

neighbourhood of the pass or the upper part of the valley that we had traversed. With its innumerable folds in the ground covered with fir-trees it looks picturesque and magnificent, especially in its present winter garb. — »Kapitan«, as my men call a retired Chinese officer employed by me, had succeeded with the help of the mandarin in securing lodgings for us in the house of a terrifying old Chinese woman, a tiny room for me, with walls, mostly of paper, and a larger one for my men.

It is the Barkul mandarin district, in which the pure Chinese element is comparatively most strongly represented in the Sinkiang province. The few Dungans and Sarts who are engaged in trade or handicrafts constitute a very insignificant proportion of the population of the district. The villages are inhabited by Chinese who immigrated in the course of a couple of centuries from different provinces in the centre of China, mostly from Kan Su, or were exiled for various offences. The mountains in the N and NW serve as an abode for about a thousand Mongol yurts with their inhabitants and herds. October 17th.
Barkul
(Balikun).

From the high slope, on which the town is built, an open, grassy stretch is visible in all directions for a distance of many miles. The Tian Shan mountains, once more of mighty proportions, rise in the S; in the N some lesser mountains are visible at a distance of a few dozen miles; in the NW, NE and E they are slightly higher. The plain continues in the W and ESE as far as you can see. One might be inclined to consider the district inhabited solely by nomads and their herds. To the N of the town the plain is intersected in an E—W direction by two rivers which unite and, under the name of Irdy-ho, empty themselves into Lake Barkul, described in Chinese maps as a »sea« owing to its great size. Two ariqs, as large as rivers, have been cut from the northern river and a number of villages have been established round them. If you ride due N from the town, you cross the first arm of the river, 3—4 paces wide, in about 4 1/2 miles, the second, in which the water reaches a horse's belly and is 3 fathoms in width, about 2/3 of a mile later, and the first ariq, 1 fathom wide, in another 5 1/2 miles. Here the villages have run into each other and form a continuous row of houses for a distance of, perhaps, a dozen miles or more. The other large group of villages is situated to the east along the main road to Hami and slightly to the N of it. In other directions there are only a couple of villages with scattered houses. Wheat, tchinkho (a kind of barley without husks) and peas are grown. The average yield is 8 fold. There does not appear to be much tillage and the output of grain is not very considerable. The principal wealth of the district consists in cattlebreeding, for which the large, open grazing grounds are very suitable, but the inhabitants are able to sell some flour to Uliasutai and Kobdo. The administration of the province also has large studs of horses here, up to 6—7,000, managed by the Inguan (juti) at Kucheng. Their principal object is to serve as remounts for the provincial mapoza.

The villages in the district are as follows: