

in this country, would form a lake, but there was no sign of water. One mile beyond, the road divided, the right-hand one going to Urumchi. We halted at 12.10 at Tuan-yen-kou (110 li), a house and inn situated at the foot of the range, which forms the western boundary of the plain. Water here particularly bad, and smelt horribly. Quite a good inn for these parts, as one room in three had a door to it—no windows yet, though, and during a thunderstorm the rain came through the roof as through a sieve. Started at 5.20, turning off in a south-westerly direction, and still passing over the plain for four miles, when we ascended the stony slope of the surrounding hills. It was a long trying pull of about nine miles, not steep, but continuous. We passed thirty donkeys, laden with grapes from the Turfan district, going to Hami. Donkeys are very plentiful in this country, and seem to be the only animals used for packs. The Turkis are very seldom seen on a pony; it is always a donkey they ride. At 10 p.m. we reached the end of the slope and entered the hills, descending very gradually down a gorge in a direction somewhat south of west. There were two or three houses at the entrance, but no inn. As usual, the hills were perfectly bare. Halted at 3.20 a.m. (13th) at Hsi-yang-chê. From 4.40 a.m. on the 12th to 3.20 a.m. on the 13th we have done 230 li, travelling seventeen hours twenty minutes, and resting five hours ten minutes. The two cart-mules went well throughout, the ponies not so well. These mules are certainly very good for cart work. Cloudy day Thunderstorm in afternoon. Cool night.

*July 13.*—We started at 12.40 p.m., descending at first a narrow and precipitous gorge. The hills on either side rose in cliffs of six or seven hundred feet high. After two and a half miles, we left the hills and descended a barren, gravelly slope. At 10 p.m. we passed a deserted inn where the road divided, and the carter was uncertain which to take. We wandered about the plain for some hours, and then I ordered