

from a caravanserai. The population sells grain, if the harvest is tolerable, otherwise a little wood.

After riding for 10 minutes in a SE direction we were in the desert that continued uninterrupted for about 30 miles until we reached the oasis of Kurabat. In the west the same chain of mountains accompanied us, though now quite insignificant in size. With the exception of the Chinese paotai poles and a few mud shelters to enable the traveller to rest in the desert these mountains are the only thing that breaks the endless horizon. The sun is scorchingly hot and the heat is reflected by the hot sand. The »paotai» poles are massive clay towers with a kind of flagstaff stuck into the roof, intended, at any rate in former days, to signal by means of beacons the irruption of an enemy. They were to have been built at a distance of 4 versts (8 li) from each other, but according to Sven Hedin's calculations the distance varies considerably. The mud shelters scattered along the road are sometimes inhabited and provided with enormously deep wells with bad water. The largest of these shelters or sarais lies halfway and is called Aq Rabat. Here there is a Chinese post-office and a shelter for the traveller that is tolerable on the whole. A little fodder, bread, tea and water can be had. The water is drawn from two deep wells with a small leather bucket lowered by a rope. In spite of their shortcomings these shelters can be of good service to a weary traveller. The uninhabited shelters lack the greatest necessity in the desert — water. No vegetation, only sand, stones and more sand with a little gravel. Luckily, it is coarse-grained and the road is hard, so that we suffered less from the dust than the day before. A few miles before Kurabat we saw some creeping grass-like plants that did not even tempt our horses. The heat was oppressive. We gladly shared the small supply of tea in my flask like brothers. The traffic was insignificant, at all events during these days. On the first day we met 30—35 asses from Yarkand with mata, a white, coarse cotton cloth, 25 asses from Karghalik with felt and 25 asses from Khotan with mata. On the second day 17 horses with mata from Yarkand to Andijan and 25 asses with felt and leather from Yarkand to Kashgar. On the third — nothing. — We covered about 27 miles during the day.

Kök Rabat is a large oasis of 200 households with about 8.000 mou of tilled land. The water is conducted along ariqs from the Yarkand darya, although the adverse conditions of the country make it difficult to supply a sufficient quantity of water. Tchumiza and wheat are grown most, but also maize, hemp and some cotton. A mou is sown with 2 tcheraks and yields 10 tcheraks in a good year or 6—7 on the average. One owner of 40 mou had 40 oxen and 3 asses as his cattle. On another area of 50 mou there were 1 horse, 6 oxen, 4 asses and 17 sheep. Produce is disposed of at Yangi Hissar and some grain is sold. Cotton is grown, but is only spun for domestic use.

*October 15th.* The road from Kök Rabat goes almost due south. To the east large uncultivated fields are visible at a short distance, to the west a slight chain of mountains running parallel to the road. Except for very short stretches of sand on low eminences you ride all the time through a cultivated oasis. After 6—7 miles the road turns east and goes on in the same direction with a slight tendency towards the NE as far as the town.