

a halt till daylight. I did not feel at all comfortable, for we had no water with us, and the mules and ponies cannot go on, like camels, without it. As far as we could see while daylight lasted, the desert extended in all directions. When dawn broke, however, we saw trees in the distance, and the carter recognized his whereabouts. Our misfortunes were not yet quite over, for the cart stuck in a hole when we were close to the village, and we took nearly two hours getting it out. We finally reached Shi-ga-tai at 7.20 a.m. (14th). There is here a small fort built on a mound, occupied by a hundred Chinese soldiers. It has mud walls about twenty feet high, loopholed for musketry, but it is commanded at three hundred yards by a hill on the south. The village consists of some thirty houses, inhabited partly by Chinese and partly by Turkis. There is a little cultivation and some pasturage round the village. Day fine in the morning, thunderstorms falling in the neighbourhood in the afternoon.

*July 14.*—Started at 3.25 p.m., and crossed a desert with occasional oases every four or five miles. To the south are ranges of bare hills, some fifty to one hundred and fifty feet high, running parallel to the road. At two miles from Pi-chan the desert ended, and the country was covered with trees, cultivation, and small hamlets. The road was every here and there lined with rows of trees on either side. We lost the track again, and went wandering round the country till 1.30 a.m., when we arrived at the gate of the town, which we found shut. It was, however, opened for us, and we put up at a good inn—good only as inns go in Kashgaria. The smallest village in Manchuria would not call such a place an inn. There they put up cows in such places as these. Day very hot, thunderstorms as usual on the Tian-shan in the afternoon, and very slight rain fell down here at night.

*July 15.*—Pi-chan is surrounded by a wall about four hundred yards in length in each direction. It contains about two