

about a dozen arbahs, drawn by 4 or 5 horses each, are ranged side by side, very skilfully, it is true, they fill a large yard in no time. The horses are unharnessed immediately and the first thing they do is to roll on the ground and raise clouds of dust. The men start looking for rooms or making arrangements to camp in the yard and in doing so a couple of dozen Chinese can produce quite a lot of noise. In fact, however tired you may be, you have to abandon all thought of sleep. The clay walls of the house literally imbibe the heat during the day, and in the evening, after the sun has baked one of these houses thoroughly, the temperature in the rooms is like a hothouse. I spent the days in a little garden behind the sarai, where I established my travel-worn and very shaky writing table in the shade of a tree. To make me feel cooler Izmail broke a hole in the wall, scraped away the earth and in a trice I had a murmuring ariq flowing under the table. An hour or so later the host came rushing towards me in despair. The yard of the sarai was being flooded. The hole in the wall had to be closed with a lump of clay, the ground was made level and that was the end of the cool spell.

The Dungans in Toqsun were obliging and quick to understand. The host was very accommodating. He readily agreed to feed my 9 horses, Lukanin and a yigit and wait until payment was sent from Urumchi. It was rather comical to be so hard up in China as to have to leave my horses in pawn for the fodder they consumed. — Fruit was being sold, though the melons and some of the grapes were not quite ripe. They came from Turfan. Straw, bran and gaolyan were comparatively cheap.

At about 7 p.m. I started with Tchao, Izmail and a yigit. The arbahs and men used hired horses, only Tchao and myself riding our own. The sky was covered with clouds and a regular gale was blowing from the WNW. The character of the country N of the town was rather like the ground we had travelled over between the mountains in the S and the town, except that now we rode through a sparsely populated district. The ground was saliferous, the grass coarse and unsatisfying, and there was little cultivation. In an hour the road led through the village of Uiman Bulaq with 15 houses in scattered groups surrounded by trees. The land yields up to a 10 fold crop, but burans which are common — occurring daily during some parts of the year — sometimes destroy the crops. Darkness had fallen. The moon was unable to break through the heavy clouds and the road was only faintly visible.

An hour and 40 minutes from the town we passed the last group of houses in Uiman Bulaq and all tillage ceased. For a short time the ground went in mounds, after which we came to a slight slope covered with gravel and stones that led up the mountain side. The road had hitherto gone WNW, but now turned more towards the north. Fine rain began to fall. After riding for five hours we discovered that Izmail had lost sight of the road. As it was impossible to strike a light in the gale in order to find the road, the horses were tethered and we slept on the stones.

At 3 in the morning I was awakened by the sound of horses' hooves and roused Izmail and Tchao. A Sart boy of 16 who was passing told us that we had deviated considerably from the main road and advised us to follow the bed of the river which would lead us to the post station, 15 li distant. We looked round and found that we had been sleeping on