

immorality and various other forms of weakness, it would be unfair to attribute all the vices of the Chantos to that cause. Various tribes of Arabs, Turkomans, and even Khirghiz have relatively high standards of morality, although they are stricter Mohammedans than are the Chantos. They preserve the standards as long as they retain the nomadic habit, though, significantly enough, they are said by the Russians and others to begin to deteriorate when they settle into an uneventful oasis life like that of the Chantos, and I myself saw evidences of this in Russian Turkestan.

The essential fact in the life of the majority of the Chantos is that they live in densely populated, but small and isolated oases. Their surroundings are pretty and attractive, but not varied enough to be inspiring. A short period of hard labor suffices to provide sustenance for the whole year, and the rest of the time is given over to prolonged idleness, with leisure for more of evil than of good. The population of the Lop basin is strictly limited by the water supply. The people possess a great advantage over those of most irrigated countries, however, because the loftiness of the mountains causes the maximum flood to come in midsummer. Hence, though few in number, the people live in comfort. In most irrigated countries, such as eastern Persia or Transcaspia, for example, the mountains are so low that the snow largely melts at the end of winter, and the maximum flood comes in the early spring when the grain is being sown or is beginning to grow green. Thereafter the water supply decreases until fall. Every drop is hoarded. Most of the water must be given to the grain fields, which produce the main support of life. Very little is left for fruit trees and vegetable gardens,