

noon. And now having no tent to pitch and strike, no pack animals to load and unload, and standing in no need of house accommodation, we had nothing to delay us, and covered long stages every day. On one day we accomplished nearly seventy miles, resting only five and a quarter hours in the twenty-four.

Near Pi-chan we passed through a pretty, well-cultivated country, through which ran a charming little stream, its banks lined with graceful poplars and willows. Numerous little irrigation ducts were carried through the fields and straight across the road, rather to the hindrance of traffic; though I found it a real pleasure to hear the cart splashing through water. There were a number of little hamlets dotted over the plain, and many mosques, all built of mud like everything else in the country. Many of them had piles of *Ovis argali* and ibex horns on the ledges of the roofs, but I saw no *Ovis argali* as fine as those which I obtained in the Gobi. At two and a half miles from Pi-chan the delightful oasis came to an end abruptly, and we were on the same dreary old gravel desert again. From a piece of rising ground I obtained a good view of the