost five dollars, and thirty partridges four. We got fine wheat-bread, eggs, onions and cabbages, and after two months and ten days in the desert it seemed to us that we had reached civilization at last.

Towards evening LARSON arrived at the head of the fifty hired camels. Late that night we heard the clank of bells from the west. It was a caravan of a thousand camels and twenty-five tents, on the way to Pao-t'ou. The embargo on traffic had thus been raised.

We stayed over a day in the shadow of Khojam Yagus, the saint's tomb, and were visited by one Captain CHANG, the officer in command of the troops that were to keep an eye on us and our doings. He informed us that YUAN and his column, who had been missing for so long, had passed this place a week previously, a happy piece of news, that relieved us of a great anxiety.

The owners of the hired camels now wanted their beasts back again, and we were therefore obliged to continue our journey in carts. But CHANG explained that everything on wheels had been requisitioned on account of the Chinese New Year which was now impending. While he was still holding forth the Mongol officer TSAI entered my yurt, and he procured us a cart and four horses in a twinkling. LARSON was allowed to keep the hired camels, and that evening he