

stranger and wanderer, whose home was everywhere and nowhere, and who had no abiding city. A poor, lonely pilgrim sitting by the dying embers and raking up faded memories of a thousand nights in bygone years, and astonished at the patience with which he could expect and desire some new experience, a dream-picture which always fled before him over the earth like an apparition. Yes, I was astonished that I had lived through the Lop desert and had ridden out all the storms in the Takla-makan. Sometimes the journey from Trebizond, not long past, seemed to me hopelessly long and wearisome. And yet I was eager to return to the desert; its silent, inexplicable witchery drew me on with irresistible force; I seemed to hear its mysterious voices calling to me from its depths, "Come home." Beyond the great desert I had a vision of the blue snowclad mountains of Tibet, but now the desert must first be conquered. In a few days we should see its endless, flat horizon expanded in all directions, and then after many painful steps we should see the palms of Tebbes, a green patch in the boundless yellow; and I had long yearned for Tebbes, this singular oasis which even on a map looks so lonely and deserted.

Even in Marco Polo's time, more than six hundred years ago, Eastern Persia was occupied by immense deserts, which men could traverse only by carrying water with them, and following the shortest routes between the oases. And we were soon to discover that the conditions are not better in our own time, but rather worse; for a period of desiccation has set in amidst the variations of climate, which is favourable to the extension of deserts. The towns and names which the Venetian traveller mentions in his famous book are still extant—Kerman, Kubenan, and Tun-o-Kain or Tun and Kain—a region now called, however, Tun-o-Tebbes.

The villager stated that Kala-no has 16 huts, and produces wheat and barley, melons, pomegranates, grapes, apples, pears, and mulberries, and also butter, cheese, and *rogban*. The north-westerly wind now blowing was said to be prevalent at this season; the man informed me that if the gale lasted till to-morrow afternoon it would be a