

way impressed by the density and activity of the population. But if he halt here, he will find the illusion dispelled. The morrow instead of a struggling and jostling crowd will show him lonesome streets with long rows of silent forges, empty cook shops, deserted grocers' stalls, and the tenantless sheds of the shoe-maker, hatter, and draper; and if he enquires, he will learn that the multitude of yesterday is dispersed far and wide over this and the adjoining settlements till next week's market day brings them together again.

I have no data on which to base an approximate estimate of the area of land under cultivation in each division; but considering the limited water supply and the barren nature of the soil, and comparing the spreads of cultivation with those of other countries where the population is known, it does not appear to me that the soil is capable of feeding the alleged population in the western divisions of the country which I have seen, particularly if it is borne in mind that they are entirely self supporting and receive no extraneous supplies of breadstuffs and similar food. It is for these reasons that I am disposed to estimate the actual normal population at a lower figure than that produced by the reckoning in the time of the Chinese as above given; and independent of the great diminution that is said to have occurred by the war losses and massacres attending the revolution that overthrew their rule, and transferred the possession of the country to other hands.

*Climate and seasons.*—The preceding description of the natural and political divisions of the country will have prepared us for a diversity in the character of its climate and seasons corresponding with the physical peculiarities of the several divisions themselves. And though I can only speak from personal knowledge of what prevails in the western districts, there are some special characteristics which by common consent are applicable to the whole region. These I may here briefly notice before proceeding to detail the meteorological observations recorded during our stay in the country.

The chief and most notable peculiarities in the climate of Káshgharia are the extreme dryness of its atmosphere at all times, the trifling amount of its rain fall, and the more or less dense haze which nearly always obscures the air; the periodical winds which sweep its surface, the intensity of the sun's rays, and, finally, the very great range of temperature between summer and winter.

The first is the result of the vast expanse of arid sandy desert which forms so large a portion of not only this region itself but of the Central Asian Continent both on its east and on its west, and is intensified by the second; for what rain does fall is caught by the mountain ranges bounding the country on three sides (and even then mostly in the form of snow), and rarely reaches the plain country in any appreciable quantity; whilst the third would seem to be the effect of both the other causes combined; the impalpable dust of the desert, unweighted by a trace of moisture, floating up into an atmosphere equally void of its presence and there obscuring its transparency till the general haze be dissolved, not by wind alone, for that only intensifies it, but by moisture either in the form of cloud or rain or snow. These atmospheric peculiarities characterize the climate of Káshghar in greater or less development and with more or less persistence in all its extent and during all seasons.

The remaining three characteristic peculiarities of the climate are more of a seasonal nature, and prevail in their proper periods with greater or less intensity according to the determining influences of locality. The winds on the plain blow only in the spring and autumn months, and then persistently, with diurnal lulls only, from the north or north-west as a rule; and for the rest of the year the atmosphere may be considered as still. For though whirlwinds and eddies do circle over the desert wastes during the spring and summer months as they do over the plains in India, the spheres of action of the several currents are very limited and rarely produce any extensive or general disturbance of the atmosphere beyond their own little isolated tracts. In the eastern borders of the desert and on Gobi itself, however, these whirlwinds are described as assuming vast proportions and raging over wide tracts with overwhelming violence; but they are not known in this form in the western portions of the plain.

As on the plains so on the mountains, the spring and autumn months are those in which regular winds do most prevail. According to native reports those on Alátágh are mostly