

the region. The sheikh whom I addressed looked sheepish; the bystanders laughed, and some one said:—

“Oh, yes, he knows how to drive them away. There are many here, not only in the mountains and the desert, but in the village. Look at that man. A ‘jin’ struck him. Can you heal him?”

The man referred to suffered from a large excrescence on the side of the head above the ear. In Khotan and Yarkand, where the people suffer terribly from goitre and stiff necks, it is commonly believed, so I was told, that the ill-natured “jins” have a habit of gripping a sleeping man around the throat, after which the neck swells with goitre. Sometimes the “jins” vary their mischief by cuffing the side of a man’s head, causing a stiff neck.

The four Imams who died so sadly at Imamla must have been well-to-do, to say the least. According to the sheikhs, they cooked their rice in a golden pot, which is still preserved in a rickety mosque, and is used for cooking the sacrifices of pilgrims. The pot is so holy that whoever looks at it is struck blind. I naturally inquired how, then, the meat could be cooked.

“Oh,” answered Kassim Sheikh, my host, “when a sheikh becomes sixty years old, he can see the pot without injury. Even I have never seen it.”

Later, I had a conversation with the old sheikh who acts as “chef of the golden pot,” but refrained from asking questions. He looked like a man able to keep a secret.

An equally remarkable fact was brought to light when I sought for geological information. On asking the source of numerous cobbles and small round boulders of vesicular