

camels and ponies far away from water or grazing, it was a real relief to look down on open Dzungarian slopes of bare gravel and to sight far away in the distance a tiny dark spot suggesting vegetation. It was the little village of Bai for which I had wished to make all the time, and after four weeks of continuous travel it was no small satisfaction to have safely reached it without the loss of a single animal. There was reward for our troubles in the extensive and accurate surveys carried by new routes across a vast area which, barren as it is, presents distinct interest in its geographical features.

A rapid journey then carried us during October along the northern foot of the eastern portion of the great T'ien-shan range, already bearing its first winter snow, to the tracts of Barkul and Guchen. The ground crossed here, topographically better known, had a special interest for me, as it helped to acquaint me with the peculiar physical conditions of a region through which many of the great historical migrations westwards, like those of the Great Yüeh-chih or Indo-Scythians, Huns, Hephthalites, Turks and Mongols, must have successively passed. These valleys and plateaux of Dzungaria are favoured by a climate far less dry than that of the Tarim basin. They offer in many parts good grazing-grounds and have often played an important part in the history of Central Asia.

Again and again they have in ancient times afforded a temporary home to nomadic tribes. These could never have maintained their flocks and herds in the arid plains of the Tarim basin. But from across the T'ien-shan they were always able and ready to carry out raids into it and to exact tribute from the settled population of its oases. It was