

were welcome, as our own things did not come in till next morning, much to my special annoyance, as the chronometers had all run down in the night, a great misfortune, as I had been very anxious to determine a good *travelling rate* for them, and with that end in view, had taken very careful time observations before departure from Káshghar.

About a mile from Bu Miriam, we crossed the small river coming from Ostyn Artysh, the upper part of whose course I have traced in an earlier portion of this narrative. It (or rather what small portion remains after irrigating the large and fertile village of Beshkerim, which we passed on our left) falls into the Káshghár river near Khush Toghrák, about 25 miles to the east of where we crossed the stream. Five miles further on the road traverses the same low range of hills which, south of Ostyn Artysh, is pierced by the Artysh stream. This ridge, composed of clay and shales, is several hundred feet in height at Ostyn Artysh, but gradually gets lower and lower as it runs eastward, until it dwindles into nothing, and gets lost in the level plain a very short distance to the east of where we now crossed it; a few miles further on, after crossing a small stream supplied from springs on the west, we reached the village of Altyn Artysh, a march of 22 miles.

This village partakes of much the same character as Ostyn Artysh, and, indeed, nearly all the villages I have seen in East Turkestan, consisting of a number of small hamlets, scattered about the plain, at intervals from each other varying from a quarter of a mile to a mile. Each hamlet consists of a number of scattered farm-houses, each farm having its separate irrigation canal, its trees, its fields, and out-houses, and forming the residence of a family containing generally from four to a dozen souls. In a central position is the bazar, with long rows of stalls on both sides of the road, somewhat resembling that of an Indian village, but absolutely untenanted except on the weekly market day. In its neighbourhood the Hakim, who generally owns a somewhat better house than his neighbours, administers justice. Sepoys, if the village be important enough to contain any, are generally quartered near the residence of the Hakim.

The valley in which the two Artyshes are situated runs from west to east, and is throughout about eight miles in breadth; bounded on the south by the low ridge of hills before mentioned which comes to an end south-east of Lower Artysh, it is confined on the north by another and somewhat higher range, which extends eastwards from Teshek Tash on the Chakmák road, to nearly opposite the termination of the southern range, when bending towards the north-east it runs away towards Kalti Ailák, another large group of villages about 22 miles east by north of Altyn Artysh. The valley opens, where loosened from its bounds on the south, into the large desert plain which forms part of the one vast plateau of Eastern Turkestan. The one difficulty, in all this country, is want of water, and one cannot help admiring the ingenuity with which the inhabitants have made the best use of the scanty supply of this precious fluid. Where there is a sufficiency the country is one close net-work of irrigation channels, and in the spring, in these places, one unbroken mass of tress and verdure testifies to the excellence of the system. In the Artysh valley there is water in moderation, and, as far as I could learn, nearly every drop, in the spring and summer, is used in irrigation. In the winter, one sometimes comes across tracts of marshy land, but these are generally caused either by springs which rise in the neighbourhood, or by leakage from canals in autumn, at which time the water is no longer required for irrigation, and the saline nature of the soil causes breaks down and consequent leakage, which it is not considered worth while to repair until the following spring.

In Altyn Artysh, I was informed that there were in all about 3,000 houses forming the following hamlets:— 1, Meshak; 2, Sborchí; 3, Takyun; 4, Langar; 5, Kichingiz; 6, Mai or Táter; 7, Kijja; 8, Bayámát; and 9, Kukíla. It is more thickly inhabited than other parts of the surrounding country, as it forms the seat of the District Government (which includes under it Kalti Ailák and other villages). It is well watered, but the population being large, it barely produces grain sufficient for its own consumption. This deficiency is, however, made up from the neighbouring village of Kalti Ailák, where there is plenty of good rich soil, and a smaller proportionate population, due to an occasional want of water the supply of which is often insufficient to irrigate the whole of the lands. The headman of Kalti Ailák bitterly complained to me, that where there was plenty of water good land was deficient,