



*A group of Sarts on the primitive balcony of the author's host at Kucheng.*

I had never seen such traffic in the streets of Kucheng as when we left this morning. Arbahs drawn by oxen, camels laden with large blocks of coal, donkeys bringing fruit from Turfan, the place was seething and every now and then we were forced to stop and wait, while the arbahs manoeuvred to get past each other. My two arbahs stuck at least a dozen times with their axles locked in some other arbah until at last we succeeded in getting away from the town and the suburb.

As far as the village of Hsiao-tung we followed the road to Tsimusa which runs SSW—NNE and SW—NE in this part. In the distance in front of us the mighty range of mountains rose up, from which Bogdo Olo could be seen rising in the SW. All the higher peaks were wrapped half-way in snow after the cold weather of the last few days which made the view magnificent. Far to the N, or rather the NNW, the outlines of a mountain that I had not noticed before were indistinctly visible. From the village we continued for several hours in a direction 50—55°, while the road to Tsimusa led further west. For 40 minutes the plain was covered with the same coarse, tall grass, «tjitji». When this ceased, the plain was sparsely covered with low bushy grass which changed a little further on to a scanty growth of poor grass. The land is barren and flat with a scarcely perceptible rise southwards.

90 minutes from Hsiao-tung we passed the first solitary house of Tungva su, a village that is said to be large. The fields were small and scattered, but the houses looked neat and prosperous. It was only half-an-hour later that we passed another house and 10 minutes after we crossed a comparatively rapid river of negligible depth, flowing in two arms six feet in width. About 3 1/2 hours' ride from Hsiao-tung we entered the area of the village of Shiliang and passed a house. In the E and W we saw similarly isolated houses and here and there still rarer trees. 15 and 35 minutes later we once more passed houses with small fields. The ground was sandy and sparsely covered with low grass. 50 minutes