

very dry, alluvial, and covered with a thin hard crust of soda, which crackles under foot at every step, and in which horses sink up to their fetlocks. The forest abounds with gazelles (*antilopa gutturosa*) and hares, but is otherwise singularly wanting in animal life. For a space of about three quarters of a mile on each side of the river there are no trees, but in their stead a belt of thick high grass, like what is known in Indian jungles as nurkut, growing to a height of from 8 to 12 feet. In this are tigers, wolves, the large deer called by the natives "bugha" or "maral," gazelles, foxes, and pheasants. This treeless belt is doubtless caused by periodical changes of the river bed of which there are many evidences. The fall of the country to the eastward is little over 500 feet in 100 miles, according to aneroid readings taken daily. The river makes frequent turns and windings, and is level with its banks, so that a very slight flush of water would cause an overflow. The current is not rapid, and the river is frozen so hard in winter that loaded carts cross it without difficulty. It is crossed in summer by a bridge, which, however, I did not see, as I was able to save several miles by taking a short cut and crossing on the ice in another place. It varies from 70 to 100 feet in width.

At one of the robats I had an interesting conversation with a traveller who was also putting up there for the night. He was an Aksu official, and had lately come from there with a presentation horse for the Amír, and having delivered it was on his way to Khoten, where his brother was a Cazeer. He told me there was a direct road from Aksu to Khoten, lying through jungle the whole way. He had visited Turfan, and said he had himself seen wild camels two marches to the east of it, and spoke of them as not being very wary, but smaller than domestic ones. I questioned him as to the existence of wild horses or asses in the desert eastward, but he said he had never heard of any.

At Togha Sulookh, between 40 and 50 miles from Maralbashi, I stopped for a day's shooting. The only game I got was one very good specimen of the gazelle, or as the people there call it, djeran. The buck measures  $27\frac{1}{2}$  inches at the shoulder, and greatly resembles the common Indian gazelle, except that the horns are rather longer and curve outwards, the tips being turned sharply inwards towards one another, making a very handsome head.

The next day on the march I was met by a Yuzbashi, who had been sent out to meet me. He had brought a pair of trained hawks with him, and as we marched we beat along keeping a few yards off the road, and took several hares with them. The hawks seemed to have no trouble in holding a full grown one, and the hare was often taken within 30 or 40 yards of where he was put up, even among the brambles and bushes. The trembling of the hares when taken from the hawk was very curious, they seemed quite paralysed with terror, in a way I never saw before in animals of the kind; otherwise they were quite uninjured. Just as we got to our halting place for the night, one hawk was flown at a cock pheasant, which after a flight of 150 yards through the high trees, dropped in some thick brushwood: the hawk at once took perch above him, and we put up the pheasant again. In this way we had three flights, the pheasant escaping at last in a large extent of brambles, out of which we could not put him. This was in thick forest, but the men said if both hawks had been flown, they would have killed. It was curious to see the hawk each time perching guard over the places where the pheasant dropped, waiting for us, and watching every movement while we beat. The flight of the pheasant, when once fairly on the wing, though short, is so rapid that the hawk has no chance of striking him, but by perching high above him when down is generally able to strike him as he rises a second time.

Within four miles of Maralbashi the forest ceases, and the country is covered with long grass varied by occasional patches of scrub and swamp, much resembling the Rohilcund Terai. In this are dotted about small villages with patches of cultivation round them. The grass jungle extends over a great extent of country, as well as I could gather, to the north-east, south-west, and eastward, being doubtless formed by the overflows and changes of course of the Kizzil and Yarkand rivers. The latter, I was informed, flows close to Aksakmaral, about thirty-two miles south-west of Maralbashi.

Maralbashi, which is also known as Burchuk and Lai Musjid, contains about fifteen hundred inhabitants, and is at the junction of the road from Yarkand with the Kashghar and Aksu road. It contains a fort and small garrison of about 200 men.