

February 26th.
Sughun village.

During to-day's journey the river took a more and more E, at times a SE course. At first it flows in 4 arms and forms a curve of about 8 miles, open to the S. In this reach it approaches closer and closer to the northern bank and the river bed narrows gradually to a width of 2—2 1/2 miles. The little village of Gungrat lies on the northern bank. With a couple of farms it extends below the ledge of the bank which is fully 7 fathoms in height for about 5 1/2 miles and is only accessible in 4 places, where steep bridges lead to the top. The following villages succeed each other on the southern bank: Kandak with 100 houses, Djiran with as many, Kagotra with 350 rather further off and Djoubezem again closer to the river. With the exception of the village of Kuche with about 200 houses, 4—5 1/2 miles distant from the river, there are no dwellings on the northern bank of the river for a distance of 8—9 miles after leaving Gungrat. A grey, desolate plain with practically no vegetation extends between the mountains and the river that flows further and further from them. The four arms of the river unite about the middle of the curve already mentioned and flow in a single channel for barely 2/3 of a mile. This is crossed by a shaky bridge. The width is 25 fathoms, depth 1 m. 73 cm. at the deepest place, 1 m. 60 cm. at a distance of 2 m from the southern bank. In hot weather the population fords the river here, too, though the depth exceeds the height of a horse. During the winter this place is avoided for fear of catching cold. Excepting at this place the depth of the river does not exceed 1 m and presents no obstacle to a horseman even in the spring and summer. The water presses hard on the vertical northern bank here. Soon it divides into two main arms with subsidiary arms going from them in places. For about 4 miles these arms flow close to the northern bank. The ledge becomes lower during this stretch and finally disappears altogether, but is replaced a few minutes later by a mountain, apparently solitary, in a S (?) direction, of about the same height as the mountain at Uch Turfan. One of the arms enfolds the steep W and S sides of the mountain. Here, too, it is joined by the arm that had taken such an E direction from the village of K k-jigda and had only rarely appeared in the distance as a silver ribbon of ice during the last three days. The bed of the river is not more than 1/3 of a mile wide here, while the water channel had widened considerably. To the south of the mountain, which the local people call Sughun or Djonbezem tagh after two villages situated east and south of it, the river again divides into two main arms which, combining into one in some places, continue in an E direction. The mountain is in the NE and is continued by a chain of less important heights. The enormous mountain range that was visible before in the N and NW had disappeared entirely, possibly because the air was filled with dust and therefore not transparent.

The wonderful sunshine of this morning had changed to a biting NE wind with pillars of sand and dust showing here and there. In the S the northern extremity of the Qara Teke mountains was visible at a great distance beyond a line of houses surrounded by sparse trees and fields. It looked as though the river drew near to them by degrees. On the bank opposite the mountain lies the village of Djonbezem that seems to be connected with it and with Khotan which surrounds it. This village is inhabited by Khotanliks, who have immigrated, and takes its name, like another village, Yangi Hissar, from the native town of the population. To the east of it lies Bugan. On the northern bank tilled land