

The villages look very pretty at a distance, surrounded, as they are, with trees and green fields, forming a contrast to the neighbouring desert; but as they are approached they are seen to contain so many ruins and patches of ground formerly cultivated and now lying fallow, that the charm is lost. We halted at 11.30, at San-to-lin-tzu, a small village with four inns. As my boy said that fleas were very numerous in the rooms, I slept in the cart, where it was also a good deal cooler.

Day fine generally, with thunderstorm at noon. Thermometer—max., 96°; min., 66°.

*July 10.*—Left at 2.30 p.m., and passed over a stony plain gradually ascending towards the mountains. The slope was cut up by dry watercourses running down from the hills. At thirteen miles we passed a house surrounded with cultivation, forming a small oasis. There was a comparatively large plot of poppies, though one would have thought that in a desert like this all the land capable of cultivation would be needed for the production of necessaries. Shortly after, we passed twelve donkeys, laden with merchandise, going to Hami. We met little traffic on the road.

Halted [at 10.30 p.m., at Lain-tung, a small settlement of inns, no cultivation. They had here some coal which was obtained from the Tian-shan. My boy told me coal could be obtained at Hami also, but I saw none myself. Distance ninety li.

Cloudy day. Thunderstorms on surrounding hills. Thermometer—max., 86°; min., 68°.

*July 11.*—We only halted at Lain-tung to feed the animals, and started again at 2.20 a.m. We gradually ascended the mountain slope in a transverse direction. The ground was a good deal cut up by dry watercourses, and was covered with stones, which delayed the carts.

Halted at 9 a.m. at I-wang-chuen, which consists of