



*Chinese soldiers practising target shooting.*

mile it goes over the Psönn. Both arms of the river are shallow, but the spring flood is said to be so strong that the road is impassable for 3 or 4 days. The bridges and banks built over the delta in some places are bad in parts, but could easily be repaired by using trees in the neighbourhood. The improvements necessary to make the road suitable for heavy vehicles are insignificant. With the exception of small strips of field beside a few poor mud huts, the delta is entirely untilled. After about 10 miles, the road leads into an oasis where practically all the land is cultivated. The houses are not gathered together to form large villages — they are built in groups of no more than 3 or 4, but there are a great many such groups. Soon, however, you again reach a barren, desert-like plain, which seems to burn under the hoofs of the horses. It begins about 10 miles from Yapchan, makes a détour a mile or so from there round a couple of huts and continues for a distance of about 2 1/2 miles. The soil is sandy and in some places a layer of white salt is visible on the surface. The monotony is broken by a line of sand dunes, beyond which there is a glimpse of something green, which proves to be the first trees of a little oasis, Seidlar. The shade is welcome and you seat yourself contentedly under a mud wall and slake your thirst with melon — a form of refreshment that is offered in every village. The tilled land at Seidlar — approximately 1,200 mou — is divided among about 120 households, giving them an area of about 10 mou (3 1/2 hectares) each. This would be inadequate in normal conditions and is all the more so here since the soil is poor with a strong admixture of sand, and there is a shortage of water. Such water as there is, is supplied by means of ariqs from the river Altunluk, which flows from Saryal. Wheat and especially maize are the principal crops grown. There is less millet and fruit. About 50 horses, 20 yoke-oxen, 100 cows and 300 sheep are distributed among the different households.

After a pleasant ride of a couple of miles through the oasis, we again entered the desert, with its saliferous soil — luckily for the last time to-day. The verdure of the Yangi Hissar