

*July 15th.* The distance to-day was unanimously declared to be 180 li, i.e. 55—60 miles. I got up at 2 a.m., woke my men and started at 4. There was a fresh wind, so that we donned our raincoats. For 4—5 miles the Ushak-tal oasis extends on the right along the river, from which the road departs more and more. The ground consists of sand with a bushy plant growing sparsely in tufts. The ground rises constantly, though slightly. Yesterday's chain of mountains continues on the left. Single mountains rose up in the E out of the sand in front of us. The mountains that were visible yesterday in the S were hidden by the cloudy weather.

After 6—7 miles we reached the first of the mountains that were visible in the E. They are of no great size. The ground began to fall slightly. The road led between the mountains we had just reached on the right and small projecting parts of the chain on the left. — About 16 miles from Ushak-tal we halted for a time at a post station Hsin-Ching-zu («the deep well»). The horses were watered from a well 300 feet deep, while we had some tea at the house of the chief of the post, a Chinese byje (writer) from Qarashahr. The long rope in the well is so heavy that, if you are not careful, you risk being pulled down into the bottomless, narrow pit. Four victims, who were dragged into the depths, are buried here.

Not quite four miles from this place we passed the remains of a couple of small houses built of boulders, 2 1/2 miles further on the ruins of a rather larger house, apparently with a paotai tower. There are no signs of wells and yet they must undoubtedly have existed. Near the ruins of the latter house there is a track from the SW. The ground began to rise again slightly and a few trees appeared at the foot of the mountains. About 29 1/2 miles from our starting point we entered some small mountains and soon went up a gorge, about 230 yards wide, or rather a corridor that led us to Qara Qizil, a shabby sarai embedded among the mountains. The rooms were falling to pieces. There was dirt, dust and sand everywhere. No sign of grass or supplies. A Chinese post station is situated here. At an exorbitant price I managed to do a deal with the chief of the post station for a little straw, maize and three uneatable chickens which proved to have been fed on the carcasses of horses. The high prices, additional wages, purchases of Kalmuk objects and various other unforeseen expenses had depleted my purse to such an extent that I started the journey from Qarashahr, with 30 lan in my pocket and already one-third had been spent and I had to reach Urumchi.

There seemed to be good shooting here. I saw four kiyiks in the plain, but was unable to get within range, and we passed two keklik families at close range.

*July 16th.* We proceeded along the same gorge, the bottom of which was fine sand. The mountains on both sides were small (there was no large chain of mountains). Bushy grass with white, sweet-scented flowers grew close to the mountains and here and there we could see low trees. After five miles the road debouched into a valley, a few miles in width, bounded on one side by the mountain range we had just ridden across and by a larger one on the opposite side. In the centre there was a dry river bed. The road described a curve, open to the S, and then turned ESE, almost E, only receding gradually from the mountain range we had just left. The valley dips perceptibly from both sides towards the river bed. The