

out of the water and allowed to dry for 24 hours. The product is, of course, a clotted, grey, coarse paper with long fibres, but as it has no competition to face, it has a good sale in the country. During the day we met many caravans of asses, about 140 with paper, sheepskin and principally raisins from Guma to Yarkand, and 20—30 with silk thread, raisins, sheep's hides and carpets from Khotan to Kashgar.

*November 25th.*

*Moji.*

Although the 9 paotai we covered to-day were of no special interest, they were at any rate less monotonous than the journeys of the two previous days. One or two small oases, some irregularity in the ground and a certain amount of vegetation, though very modest, relieved the hopeless sand and gravel of the desert from time to time.

We left the anything but comfortable sarai at Guma at 7.45 a.m. The air was clear, but cold though the wind of the last few days had died down. In a few minutes we were outside the town and rolled along a sandy road between mulberry trees and poor plots of field to the SSE. Now and then the direction changed for a short turn eastward, but was resumed very soon and pursued as far as Moji. An hour's journey took us out of the oasis and on to an extensive plain with sand strongly mixed with gravel. To the E and SE it is encircled by a sparse and low-growing wood, to the SW and W the skyline is clear. About 10 a.m. we reached a line of hillocks, beyond which the road led us into a hollow, obviously a river bed, on the opposite, steep side of which some houses and trees of poor growth were visible. Immediately beyond them the barren sand began again. Shortly before 11 we came to the little oasis of Chudda (?), beyond which the road crossed a large sandy plain, this time with some slight vegetation and with a pronounced undulation in the ground. Shortly before 2 we reached another oasis, rather larger than the last and bearing the same name (Chudda). Some carpets were spread in front of one of the houses in my honour and a group of old men collected to regale me with tea, hard boiled eggs, raisins and almonds. There are about 300 landowners in the oasis. The greatest magnate possesses 200 mou, the poorest only 2. The crop depends on the quantity of water in the mountains, from which a river supplies fresh water. 2 1/2 to 3 tcheracks are sown per mou and the population is pleased with a crop of 10 tcheracks per mou. A little grain and cotton are sold.

We had another 2 paotai to cover before we got to Moji, a small village in an oasis of the same name. The cook and the pack-horses arrived a good while before us. The soup was bubbling over the fire and rooms had been prepared for me and my men in a very tidy and comfortable caravanserai belonging to the Government. I was given a splendid room with a large paper window. Rugs had been spread on the floor and a padded blanket hung over the draughty door. My travelling stove was put up in a few moments. It consisted of a sack with a hole, surrounded by a piece of sheet-iron, for the chimney and was suspended in front of the open fire; a fire was lighted and I began to feel quite warm. During the day my suite had grown by the addition of a merchant from Samarkand, who was travelling with his son to Khotan in order to give him a chance of seeing the world, and a divani, a curious fellow, who amused us by his antics. He walked through the deep sand, keeping abreast of our horses on this stretch of road, which was by no means short.