

I glanced backwards in vain. The rise in the ground obscured the gleaming white peaks and ridges of the Tian Shan and forced us to turn our gaze forward to the interminable dark desert. The sarai is comparatively good. The rooms are so small that a pan of coals gives off some heat. The reeds in the plain supply at any rate sufficient fodder to support 40 cows, 10 horses and 50—60 sheep. There is no tillage. The soil is very saliferous. Snow melts as soon as it falls. E and NW burans are common from November to the beginning of summer. Water is obtained from springs and a well. At Hwang-lung-Kang the level of the water in the well was about 2 arshins below the level of the ground, here about 3 arshins.

The low-lying desert that I took for a gravel plain yesterday at a distance, proved to be a gully with a sandy bottom, enclosed on the S, E and N by raised ground. The soil is löss and the arbah horses puffed and blew a great deal. The surface is slightly uneven and a few spiky grass plants were growing on it. The road went on in a SE direction. We reached the raised ground at the southern edge of the gully in about 4 miles and climbed on to a large, slightly higher plain, on which the sand was mixed with gravel and was a little firmer, though the wheels of the arbahs nevertheless cut deep ruts. After another 4 miles we reached another gully, not so broad or sharply defined as the first. This was succeeded by a ridge-like elevation also in an E—W direction. From this the road led us again into a gully similar to the first in shape and size. S of the ridge-like eminence that bounds it on the S, lies the group of Yen-tun sarais at the very foot of the eminence and on the edge of another, apparently still larger gully. There was absolutely no sign of mountains in the south for a distance of at least 15—20 miles. As a large rise in the ground is marked just E of Hami on the 40 verst map, where I could not find it with the best will in the world, these three striking ridges of gravel and sand should not be overlooked. The barren area starts at the first of these eminences. The road is trying for vehicles owing to the löss. The weather was bright and cool. The wind was in the E and still high, though not as high as during the last two days. The distance for both these days was 70 li, which I calculate to be 16—17 miles.

*November 1st.
Yen-tun
station.*

In Yen-tun there are 3 sarais, 1 mapoza station and a temple. There are 3 wells with plenty of water, slightly salt. The level of the water is about 4 arshins below the level of the ground. Snow falls 3—4 times in November and December and during the spring and winter.

We started immediately after 5 this morning. The thermometer indicated -8° R., but it was a clear day and perfectly windless. In the N the Tian Shan mountains were so distinct that it was hard to believe that we were 4 days' journey from them. The road crosses the valley S of Yen-tun in an ESE direction. In about 7 miles we came to a rise in the ground, the point of which reaches the road from the E. Its direction is $250^{\circ} - 70^{\circ}$. On the opposite side (to the S) the same valley continues, bounded now by a semicircular gravel hill in the E. We reached the S edge of the valley in 2 miles and the road took us up a gravel slope to raised ground similar to that we crossed yesterday. This raised ground, which

*November 2nd.
Kufi station
(Ku-shui in
Chinese).*