

ground, however, went on falling up to the ninth mile of the road, when a slight ascent began. The barometer No. 1 indicated 669.1 here. A third of a mile further on we saw the remains of a house and $1/4$ of a mile N of it a well surrounded by a mud wall, without any hoisting apparatus, evidently abandoned. $13\ 1/2$ —14 miles from Qara Qizil the road intersects the dry river bed which runs at an angle of 33° and to the naked eye looks as if it fell westward here. On the opposite side the ground is covered with sparse tufts of grass-like bushes.

We arrived at Kumush after riding about 22 miles. Here the mountain on the right seems to join a slight eminence from the opposite side which bounds the valley. There are many sarais, fodder for the horses and supplies of food at reasonable prices in the shady little oasis. The village consists of 7 houses (3 Dungan and 4 Sart) and is about 20 years old. A Chinese mapoza station is established in it. Wheat is grown and yields a 4 fold crop. The supply of water is not large, but is constantly being renewed owing to the presence of a spring. During the four winter months there is snow occasionally, though it melts almost immediately. There are frequent burans, almost daily during the spring. Most of them come from the west. Here, too, we met one of those wonderful arbah-caravans in which mandarins transport their wives and other belongings. There is something medieval about these waggons with houses built of straw matting and equipped with doors and windows. Each arbah carries a small yellow flag with an inscription in Chinese stating to whom all these animate and inanimate treasures belong.

At midnight I roused my men and at 2 a.m. we were off. Carelessness in collecting the horses wasted half-an-hour. In the starlight we could see nothing but a wide, open, level plain of sand and gravel. Six miles from the village we crossed a dry river bed coming from a direction of 170° . Three miles further we came to another at 190° and $2\ 1/4$ miles later to a third at 170° . Another $2/3$ of a mile and we crossed a fourth. From the first river bed the ground on the left of the road had been marked by undulations and small mounds. Beyond the fourth we got among some low mounds that obscured the view. The road takes a more northerly course. The mounds become low mountains. The road runs along a corridor, 100—150 yards wide, covered with fine sand between small mountains. The rise in the ground was almost imperceptible. After 18 miles it began to fall distinctly. The aneroid No. 1 indicated 631.2.

*July 17th.
Arghai Bu-
laq post
station.*

Two-thirds of a mile or a mile from this place there was a small post station jammed between the sides of a narrow side-cleft. There was no straw to be had. The horses greedily drank some water from a hollow in the rock. It was greenish and appeared to be stagnant water. There is said to be a spring a little higher up the mountain. The ground after dropping for a short time, again began to rise slightly. Six miles from the post station we reached the highest point for the day, marked on the map as a pass. From here a distinct descent began, while we proceeded along the same mountain corridor, the sides of which grew higher, though they did not attain any great size. As to their colour, black with beautiful reflections in the sunshine predominates, though grey, brick-red and dark green are also visible. The heat in the gorge was intense, without a breath of air.