

As the night was chilly I wrapped myself in a thin, well-worn numnah lent me by one of the donkey-men, and, curling myself up on the sand, with my arm for a pillow, was soon asleep.

About three o'clock in the morning we resumed our march, and travelled through a country bare and waterless almost as far as Sorgak. About a mile from this village water was found, but the region was still devoid of vegetation. The villagers earn a livelihood by digging for gold, but, from the poverty-stricken look of the place, it was clear that gold was scarce in the neighbourhood. The village houses were miserable hovels, usually mere excavations with roofs almost flush with the ground. Supplies for the villagers had to be brought from the village of Talkolok, about twelve miles distant, or even (if flour was required) from Nia, about forty miles distant.

In the march which ended here we had covered quite forty miles (we had been told that the distance was thirty miles), but the chopped straw, dry lucerne, and corn which the Beg of the village had collected for us and with which he met us as we approached, enabled me to give the animals a well-earned rest. Next day the air, cooled with rain, became clear, and in the evening we had an excellent view of the distant villages on the plains. The few oases, of which Nia was by far the largest, with their bright green fields and abundant trees in foliage, presented a marked contrast to the surrounding country which consisted of nothing but a dreary desert of sand and loess. The eye, however, could not but rest with pleasure on the majestic Kwen Lun mountains, now not far distant, to the south. Here I witnessed a gorgeous sunset, during which the western horizon, almost from north to south, was lit up with rosy red, while, over the sun, an extraordinary effect was produced. A band of reddish yellow, with a breadth of about one and half times the sun's