

RECORDS OF THE JOURNEY

covered with a layer of earth, on which grew low grass. The road followed a slight, rather stony, dry water-channel and made small bends, though the main course remained E. The rise in the ground became more marked, though never steep. After 5 miles, of which the last 3 had been very stony, we reached the crest of Tole dawan, almost the easiest mountain pass I can remember crossing. Denuded mountain ridges in a W—E direction were only visible in the N, otherwise all the mountains and hills were covered with grass. The ridge in the S which we had had on our right is more considerable than the others and seemed to run a couple of dozen miles eastward, where it formed a slightly higher pile of mountains. Its slope facing N has conifers growing on it here and there, the trees going halfway up the mountain. In the N we saw horses grazing in a valley that disappeared behind mountains in the W and in the E a considerable, long valley. It appeared to be a mile or two in breadth and to spread out, at the end of the mountain ridges running E, into an open plain in which a blue patch indicated the position of Lake Barkul. In the distance beyond the lake a mountain ridge rises, running in an opposite direction to that of our road. The slope of the ground eastward of the pass is gentle and the road across the grassy slope is good.

During the descent we passed a stone column, about 2 m high and 0.3 m wide, like those I had seen between Dawanchin and Urumchi. Very close to the pass I noticed the ruins of a small square stone building, obviously very old. Large herds of grazing sheep could be seen in the neighbourhood of a yurt inhabited by a Sart shepherd from Hami.

We rode past a small stud of horses. They were of a peculiar type, low, broad and coarsely built. Their heads were strikingly small, their eyes narrow, and their movements good. They are reputed to be untiring, but very hot-tempered.

About 5 1/2 miles from the pass we reached and encamped at the mapoza station of Shang Laibutchyen — not to be confused with the Laibatchyen sarai at »Peilu» which is called »Hsia Laibatchyen» — where we were offered hospitality in a filthy kitchen and a cold hall. A little stream flowing from a spring supplies plenty of water.

Horns of wild sheep are to be seen along the road and we caught sight of an unusual number of kekliks. There is snow here from September or October to April, up to an arshin in depth. Burans in winter are common, also in spring, but not so strong, mostly from the S.

We continued our journey along the broad valley towards the blue lake to-day. We rode from the mapoza station in a NE direction until, after about 2 miles, we reached the wheel tracks of the Tole dawan road that we had left yesterday just on this side of the pass. Following this, the course is ENE for 4 1/3 miles and then in an almost E direction for about 7 miles as far as the Chu-chi sarai, where we camped. The ground during the day's journey was firm sand covered with grass, slightly mixed with gravel in places. It slopes to the NE. The mountain ridge in the N was still on our left. The local people said that kulans were very common on the grassy slopes. They were very shy and hard to shoot. Wild sheep are also found in the mountains, but in flocks of not more than 10. Djerans, »kiyik» and wild boar are said to be no rarity. The mountain slopes look fairly accessible. Shooting must be splendid in these parts.