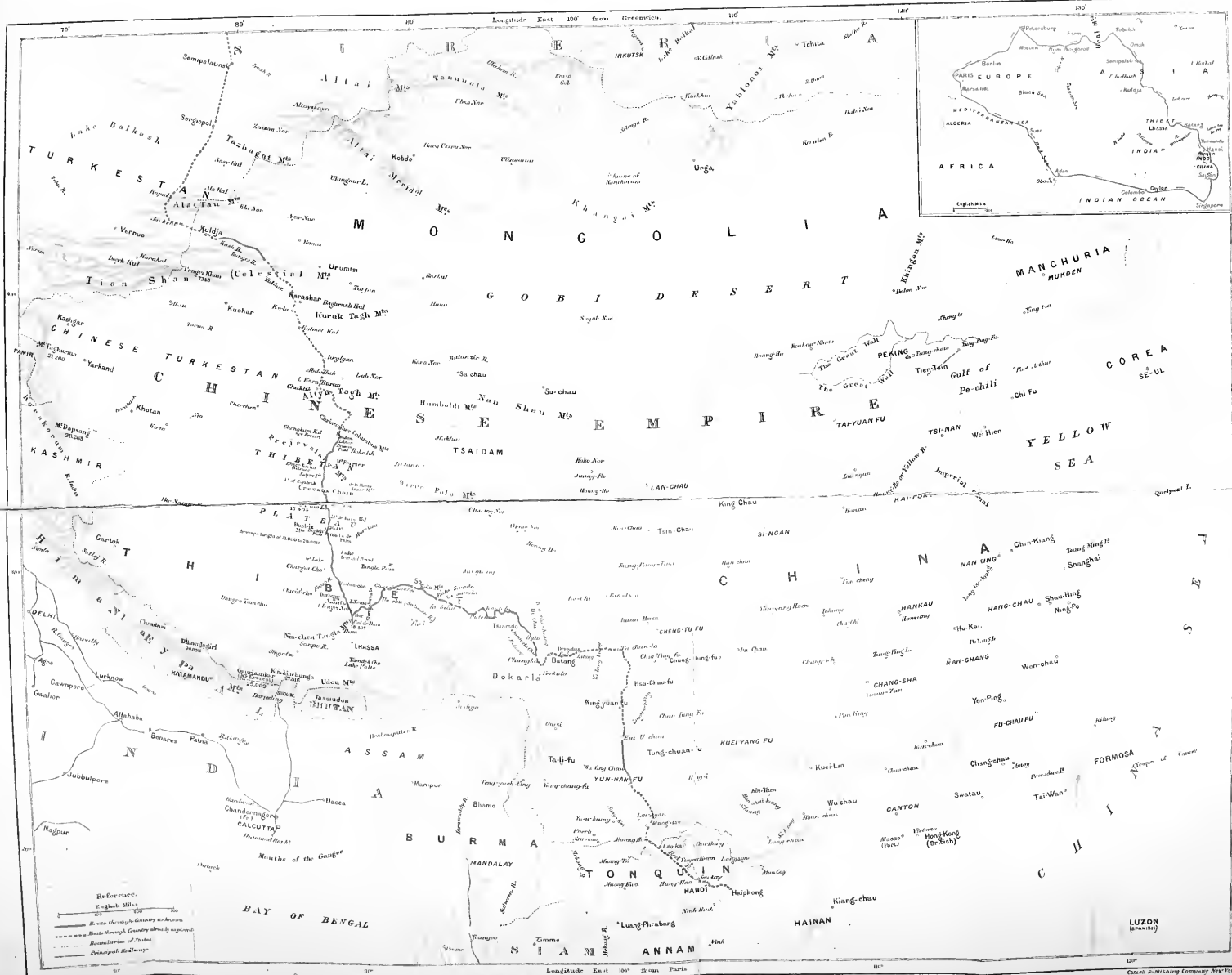


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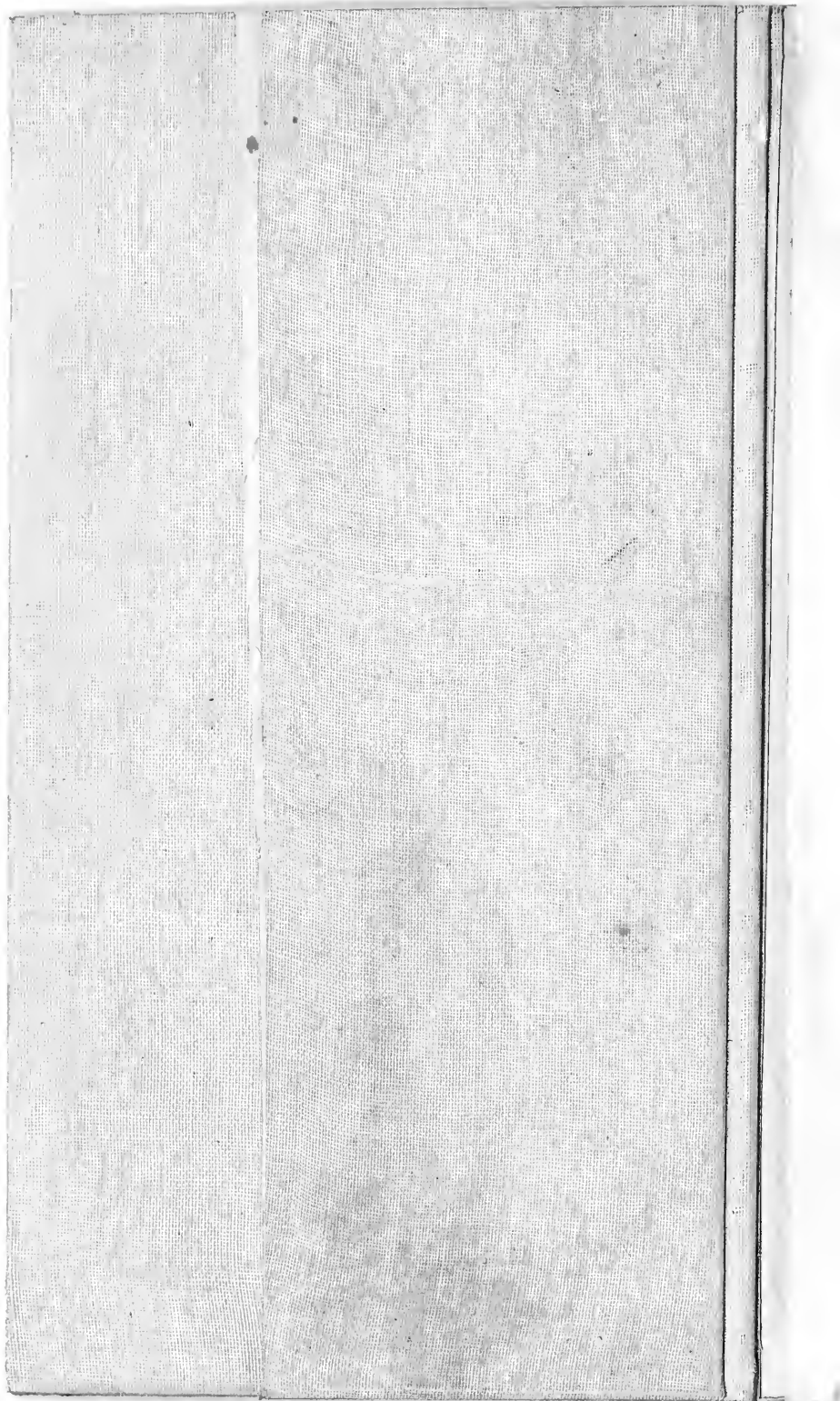


MAP SHOWING M. RONVALOT'S ROUTE.

Engraved by Charles Bess, Paris

Geogr. Anstalt der Kaiserl. Universitat Wien







GABRIEL BONVALOT AND PRINCE HENRY OF ORLEANS.

ACROSS THIBET

BEING A TRANSLATION OF

“DE PARIS AU TONKING A TRAVERS
LE TIBET INCONNU”

✓ BY *Pierre Bonvalot*
GABRIEL BONVALOT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY
PRINCE HENRY OF ORLEANS

TRANSLATED BY C. B. PITMAN

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE last journey undertaken by M. Bonvalot, who was on this occasion accompanied by Prince Henry of Orleans, the eldest son of the Duc de Chartres, has perhaps excited even greater interest than the preceding one, when, together with two other Frenchmen, he accomplished the difficult, if not unprecedented, feat of reaching India by scaling those table-lands of the Pamir—the “roof of the world,” as that mountain mass is often called—concerning which there is so much talk just now. M. Bonvalot entitled that book, “Aux Indes par Terre,” or, to give it the English title which I adopted as an equivalent, “Through the Heart of Asia.” It was a laborious and even dangerous journey, bringing out those qualities of courage, self-command, tenacity, knowledge of human character, and good-humor, which go to make up the successful traveler and explorer. It is to the possession of all these qualities that M. Bonvalot undoubtedly owes the renown which he has achieved as a traveler, and I do not think it will be possible for anyone to read the following pages without being impressed with the fact that M. Bonvalot—who was evidently well seconded by his two companions, Prince Henry and the Belgian missionary Father Dedeken—is not only a man of dauntless pluck but a keen observer of men. Although he has not that undue and self-depreciating modesty which is but pride in another form, he does not in any way boast of his exploits; but one has only to read the dispassionate and almost bare record of the temperature and the privations of the months spent on the highlands of Thibet to realize what the chilling cold and the wasting miseries of that terrible winter must have been.

Yet all this is related, as I have said, in as matter-of-fact a tone as if the writer were describing a journey to Cairo or some other well-known place in touch with civilization. Starting from the frontiers of Siberia, and coming out at the other end of Asia, on the coast of the new French colony of Tonquin, M. Bonvalot and his companions traversed not only that portion of Thibet which several English travelers, such as Dalgleish and Carey, and the great Russian Prjevalsky, had explored, but going beyond the limits which their predecessors had reached, forced their way over the table-lands and came out on the other side, this journey being one which no European had ever accomplished; the only persons who had trodden the same paths being the Thibetans on their way to and from the holy city of Lhassa. Although they encountered many obstacles, and must at times have been in considerable peril, they did not meet with any active hostility, so that the narrative of their journey is not a sensational one, though scarcely a day elapsed without an incident of some kind.

In translating the book into English, I have endeavored to remain as far as possible true to the original meaning; but as the work is a very large one, I have taken it upon myself to omit certain passages—chiefly of dialogue, especially in the chapters relating to countries where other travelers had been before. The list of the collections which the explorers brought back with them has also been omitted in this edition, these collections having been exhibited in the Paris Museum, and not being destined for England. I may add that the figures relating to the temperature have been altered to the Fahrenheit scale throughout.

C. B. PITMAN.

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ACROSS THIBET.

CHAPTER I.

AMONG THE LAMAS.

How the Journey was Suggested—Rachmed—At Moscow—Through the Ural Mountains—Arrival at Djarkent—Organizing the Caravan—At Kuldja—Father Dedeken—Abdullah, the Interpreter—Across the Tien-Chan—In the Province of Ili—Kirghiz and Kalmucks—Chinese Justice—The River Kungez—Moguls—Exposing the Dead—Visit to a Grand Lama—A Lama Monastery and Pagoda—Timurlik—Kirghiz Immigrants—Valley of the Tsakma—The Joy of the Desert.



RACHMED.

It used to be the fashion to invoke the muses before one began to write a narrative, but all that is out of date, and, for my own part, I would simply entreat the cross-grained rheumatics and treacherous fever to be so kind as to let me keep my word with my publisher, and write him with as little delay as possible the story of a journey which I undertook with great pleasure, and which, as I must frankly admit, it is much less agreeable to put upon paper.

In January, 1889, we were talking, at the house of my good friend Henri Lorin, as he reminded me upon my return last winter, about travel and exploration, and he asked me if I had any fresh project in view. I told him that a very interesting journey would be one from Paris to Tonquin overland, cutting out a route of one's own across the whole of Asia. And when he asked me to indicate my probable itinerary upon the map, I drew a line through Chinese Turkestan, the higher tablelands of Thibet, and the valleys of the great rivers of China

and of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Those who were looking over my shoulder thought this scheme a splendid one, but, for my own part, still feeling the effects of my journey over the Pamir, I would not allow myself to think of putting it into execution, for the good reason that when I let my fancy turn to travel I am sure to be carried away by it.

A few months later, on coming back from the Exhibition, where I had been to catch a glimpse, as it were, of the distant lands in which I had wandered, this same friend wrote to say that there was a person desirous of traveling with me in Asia. The first thing to ascertain was whether it was someone prepared to follow me blindfold, for my intention was not to play the globe-trotter but to explore. I was told that this was so, and, forgetting all about my resolve to take a rest, I plunged into the study of the narratives of Father Huc and Prjevalsky.

Little time was lost in coming to an understanding with the Duc de Chartres, who offered to participate in the expense of an exploring expedition in which his son was to take part. We at once agreed that our undertaking should be a national one, and that the collections we might make should be handed over to our Museums. My future companion, Prince Henry of Orleans, was delighted at the plan which I submitted to him, though it was a somewhat vague one, for traveling has this much in common with war, that, before getting upon the ground, it is idle to commit one's self to any positive arrangements.

The preliminary preparations having been rapidly completed, we left Paris on the 6th of July, just when Paris was in the full fever of her Exhibition. At Moscow we were to be joined by Rachmed, my faithful companion during my two previous journeys, he having been found out for me in the Caucasus at the place where I had expected he would be, for I knew where Rachmed prefers to live when he is not on the tramp. The worthy fellow was preparing to come to the Exhibition, by way of realizing a dream he had for some time been cherishing; his ticket had been taken and he was about to embark at Batoum,

when he got my telegram, saying that if he cared to come to China with me he was to go and wait for me at Moscow. So he went and changed his ticket for one to Moscow, not in the best of humors, for it cost him a pang not to see the Exhibition. Still he did not hesitate, being afraid, as he confided to one of my friends, that he would displease me. Rachmed is an Uzbek by birth, and belongs to one of the branches of that fine Turkish race which, as I am never tired of repeating, comprises so many noble specimens of humanity.

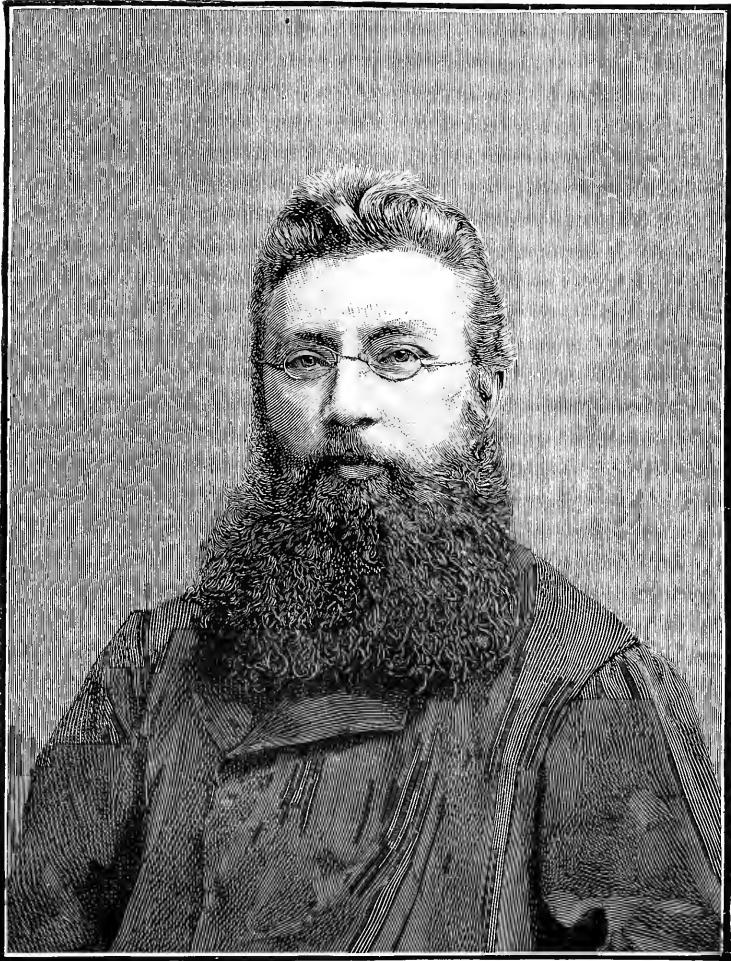
In Russia we were treated most handsomely, and furnished with all necessary letters of recommendation to the Consuls along the Chinese frontier. Remaining at Moscow only long enough to make the many necessary purchases, we just stopped at Nijni-Novgorod, went down the Volga, ascended the Kama, and traversed the Ural chain of mountains. At Tiumen we again took boat, and landed at Omsk, whence, after making some purchases, we started again for Semipalatinsk, where we purchased the European goods which we were afraid of not being able to get at the frontier itself, and, after being very much jolted in a tarantass, arrived at Djarkent, the last town on Russian territory.

Before entering China we had to organize our caravan and recruit the staff needful for carrying out our project, but I will spare the reader an enumeration of the details and trouble entailed by these preliminaries of an exploring party. Let me, however, say that the thorough organization of a caravan, for a journey which is to end Heaven knows when or where, is the most difficult part of an explorer's work. In the Asiatic countries we were about to traverse vehicles are not used and the rivers are not navigable, being obstacles instead of means of communication as they are elsewhere. It is imperative, therefore, neither to forget anything nor to take a single superfluous article. So one tries to think of everything, to foresee all contingencies, and, after having eliminated as much as possible, it is astonishing to find how heavy the load is.

Meanwhile, we had to recruit our men at Djarkent on the frontier of Siberia. This was most difficult, for here we could only secure men very much below the mark, and not at all built for a long journey. Rachmed inspected them first, and, in presenting them to me, his unvarying observation was, "They are of no use for the road." I could see that he was right. There was not one of them who had respectable antecedents; they were a pack of lazy and penniless fellows who were anxious only to get across the frontier in our wake. Among them there is not one of those adventurers, vigorous and ready for anything, who have already looked death in the face, and would go through fire after the leader whom chance had given them, provided that leader had succeeded in attaching them to himself by a mixture of good and of bad usage. How much we regretted not having our base of operations in Russian Turkestan—at Samarkand, for instance, where there is no lack of good men. It is true we had three Russians who would suit us very well, but they made it a condition, when they took service with us, that they should not go beyond the Lob Nor.

September 6.—We left Djarkent on the 2d, and, marching by short stages, reached Kuldja to-day, and were most hospitably received by the Russian Consul and his secretary. We spend a few hours very pleasantly with the members of the Belgian mission, one of whom, Father Dedeken, has completed his engagement, and is about to return to Europe. As he has an appointment at Shanghai, he will go with us to the coast, and perhaps accompany us to Europe. He speaks Chinese, and as he is a man of strong will we are glad to have our party reënforced by him. His Chinese servant, Bartholomeus, who is to accompany him, is honest—which few Chinese servants appear to be—but very obstinate, which, on the contrary, seems to be very common in China.

Prince Henry, Father Dedeken, Rachmed, Bartholomeus, and myself form the nucleus of the expedition. We have, too, an interpreter named Abdullah, who speaks Chinese and Mogul, and



FATHER DEDEKEN.

who accompanied the celebrated Prjevalsky. He seems to be an honest sort of fellow, but his vanity, his boastfulness, and his talkativeness make us very uneasy.

His account of what he went through in the Tsaidame alarms our followers, and he seems bent upon dissuading us from undertaking anything out of the beaten tracks. It must be added that the Russian Consul at Kuldja is not much more encouraging,

and when Prince Henry tells him we are going to try to reach Batang he smiles incredulously, and advises him not to be lured on by that idea. He points out to us that we have no escort, no felt tent, no Chinese passport. But experience has taught us that one can get on without either of these three things which he regarded as indispensable. As regards the passport, I must say that the main cause of our success was our omission to give notice of our journey to the Tsong li Yamen at Peking. By asking for a passport to travel in those parts of China which have been little visited we should have excited the attention of Chinese diplomacy. The Mandarins would have given us the warmest letters of recommendation, and then, as soon as our itinerary was known, would have sent orders for every sort of means to be used to stop us on the road, and compel us to turn back. Such has been the lot of all travelers in China, from the late Prjevalsky down to Richthofen, Count Bela-Szechny, and so many others who have been stopped in their journeys by various devices.

After having completed our caravan as best we could at Kuldja, all we wanted, in order to continue our journey, was the authorization of the Chinese governor of the province. This was granted us after a visit in which etiquette was very carefully observed, insomuch that we were offered three cups of tea and a bottle of champagne, and the Governor gave us two safe-conducts to take us to the frontiers of the province of Ili.

September 12.—To-day the small European colony kindly escorts us to the gate of the town, and cordially wishes us a safe journey and happy return home.

And so at last we find ourselves in the saddle. We first make in an easterly direction, but change our course as soon as we have crossed the Tien-Chan, as it is Tonquin that we have in view. Shall we ever get there, and, if so, by what route? There is all the old continent to cross, the least known portion of China, Thibet and its highlands, the deserts and the deep rivers, to say nothing of the human beings who look upon every stranger as an enemy. All this I might have said to myself, and to these

reflections might have added that we were only five or six to face an unknown situation before which so many others, better equipped and prepared, had quailed. But I must confess that I had not one of these rhetorical thoughts in my head when once I found myself fairly started, abandoning myself to the pleasure of being in the open and looking about me with the eager curiosity of the traveler whose eyes, almost starting from their orbits, scan the horizon like a hungry hawk in search of prey.

After getting quit of the dust, which reminds me of Turkestan, the soil, the landscape and the cultivation of the plain recall the neighborhood of Samarkand and Tashkent. The beardless faces, the sunken eyes, and the long dresses of the men show that one is in China. The fertility of the valley of Ili is remarkable, so that for the last few years its population has been growing very rapidly. A great many of the Tarantchis who had fled to Russian territory are coming back to the places which their forefathers had cultivated, and a number of emigrants come from Kashgar, and even from Eastern China; but it will be a long time before the inhabitants are numerous enough to cultivate to the full extent this region, which would feed hundreds of thousands.

Leaving the valley of Ili to our right, as far as Mazar, built upon an affluent of the Kach, we followed a very good road, frequently coming upon villages which have been abandoned by the Tarantchis, who, having taken part in the massacre of the Chinese, fled when the province of Ili was transferred from Russia to China. The houses are falling into ruins, and are gradually disappearing amid a growth of willows, poplars, and vines; weeds choke up the gardens; the irrigating canals are dried up, and the fields are fallow. Deserted though the soil is, however, it has not ceased to be generous; it is arrayed in verdure, and its aspect is bright and cheerful.

One of our men recognizes the house in which he was born. The roof has fallen in, the door has been carried off, for fuel no

doubt, the walls are all cracked, and there are patches of barley growing at the extremity of the hearthstone. The Tarantchi was overcome with grief at the sight of the place all in ruins, and recalled how happily he had lived there with his parents, what fine crops they grew, and how cheap the food was.

I asked him why he had not remained there.

“We killed too many Chinese, Solons, and Sibos,” he replied, “and upon the Chinese returning we fled.”

“Now that you have crossed the frontier, will you return to Djarkent?”

“Heaven preserve me, no! The soil is not good, and water is scarce. I shall go to Kashgar, where the family of one of my wives lives.”

“Were you not married at Djarkent!”

“Yes, and I had a child as well. He died the day before I came to offer you my services, and I gave my wife back to her father. I am quite free.”



THE CARAVAN ON THE MARCH.

The facility with which this Mussulman abandoned his wife surprised me, but in this country it appears to be quite common.

What this Tarantchi told me about Ili was repeated to me by many others. Most of those who live in Russian territory are on the lookout for a chance of slipping across the frontier. The Chinese Mandarins have the wit to entice them; they do not ask them for papers. They let them settle on the uncultivated lands, and do not bother them about the past.

In the province of Ili, beyond Mazar, we meet a great many Siberian Kirghiz, whom the excellence of the pasturages along the affluents of the Ili has attracted. They have kept the chiefs whom they had elected, being Russian subjects. By order of the Chinese Mandarin, and with the assent of the tribes, these chiefs will transmit their powers to their descendants.

Side by side with these very wealthy Kirghiz we see some very poor Kalmucks. The rich pastures and flocks belong to the former, while the latter are relegated to the less fertile tracts, which they cultivate without gaining a sufficiency. These Kalmucks are certainly not taking in appearance. They are frail, badly fed, badly housed, badly clad, and have a placid rather than an energetic and intelligent air. Nevertheless, they have for some time been intrusted with the defense of the country, and they must not leave the place assigned to them without asking permission from their chief. They are not only bound to the soil, but are liable to be requisitioned for police or orderly duty, and must have in readiness the saber, the flint-lock gun, or the bow. Their "banners," to the number of twenty, distributed over the Tien-Chan, play more or less the same part as those families which in Austria were established in the south of the empire in the region of the "military frontiers," as they were styled. Their neighbors do not appear to hold them in high esteem, for a Kirghiz, to whom I observed how mild a physiognomy these Moguls have, replied with a laugh:

"That is true. They are as mild as cows."

"In what way?"

“Because they can be milked without any trouble.”

It appears that the Kirghiz, who are daring, well armed, and unscrupulous, do not think twice about cheating and pillaging these Moguls. As the plunderers are Mussulmans they can easily settle matters with their consciences, seeing that the victims are Buddhists, that is to say, people who have no “book,” neither a Bible nor a Koran, and so are of no account.

The Chinese authorities intervene but rarely to mete out justice to those who are aggrieved; the offenders are nearly always out of reach in the mountains, where they find it so easy to hide, and then again it is easy, in this case, to obtain from their family or tribe either a tax which may be in arrears or a present which in ordinary times would be withheld. But when brigandage has reached such a point that there is no sort of security the authorities resort to a ruse. By dint of promises and fair words, the chief who is the instigator of the trouble is enticed into the town and got rid of in some way or other. For instance, he is put into a cage between two impaling poles, and, by way of warning to offenders, he is left to die in this horrible posture. Sometimes it is a week before his agony ends in death. Having lost their leader, the nomads are thrown more or less into confusion, and advantage is taken of this to obtain some kind of submission.

The Chinese authorities have succeeded in embodying a certain number of Kirghiz, in registering them, so to speak. Thus we observed that the horsemen whom we meet wear round the neck a small tablet in a felt bag. When I ask what that means, I am told that for some time past every Kirghiz who is going into the town must first appear before his leader and ask him for one of these tablets, upon which his name is written in Turkish, in Chinese, and in Mogul. It is a passport which enables him to move about freely in the bazaars, and in times of disturbance any Kirghiz caught without it is arrested by the Chinese soldiers and visited with the most terrible punishments. On returning to his tribe the traveler has to return the passport to his chief,

and in this way it is possible to ascertain who are absent, and to exercise some sort of police control in the mountains. These men, riding about with the tablet flapping against their chests, enable one to realize the enormous power of an administration when opposed to the weakness of private interests without cohesion. The Chinese authorities have succeeded by dint of patience in getting the whip hand of these nomads, who used to make mock of them, and have put the yoke of the law upon their necks.

September 15.—To-day we left Mazar, and if the bridge over the Kach had not been carried away by a storm we should have crossed that river so as to reach the valley of the Kungez by a neighboring pass. But we were compelled to cross the mountain further north and find out a ferry higher up the river. After having climbed up and then followed the undulations of the uncultivated hills, we descended the valley, a sort of terrace at the foot of the mountains, a grayish steppe dotted over with a few tents and nomad flocks. It is commanded to the east by a chain of mountains more elevated than that to the north, and the slopes of which seem to us quite bare, while the summits are not white with snow.

The banks of the river present a somewhat attractive appearance, the stream flowing along like a ribbon amid verdure formed by poplars, willows, tamarisks which still bear a few flowers, liquorice-plants, barberries, and wild raspberries. There is abundance of water, and the grass is thick wherever the river reaches, while pheasants swarm in the undergrowth.

Passing a deserted village, we cross the small stream of Nilka and leave the marshy valley for the high plateau which overhangs it. In the midst of tall grass we come here and there upon cleared plots where the Moguls have their felt tents, which are smaller than those of the Kirghiz, lower and more pointed at the summit. These Moguls are busy threshing the wheat in the open air, in the same way as other primitive peoples who do not employ any machine. A pole is put into the ground in

the center of the wheat, which is laid out upon the ground, and oxen are tied to this pole and made to tramp round in a line, children driving them along with a stick. These children are stark naked and very weakly in appearance. Their stomachs are protuberant, and their skin, exposed constantly to the sun, is nearly black, while it seems to be merely thrown loosely over their frame, and to be about to come off whenever they raise their arms and cause their angular shoulder-blades to protrude.

September 16.—This evening we reach the banks of the river, which is at least 650 feet wide at the point where we are to cross it, for it branches out and forms numerous small islands, while the current is very impetuous. We hope that in the morning, when the water is lowest, we shall get our caravan over without mishap before sunrise. From our bivouac we can distinguish to the north white specks in the plain, at the foot of the mountains. These, it appears, are the tents of the lamas engaged upon the harvest; and when it is over they will return to winter in the monastery built upon the left bank of the river.

We are now in a Buddhist country, in a land where the people believe in the transmigration of the soul from one body to another. This does not tend to respect for the human body or to regard for the dead. While walking through the reed-beds in search of small birds for our natural history collection, my foot comes in contact with the upper part of a human skull. It is quite white, stripped cleaner than could have been done by the cleverest medical student. Upon examining it, I find that it is the very image of the Kirghiz skulls which I have had in my hand in Turkestan, there being the same depression of the occiput, the same breadth of cheek, the same prominent eyebrows, the same protruding cheek-bones, but with the forehead apparently less developed and rather lower, though quite as receding. We may assume that this skull was that of a man who did not possess any very marked intelligence, who was short in stature—as I learnt from the thigh-bone, which I picked up

a little further—and who had excellent teeth, as is proved by a fragment of his lower jaw. The bits of clothing hanging from the thorn bushes show that he was not a man of wealth.



A LAMA DOCTOR.

This was the place where his remains were exposed as soon as the soul had passed into a better body. Four stakes with bits of stuff at the end of them indicated that the corpse was deposited there, and the wild beasts, the birds of prey, and no doubt the

dogs from the adjoining tents, have cleared away the terrestrial envelope of this Mogul, devouring his flesh and grinding his bones, and then the process of time and of weather completed the work of destruction. There remain only a whitened skull, a half-gnawed thigh-bone, and a fragment of jaw; the soul has taken its flight, and the bits of stuff at the end of the stakes are praying for it, for, inscribed in black letters upon a yellow ground, are marvelous supplications brought from Lhasa.

September 17.—To-day, as we were certain of being able to overtake our caravan, which will be delayed in its progress by having to cross the ferry, we paid a visit to the Grand Lama, the head of the monastery. Our approach to the tents was heralded by the furious barking of some splendid long-haired dogs. The noise brings out the lamas, young and old, who drive away the angry mastiffs by throwing stones at them. We explain the object of our visit to the oldest of them, and he sends on in advance two young monks, and himself conducts us to the residence of his superior. The person who acts as our cicerone has an enormous head, a rather long neck, small eyes, and a big face covered with warts, so that his physiognomy would not be very pleasing but for the mouth and the smile playing upon his thick lips. It appears that this worthy man, whose age it would be very difficult to guess, is a celebrated doctor. His headdress is a greasy leather cap surmounted with a tuft, a small cap such as might fit a chorister boy, and which is much too small for so huge a head, upon which it produces much the same effect as would a wafer on the top of an orange. For a dress he has a long serge robe coming down to the feet and fastened round the waist with a belt, while his small feet are encased in untanned leather, which does duty at once as stocking and boot.

The Grand Lama received us very affably at the entrance to his tent of white felt, which was larger than any of the others. He himself drew aside the curtain, and invited us into his residence; and we, as soon as we had entered, seated our-

selves in Eastern fashion to the left of the aperture. The yellow-looking little man asked us as to our health, offered us the services of his doctor, and talked to us in the most paternal and friendly tone. Leaving our interpreter to answer for us, we proceeded to inspect at our ease, but with due discretion, this incarnation of Buddha and his abode.

The Grand Lama appears to be about sixty. Like all the priests of his creed, he wears his hair short, and being beardless by nature he has no need to shave. His features are regular, especially by comparison with those of his doctor. He has rather a broad face, but the black eyes are very intelligent, the mouth is delicate, and the eyelids very clearly defined. He is easy in his gestures, and has a good deal of unction in the voice. I should not be at all surprised if he ruled the fraternity excellently, for he gives the impression of being a man of mark. From time to time he takes a pinch of red snuff, which he puts out on to the nail of his thumb from an oval jade bottle with a silver stopper. He takes care that we are served with some tea with butter in it, which is the favorite drink of the Moguls and the Thibetans, and which I found very much to my liking upon tasting it for the first time.

Behind my host there stands upon a slab a gilt statue, which represents the Grand Lama of Lhassa. The Grand Lama seems to be very like him, and has the same smiling physiognomy.

There is nothing in the tent which indicates any effort at cleanliness or luxury. The whole of the furniture seems to be about equally neglected, and the only apparent value possessed by anything is a row of small jade vases placed upon a coffer covered with some yellow material opposite to the entrance; an altar has been raised, and some sacred images are inclosed in a sort of tabernacle or movable chapel, the shape of which reminds me of those I have seen in Italy; and, as is the case in Italy and also in Spain, these sacred images of Buddha are carried to the residences of such persons as ask for them in order to facilitate their cure, which the doctor also helps to effect by means of

remedies that have received the priestly benediction. Among these remedies are some truly extraordinary ones, of so singular an origin that I dare not explain them, for fear of being considered improper.

Presently there is a great noise of drums and cymbals, which is the call to prayer. So we take leave of the Grand Lama, who rises, offers us his hand, and wishes us a safe journey, with the same smiling face which is seen alike in the Buddhas of statues and in the Buddhas of flesh and blood. The aged priest readily gives us permission to visit the pagoda built close to the winter monastery.

As we go out we notice the cymbal-players, who are standing in front of a large tent which is used for religious service during the harvest. The lamas are nearly all out in the fields, and the number of worshipers is very small, the congregation consisting mainly of youths with skull-caps on their clean-shaven heads, and a long monkish robe fastened round the waist with a belt.

The monastery consists of a congeries of houses in the Mogul style, forming a square. Nothing can be simpler than the architecture of these buildings: four walls, a door, a window, a fireplace, a hole in the ceiling, some forage on the roof, and that is about all. As far as we can judge by what can be seen through the chinks in the closed doors, the furniture is not worth speaking of, for we can see only a few chests, some clothing, and a certain quantity of tools. Moreover, the lamas, faithful to their nomad habits, are said to inhabit, even during the cold season, their felt tents, erected in the courtyards formed by these dwellings. They are built of earth, rubble, and wood, and are used as much for cattle as for human beings.

The pagoda is new, and its walls are whitewashed. The main door being open, we enter into a sort of rectangular barn. The first thing which strikes our eye is the altar, upon which are burning lamps whose flame sheds a glow upon the gilding of the statues. One represents Buddha in his youth, wreathed in smiles and seated upon a throne. Behind him a lama, in gilt

metal, is smiling as amiably as Buddha himself. Like him, he has long ears—the better to hear prayer, no doubt; and he holds his hands out, one against the other, in the attitude of a person ready to applaud, while at the same time maintaining an aspect of great dignity.

Beside the high altar, in a chapel of more modest proportions, is the statue of a person dressed in yellow, with an apron on the



THE TIEN-CHAN MOUNTAINS.

knees and a chaplet in the hand. He, we are told, is to be the successor of the Grand Lama, and his functions are analogous to those of a Christian Saint, he having charge to intercede for the faithful and to transmit their prayers to the proper destination. On the table of the altar are a number of small cups containing oil, and, besides these, there are bronze ewers, bells, bundles of images, peacocks' feathers disposed as trophies, packets of sacred books and printed prayers, vials containing grains or perfumes, and other trifles, which are, nevertheless, of high value, for they have been

brought from the holy city of Lhassa. The two sides of the nave, if it may be so called, are used as a warehouse.

Before we left, the lama who acted as our guide showed us a tambourine which was used as an organ for accompanying the prayers; and, striking the cymbals which are used for the same purpose, he, with raised forefinger and open mouth, bade us admire their sonorous properties. Their vibrations are, as a matter of fact, very harmonious. Before parting with him we give him a handsome "tip," and the poor fellow did not attempt to disguise his satisfaction, for these simple people do not know what wealth is, and we are struck by the wretched state in which the Moguls encamped around the pagoda live. The interior of their tents is the acme of filth, and the smells emanating from them are horrible. Nearly all the children are naked, the parents not having the wherewithal to clothe them. As to the women, they exceed in ugliness anything which can be imagined; and one cannot help wondering how the most ardent of poets would contrive to idealize them.

In the evening we penetrate by a small pass into the valley of Kungez, and encamp not far from a copper-mine, where we discover a tiny spring, which supplies us with sufficient water for our tea. And this is about all, for we are on an arid steppe.

September 18.—To-day we encamp among the rushes on the banks of the Kungez, at a place named Timurlik. We cross the Kungez about six miles further on, for we have to make to the southeast toward the valley of Tsakma, and the pass which leads there is higher up the stream. We are now on the route followed by Prjevalsky, and so far the crossing of the chain of the Tien-Chan, which barred our route, has presented no great difficulties. The excursion, indeed, was a delightful one, and the temperature agreeable, though at one in the afternoon it was 100° Fahrenheit in the shade. The minimum at night was 16°, just cool enough to make it a pleasure to wrap ourselves up in our long wadded blankets.

September 19.—Some Kirghiz who to-day offered us hospital-

ity declared themselves to be the happiest of men. They have water in plenty; they sow their corn at the foot of the mountains, and find an abundance of grass in the plains for their flocks and herds. They do not run short of wood, for the banks of the Kungez are covered with thick plantations, where the willow, the poplar, the apple-tree (with small and sharp-flavored fruit), the pepper-tree, the apricot tree, hemp, the licorice-plant, and the hop-vine grow wild. These Kirghiz formerly lived on Russian territory in the neighborhood of Lepsinsk, and crossed over to Chinese soil because they had no routes for their flocks. They pay the Chinese a tax of 10 per cent. They are very cheerful, well fed, lusty, and with plenty of color, like all who live in the keen mountain air. They do not strike us as being very fond of work, passing all their time in going from one tent to another, in eating and sleeping, though occasionally they go out after game. Several of them are armed with Berdan rifles.

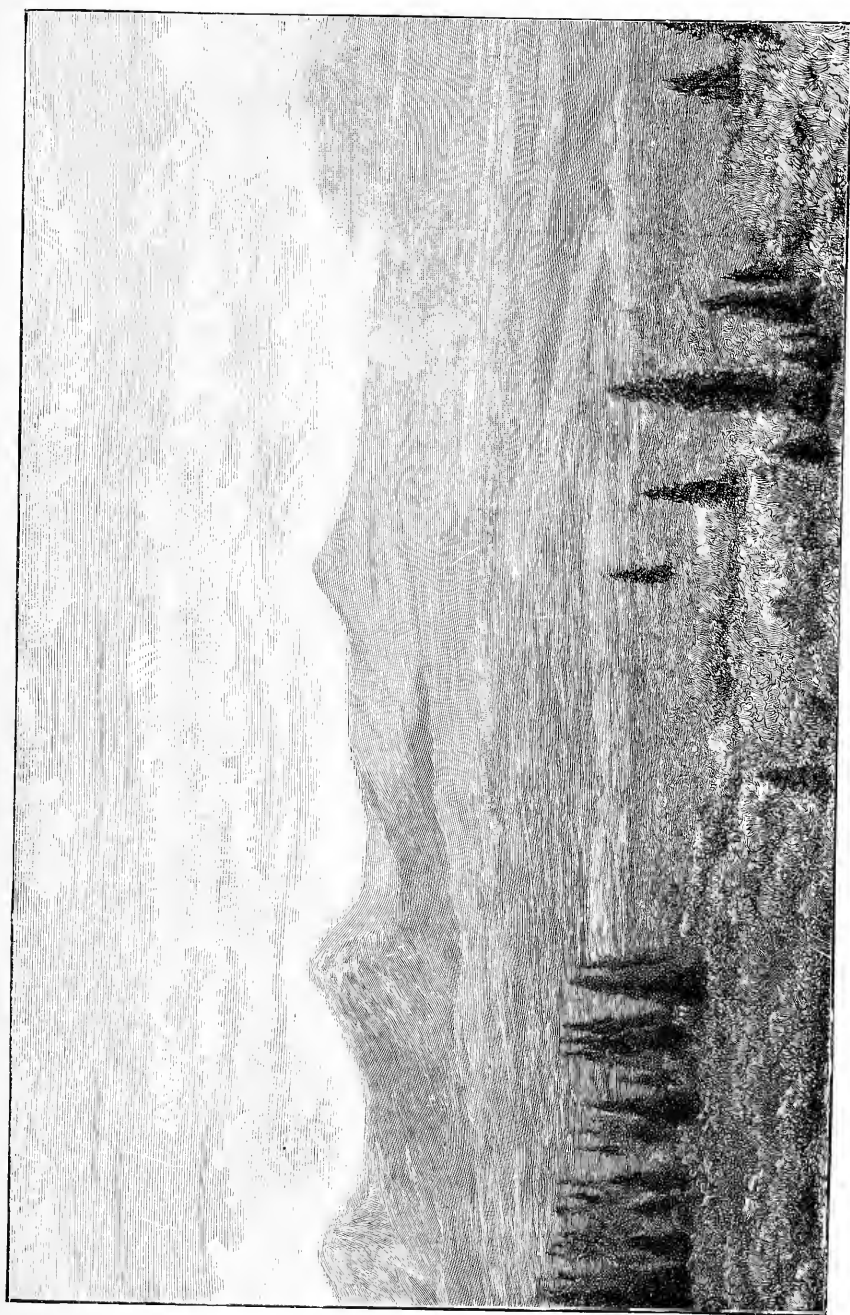
September 20.—We take leave of these Kirghiz, the last we shall see, their tribes not extending further east. Their chief, named Sasan, is very proud of the Russian medal which he wears round his neck, and of the blue button in his hat, which indicates his Chinese rank. He accompanies us through the reed-beds, and before wishing us all sorts of good luck recommends to our favorable notice five men of his tribe whom we may encounter in the vicinity of Yulduz. He warns us that when they see us they will take us for Chinese and make off, but he begs us not to fire on them or do them any harm. We at once inferred that Sasan's friends are Barantachis—that is to say, persons addicted to *baranta*, the Turkish word for horse-stealing.

September 22.—The two guides whom the Chinese governor gave us assert that they do not know the route to the valley of Tsakma, and Abdullah, the interpreter, who undertook to show us the way, led us right into a *cul-de-sac*. We retraced our steps, and the plainest common sense enabled us to discover what would have been a convenient pass if the rain had not made the

ascent so arduous. Gaining the summit at last, we descended into the valley, and re-ascended a plateau, where we found refuge beneath a splendid cluster of pine-trees; a piece of bread taken out of our pockets and some currants picked from a currant-bush close by constituting our frugal breakfast.

The rain ceased when we reached the summit of the pass. Near the watershed we came upon a roughly defined path along the edge of a gorge to our left. All of a sudden a strong gust of wind made a large horizontal rent in the veil of mist spread over the landscape, and we were able to distinguish, far to the south, mountains covered with forests, the trees of which already had a powdering of snow, while above were large banks of black clouds. Then the mist slowly cleared off, and as the atmosphere gradually lightened the eye wandered gladly over a broad valley, which we did not suspect to be so near. Clumps of green trees mark the windings of the river Tsakma, which traverses a steppe extending toward the west and covering, as if with a grayish carpet, the sides of the valley. It might be supposed to be perfectly smooth, and to come down without a break to the groves of trees at the bottom; but by looking closer spots of a more decided color can be distinguished, and the eye gradually detects that they are moving. They prove to be gazelles, which take fright at our approach, and make off at full speed. It is then we discover that the slope, which had seemed to us quite smooth, is not so in reality, for the gazelles first go down and disappear, then come up again, only again to disappear, disclosing to us all the undulations of a very uneven desert, a few green patches in the hollows marking the places where the water which has come down from the mountain has collected.

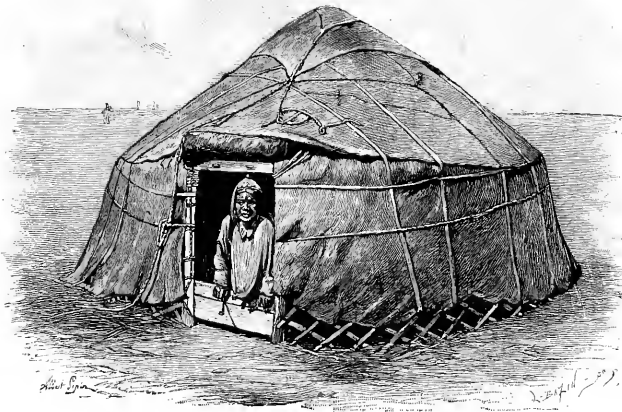
The horizon being more distinct, thanks to the breeze, the view broadens toward the west, and stretches so far that the river is only visible as a slender thread, and gradually becomes lost in space. So we get once more that sensation of the desert which we nomads so like. Without attempting to analyse the feeling, I may say that the steppe, the desert, is a very fascinating place of



VALLEY OF THE TSAKMA.

sojourn for one who has lived in large cities, and has been put out of humor by the petty worries of civilization. Solitude is a true balm, which heals up the many wounds that the chances of life have inflicted; its monotony has a calming effect upon nerves made over-sensitive from having vibrated too much; its pure air acts as a douche which drives petty ideas out of the head. In the desert, too, the mind sees more clearly, and mental processes are carried on more easily.

Encamping on a natural platform near a plantation through which the river runs, we light big fires, dry our clothes, and



A MONGOLIAN TENT.

sacrifice a good fat sheep. The sheep remaining are fastened together and placed between the fires, within the circle formed by the camels and horses, for we are in fear of the wolves reducing us to starvation.

This region, in which are to be found traces of wild boar, deer, and wolves, is frequented by trappers and hunters, as is proved by the ashes of a fire in the open, by charred logs of wood, and by a shelter made out of the boughs of trees.

We find a very comfortable resting-place under a pine tree, between two enormous roots. The soil had been trampled down, and our sleeping apartment is a thick bed of grass under a sort of arch, beneath which we had to creep. Of course, it would not do to attempt many gestures in awaking, but one can sleep here protected from nearly all winds, and light a fire without fear of its being put out by the rain, the fine points of the evergreen branches not allowing a drop to penetrate so far. There is an abundance of game close at hand, and we shall clearly be able to kill some stags, since we have come across big thigh-bones which the wolves have not taken the trouble to crunch. Moreover, there is delicious water and plenty of wood ready to hand.

CHAPTER II.

TO KOURLA.

A Good Camping-ground—Tent Life—Arrival of Two Torgutes—Death of a Camel—Concerning Obos—The Gorge of the Kabchigué-gol—A Native at His Devotions—The Ghadik—Farewell to the Torgutes—A Pan-Turkish Empire—Yakoob-Beg.



IMATCH.

September 24.—After a brief stage, having found a suitable spot, we halt to prepare for crossing the pass. I may say, once for all, that by “a suitable spot” I mean one where we can pitch our tent upon fairly level ground, sheltered from the wind or the snow, and, if possible, close to wood and water. A splendid camping-ground such as this is not to be forgotten, and we remained here two days, busied on various repairs, examining the horses’ shoes and substituting new ones where required, and taking care that there is not a nail loose or missing. The backs of the beasts of burden and horses are care-

fully inspected; where the saddles gall, they are rectified, and the wounds are dressed; the saddle-bags and packing canvas are sewn where torn.

Our old camel-driver, the bandy-legged Imatch, who would not part from the camels we had bought of his master, looks after his charges with genuine affection. They know him, and when he calls to them in the steppe at feeding-time, they come to him like fowls to the henwife.

Some of our men are already indisposed, and it happens that

these are the most lazy of the whole troop. They are very anxious to be sent back with the guides given us by the Governor, who are returning. However, they must go with us beyond the pass, as we cannot afford to reduce our staff just now.

We have been leading a tent-life for barely ten days, and already we have got accustomed to it and have learnt to like it. And yet our tent is neither large nor comfortable. About the height of an average-sized man, it is sufficiently long and broad to enable all three of us to lie upon the felt, to eat out of the single pot around which we gather, and to sip our tea without rubbing elbows. Our shelter consists of a good piece of canvas sewn double, and that suffices to protect us from the bad weather, and to give us the sensation of being in a well-protected room while the rain is pelting and the wind howling outside.

The departure of the two guides provided by the Governor of Ili created a void, which was at once filled up by the arrival of two Torgutes. They came to our encampment on horseback, with their rifles slung across the shoulder, and with a long coil of hair hanging down the back. Approaching our men's fire, they began to converse with them in the Mongolian language, and, after having had some tea, said, in reply to our questions, that five days before they found four of their best horses missing, so they went in search of them. Emerging from the valley of the Yulduz, where their tents were pitched, they found traces of horses, but without knowing whether they were theirs or not. So they resolved to visit the valley of the Tsakma, thinking that the thieves had passed that way. As a matter of fact, they discovered traces northward—that is to say, in the direction of the Kirghiz of the Kungez. But, rain falling, they could not trace them any further, so they returned, being certain that they could catch us up, for they saw that we had camels.

Upon our asking them why the Kirghiz had stolen their horses, they said it had always been so, and they could not indulge in reprisals, for the Kirghiz were the stronger. Formerly they lived in complete security in this valley of the Tsakma.

Then the Kirghiz came, and at first occupied part of it, but then they wanted to take the whole of it. For some time there was a constant interchange of robberies and murders between the two peoples, until at last the Chinese authorities intervened and decided that the only means of re-establishing peace was to compel the two parties to quit the pastures. "Since that time," they added, "neither Mongols nor Kirghiz have lighted their fires in the valley of the Tsakma."

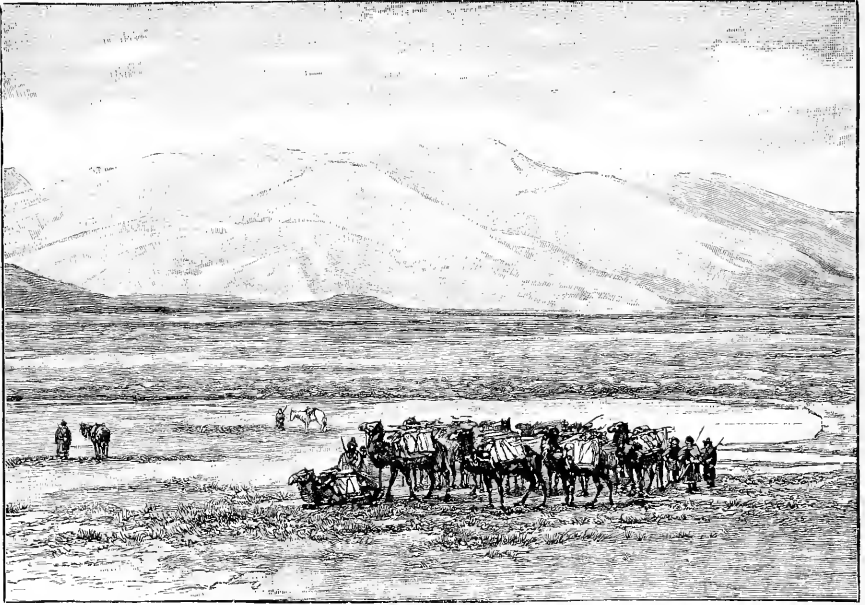
We had no difficulty in inducing the two Torgutes to remain with us and show us the way. They were much interested in what went on around them—in the arms which were being furbished, in the birds which were being stuffed, while they were surprised at finding the shin from the leg of a stag which Prince Henry had killed being preserved. They exchanged remarks when they observed the terrible effect produced by the bullet of the express-rifle, and then, chin on hand, feasted their eyes upon the palao-meat which was cooking nicely in the pot, the sight of this completing our conquest of them.

September 25.—To-day, after going up hill and down dale, we gradually climb to the pass, which Rachmed and myself consider very easy by comparison with many others. A strong cold wind gets up from the W.N.W.—that is to say, at our back—but we are on a desolate steppe, where we can find neither a shrub nor anything else which can help to combat the cold that is beginning to be unpleasant. On the other hand, we come upon some very pretty flowers, lovely wild pansies and edelweiss that would delight the heart of an Alpinist. In the evening we encamp on the banks of the Yulduz, which we reach by descending a path free from stones. The clouds conceal from us the mountains, which shut in the valley, and this does not add to the attractiveness of the view. We are glad to huddle away in a deep gorge, for the wind is most cutting.

Before night-time all our camels have come in, but one of them, purchased at Kuldja, is ill, and he drops as soon as he has got in. His burden is removed, but he cannot rise. There is a

divergency of opinion as to whether he will recover, and the interpreter, who knows all about everything, says: "Wait a minute, and I will tell you. The hairs of his tail will indicate to you what his fate will be."

He pulls out a few of these hairs and examines them, after-



THE YULDUZ VALLEY.

ward pressing them between the thumb and the forefinger, close to the root, and rubbing his two fingers together.

"I can assure you that he will die."

"Why?"

"Because I had no difficulty in pulling out the hairs, because the adipose tissue adheres to the root of the hairs, which indicates a fatal sickness."

The face of the little interpreter glows with satisfaction at having given proof of his sagacity, and in the meanwhile our poor camel is in his death-throes, exciting the pity of his driver, who puts a sheepskin under his head for a pillow. The dying

beast's eye is dilated and he loses consciousness. He struggles as he lies, and one would fancy that all the thoughts of his past existence were chasing one another hurriedly through his brain. He seems as if anxious to go through all the acts which have been so often reiterated as to have become habits with him. He makes an effort to rise, he kicks his legs in the air as if to walk, he moves his jaws as if to eat, he seeks to make a noise in the throat as if to ruminate; but the gaze fades away, the eye closes, and the good servant gasps in death.

The two Torgutes, who are Buddhists, look on with much sadness, and mumble some kind of a prayer—or, rather, a few words wishing a safe journey to the soul which is on the point of transmigration. That does not prevent them, as soon as the soul has taken its flight, from stripping the skin off the body which held it. As the soul has fled, what could it matter?

September 26.—To-night we have a minimum of four degrees below zero, and when they wake up the men complain of the cold. We follow the valley, which continues to run through the steppe, and, gradually getting further away from the Yulduz, the waters of which flow over sand and pebbles, we encamp on the banks of the Zakiste-gol, a river abounding in fish. On the way we meet the caravan of an important lama, and make him very uneasy by proceeding to photograph him, Prince Henry succeeding none the less. These worthy lamas, with their pointed head-gear, seem to us to be a little the worse for drink.

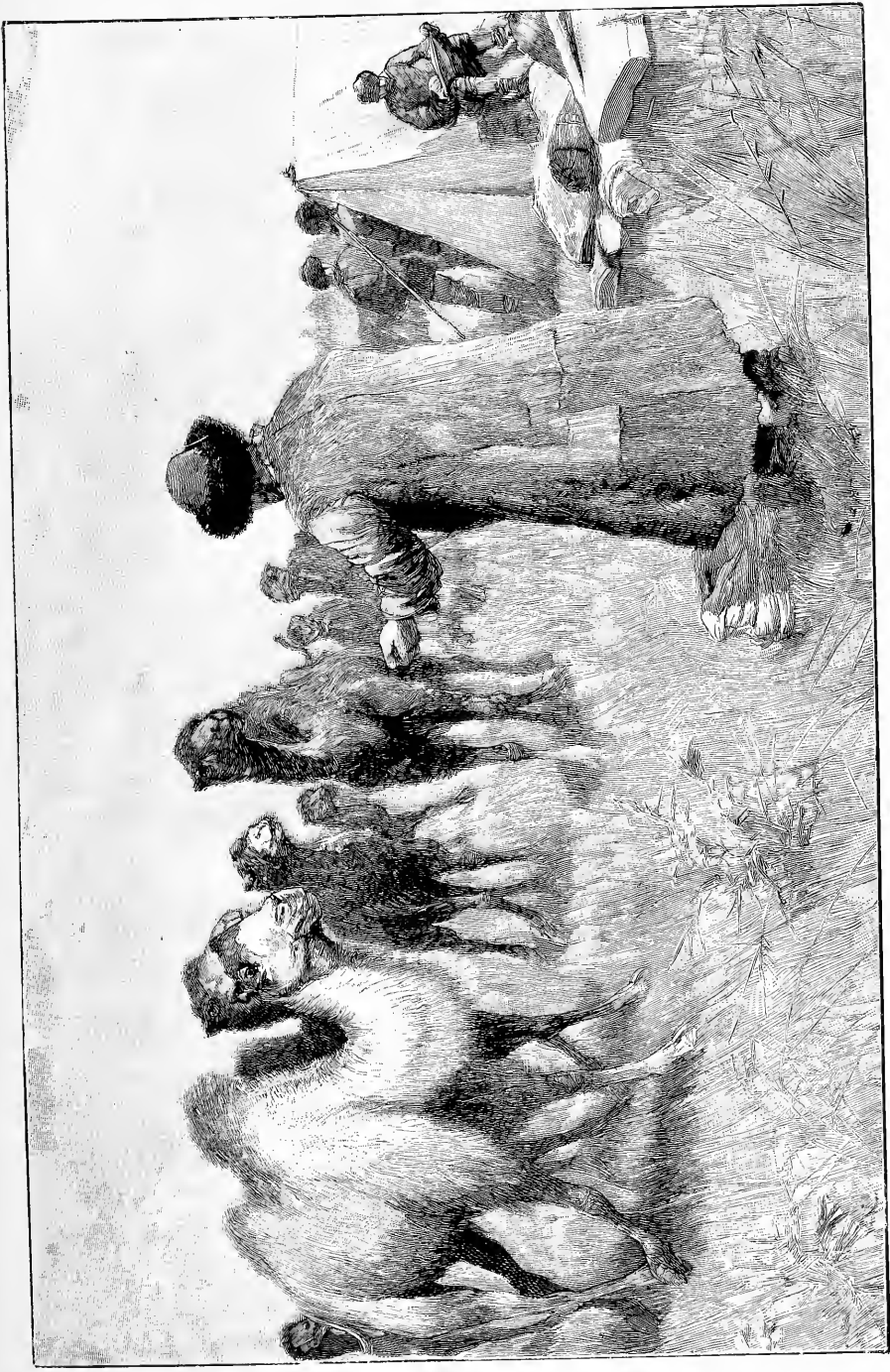
The landscape remains much the same; for we are still on the steppe shut in by mountains, bare, and in places quite white with salt, while in places there are peat-pits, where the water is either stagnant or runs off very slowly. We notice some arkar horns on the ground, but we have no time to go in pursuit of these animals on the mountains.

September 28.—This evening we encamp beyond the dried-up bed of the river Borokusté, and find plenty of grass for the camels and *kisiak* (droppings) for the fire. To the north we can see on the sides of the mountain an inscription in

very large letters. These are the sacred sayings of the Buddhists, which believers can decipher miles off. Never in my life have I seen such big letters; all the slopes of the Tien-Chan would scarcely be sufficient to print a whole book. The Buddhists like to manifest their devotion in the open air, and when we leave the valley to reach by a pass the defile of Kabchigué-gol, we meet obos, or heaps of stones, upon most of which prayers have been engraved, at each culminating point of the undulating ground.

These obos are generally placed on an eminence, at one of those spots where the beasts of burden are allowed to halt and get breath. Advantage is often taken of these halts to make a light collation; after that, prayers are offered that the road may be a good one, when starting on a journey, while thanks are returned because it has been good, if the journey is ending. By way of showing respect or gratitude to the divinity, stones are heaped up, and a pole is often placed in the ground, with a prayer written on a piece of canvas tied to the end of it; those who follow after add more stones. Workmen specially employed, and traveling lamas, engrave prayers upon slabs and deposit them at the spot. Thus the obo is constituted, and the shepherds, the travelers, and the tribes on the march swell its proportions every time they pass, the heaps of stones gradually acquiring such colossal proportions that they have the appearance of monuments. Many Buddhists deposit there images of Buddha, and of Tsong Kaba, the great reformer; and small pyramids of earth represent chapels, as I was informed. Others deposit carved fragments of horn, pieces torn off their garments, bits of horsehair (which they tie on to a stick), or anything which comes handy to them; and when they are making the presentation they offer up prayer.

In order to reach the defile of Kabchigué-gol—a word which we are told means “river of the narrow place”—we follow the left side of the valley. The road, which is fairly good, winds along the spurs of the mountain, with a view to the right of the valley



IMATCH CALLING THE CAMELS.

where the Torgutes have their tents, with their flocks and herds roaming over the green steppe. The sun is shining in all its splendor, and its heat seems excessive after the severe cold of the previous night. We have only to look behind us to be convinced that this fine weather will not last, for we can see the dark mass of a storm coming upon us from the extremity of the valley. The wind howls, the sleet and then the snow beat down upon us, with all the severity of winter. Fortunately we have reached the summit of the pass—those of us, at least, who have horses, for the camels come at a slower rate and do not alter their pace.

The fury of the storm is intensified at the very moment I reach the large obo which indicates the beginning of the descent. I am alone, and the opportunity for helping myself to some of the numerous stones with prayers engraved upon them is too good to be resisted. But I had reckoned without the spirit of the mountain, who makes my horse so restive that he will not move a step forward. I determine to dismount and tie him up somewhere, but there is nothing to be found which would answer the purpose; so I get up again, and once more endeavor to bring him up to the obo, but the noise of the stones striking against one another in the wind frightens him again, and, after losing my astrachan cap, I have to give up the attempt in despair. All these incidents did not prevent us from meeting in the evening beneath the willows of Kabchigué-gol.

October 2.—We have remained at this spot for three days, partridges swarming and enabling the guns of our party to make large bags; they are gray in color and very succulent. A great many thrushes, tomtits, and wagtails people the brushwood and trees growing on the mountain-side. We are in the country of the Torgutes, and the two who have accompanied us have their tent in this pass. They are not rich, but own a few head of stock—horses, cows, and sheep. They are the descendants of the Kalmucks, who left the steppes of the Volga in 1779, and found their way back after much hardship to the land of Ili.

Those nomads that we meet have preserved a vague souvenir of this great exodus, and they tell us that they came from the country of the Orosses (Russians), "where we left the people of our race. It is about 200 years that we have inhabited the Tien-Chan." But they can give us no details; they have forgotten the sufferings and the energy of their ancestors. They show us their square caps with laps for the ears in sheepskin, and they assert that this form of headdress comes to them from the Russians. This shows how difficult it is to get authentic information as to the history of Asia.

We are not sorry to leave this narrow gorge of Kabchigné-gol, despite its wildness and picturesqueness, and its wonderful spring, which cures rheumatism, and which is called Archanbuluk (that is to say, "the spring of healing"). We meet a few patients here, Mongolians of small stature, well built, with very small hands and feet—not the broad hands of the toiler, but the elongated hands of the unoccupied. Their head is very much like a round bit of wood which has scarcely had the corners squared off, their cheek-bones prominent, their eyes imperceptible, and, when seen in profile, it is scarcely possible to distinguish the nose. A lama owns a small hut near the spring, under an elm tree, and he is at once the consulting physician and the manager of this primitive bathing establishment. From him we learn that the young Khan, who is the heir of the Torgutes, has started on a pilgrimage for Thibet.

Making a start, we emerged from the defile on to the steppe, the approach to which was heralded three-quarters of a mile in advance by bunches of yantag, upon which the camels fed with manifest delight. The change is a very brusque one, for all of a sudden we are amid stones, sand, and a vast horizon; the temperature has already risen, and while an hour ago the air was fresh and pleasant we now begin to sweat. Marching along beside a narrow channel for irrigation, we reach a surface dotted with reed-beds, where the Torgutes are busy upon the wheat harvest, and encamp upon fallow ground, close to a fine elm

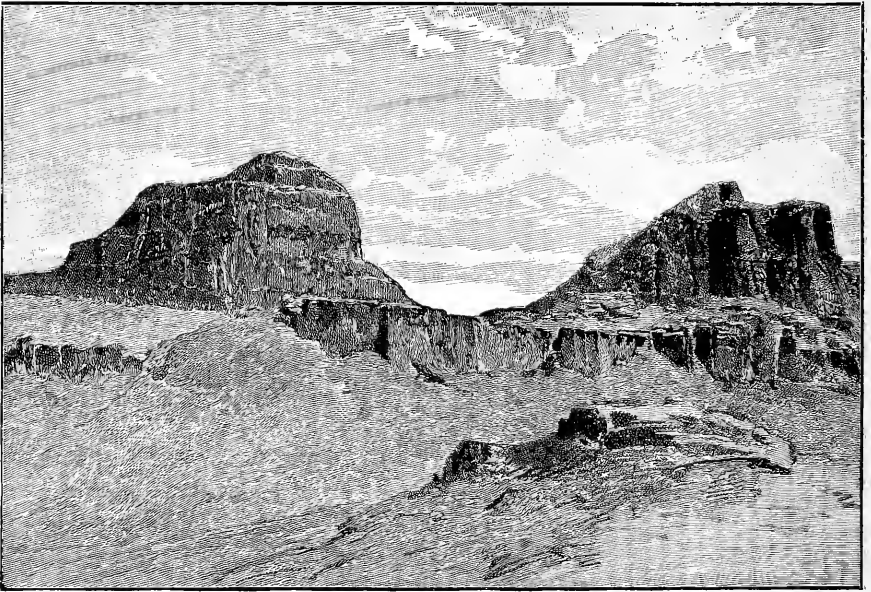
with an obo beside it. Under the shade of the tree is a sort of altar, analogous to the *ara* of the Romans, in the hollow part of which we can see ashes and charcoal, odoriferous plants being burnt upon it in honor of the divinity. Resting against the trunk of the tree is a whole bundle of sticks with rags and slabs of wood, with prayers written on them, while on the branches are a number of skins of lambs and goats, in an advanced state of decomposition, which have been hung there as votive offerings.



AN OBO.

Toward evening, at the hour when one is inclined to reverie, my attention is excited by a murmur which seems to be drawing nearer and nearer in the tall grass. A man appears, well advanced in years, the shoulders bent, and a chaplet in his hand. He casts an uneasy glance at me, but without breaking off his murmuring, and, standing upright before the obo, he tells his beads; then, going up to the tree, stoops down and rubs his forehead with the sap which he has let run on to his fingers from the bark. He next picks up two or three leaves, presses them in

his hand, and, having again looked at us, makes off without saying a word, muttering as he goes, "Om mané padmé houn"—a phrase which thousands of men repeat all their lives without understanding its meaning, but believing that they are insuring their future salvation. In the course of the day Prince Henry had great difficulty in photographing some of the Torgutes who were prowling about our bivouac. Only one of them would accept the



SANDHILLS AT KOURLA.

money we offered him, and was willing to sit for his photograph. They do not understand the box which is turned upon them, and they generally make off at the sight of it with terror depicted on their countenance. Like children, savages are always afraid of what they do not understand; and if the person photographed should happen to fall ill in the course of the year his illness would be attributed to "that box the Europeans had with them." We observe that the young men in some cases wear a sort of silver ornament in the left ear, and we are told that this is an engage-

ment to marry the young girl who has received the fellow-earring as a present.

October 3.—We are again on the steppe, where we see the thorny plant which the nomads call *touia kuiruk* (camel's tail) and the sweet yantag, on which our camels revel whenever they get the chance. Then the approach to the river Ghadik, whose waters fall into the lake of Karachar, is announced to us by tents, *saklis*,* and cultivated fields. The Ghadik, as it runs down from the Tien-Chan, ramifies over a considerable surface, as if delighted to be at liberty in the open plain, and it embraces a great number of islands which are almost buried beneath a vegetation quickened by periodical inundations. We encamp in the tall grass of one of these islands, our tent being shut in by a thick grove of willows, elms, tamarisks, jujube, and licorice trees. There is no trace of any paths upon this archipelago, for they have been effaced by the waters, and we requisition some Torgutes to guide us through this grassy labyrinth.

We emerged from it in about two hours, after having crossed several arms of the river, which are very deep at flood-time, and which are certainly not fordable then. In fact, we are told that when the snows melt the Ghadik forms a regular lake, with the tops of the trees just emerging out of the water. The pasturage is excellent, and constitutes the wealth of the tribes grouped around the king of the Torgutes.

We had no sooner crossed the last irrigating canal which derives its waters from the Ghadik than the desert began. The transition is a very sharp one, and there is a difference of temperature before we have gone a hundred yards. Behind us the air is moist and comparatively warm, but now it is dry and very keen. A path which has been trodden in by camels, at an epoch when the soil was softened by rain, winds its way upward

*The name of *sakli* is given to the walled square within which the tents and the flocks are inclosed during the winter. In most cases some sort of a shelter or hut is built in one corner, which serves as a shed or cooking-place when the cold is very severe.

to a deeper depression, running in a S.S.E. direction, in a small mountain chain very abrupt and denuded.

Beyond, there is a sort of valley without water, sandy, and skirted by elevations of the soil, which are full of deep furrows and seem crumbling away, with the appearance of some abandoned city whose monuments are falling to ruins.

Further on, in the land of the black tree (*Kara motoun*), a name given to a species of elm planted along the irrigating watercourses, we again encounter the Torgutes. The last of the Mongolian Torgutes are to be found here; they cultivate a few plots of the land, which is not very fertile, for it is a mixture of salt. A number of tall, well-set-up men, with black bushy beards, come round our bivouac; they are the first we have seen since leaving Siberia and Kuldja.

They enter into conversation with our men in Turkish, greeting them in the Mohammedan fashion, and one of them at once makes off, and speedily returns with some melons which recall those of Turkestan by their oblong shape and delicious taste. We all of us—French, Russians, Tarantchis, Kirghiz, and Uzbegs—are pleased at this meeting with men whom we feel to be closer to us than the Mongolians. We feel as if we had met some old acquaintances, and a very merry evening is passed.

If the principle of nationalities—determined by the unity of the language—ever prevails among those who speak Turkish, if a kingdom be reconstituted out of the scattered members of this great nation, the monarch or the caliph of it will never see the sun set upon his dominions, and he will command a countless host of valiant warriors. But they would be scattered over more than three-fourths of the surface of the Old World, and that would render it difficult to mobilize them in the event of war.

October 5.—To-day we have entered upon the last stage which separates us from Kourla. We again traversed a corner of the desert, and, as yesterday, low chains of crumbling marl, also

having the aspect of turrets, cupolas, and mausoleums. Before getting near to the Kutché-Darya, upon a height commanding a full view of the plain, we could distinguish the remains of a fort of dry brick, built by Yakooob the "blessed one," also surnamed the "dancer" by the people of the Ferghana.

This man was made in the mold to do great things, and Prjevalsky, the celebrated Russian traveler, was struck with his intelligence when he had an interview with him at Kourla in 1877. The good fortune of Yakooob was prodigious, though his rise was slow, inasmuch as he was a man of mature age when he became master of Kashgar and Chinese Turkestan. During the few years that he governed this country he displayed no ordinary activity, covering it with useful buildings, tracing canals, and organizing an army after the European model, having recruited, through the intermediary of the Sultan, officers in all countries of Europe. Several came from Turkey, and a member of the present French Chamber of Deputies was on the point of being employed by Yakooob-Beg. Heaven only knows what would have happened if this hardy Uzbek had not been checked in his career. He would certainly have got together the "twelve thousand good soldiers" whom Lord Hastings in his day considered sufficient for the conquest of China (this was Prjevalsky's estimate also of what would be required), and we should have witnessed the constitution of a Turco-Mongolian state, which would have extended from the Terek-Davan to the north of the Pamir to the Gulf of Petchili. But Allah had decided that Yakooob was not to go beyond Kourla, and it was there that he closed his interesting career in the fortress built by him, which still exists. He died of poison administered by his Prime Minister, to whom the Chinese made alluring promises which they took good care not to keep.

In Yakooob's lifetime the people were dissatisfied at having been roused out of the state of torpor so agreeable to the people of Asia. Now, this same people, which is under the administration of the Chinese, regret the "good time" of the *Badoulet*

(the "blessed one"), who is spoken of as having been a great man, while the "bakchi" sing his great deeds at the festivals. The people are so anxious for a fresh master that they ask us, hailing from the West as we do, if "the Russians are soon coming to take us?"

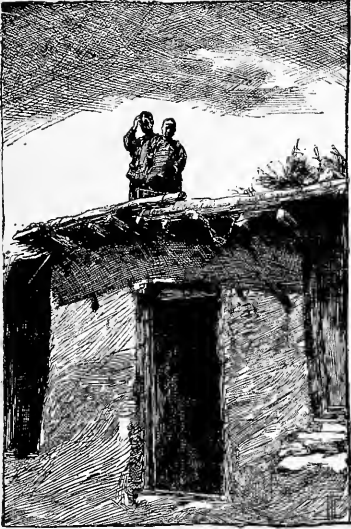


A MONGOLIAN LAMA.

CHAPTER III.

TO TCHARKALIK.

Kourla—In the Bazaar—Provisioning the Caravan—Parpa—Visit from the Akim of Kourla: A “Mandarinade”—Tehinagai—Music in the Camp—A Forest of Poplars—Crossing the Kutché-Darya and the Intchigué-Darya—Aktarma—The River Tarim—The “Silk Plant”—Arkan—Hard Words and Blows Compared—Talkitchin—The Hat of the Tarim—At Tcharkalik.



KOURLA WOMEN.

October 6.—Kourla is a small town situated in a fine oasis. It is traversed by the Kutché-Darya, over which a wooden bridge has been built, connecting the suburbs on the left bank with the bazaars and the fortress on the right. The population is a mixture of Chinese, Dounganes, and Tarantchis; but, as the Mussulmans form the majority, the chief of the town (the Akim) is of that persuasion. It was he who came and laid siege to us upon our arrival, not giving us time to enjoy the satisfactions and pleasures which an oasis always offers to those who have crossed the

desert; and Kourla is charming, with its gardens, its green trees, its fine river, and its bazaars, where are to be found melons, apples, figs, grapes, and apricots, which nomads like ourselves find so delicious.

We arrived in the night of this day (the 5th October), having done a stage of nearly thirty-five miles. We are lodged in the house of a Mussulman who is a Russian subject and a merchant in the town.

October 6.—To-day we received a great many inquisitive visitors. We learn that the authorities are summoned to meet at the Yamen in the evening to take counsel together concerning us, and the chief asks permission to pay us a visit the next morning.

We find ourselves in the first bazaar we have seen since we left Kuldja, and we shall not encounter another after we make a fresh start. So we buy and buy in preparation for Thibet, and, without losing an hour, hire twenty-two camels, to carry our purchases. Among these purchases are 1600 Russian pounds of bread, done down in fat and salt, made up into small cakes about as thick as the finger and as broad as the palm of a man's hand. The reason of their being made so small is that a biscuit of this size is easy to stow away; it can, if necessary, be placed up the sleeve on the march, for it may happen that while one is munching it one may have to pick up one's gun or whip. Moreover, it represents in size almost exactly what the appetite demands, and not an atom is lost. The salt aids the digestion, and the fat is, of course, a preventive against cold. The purchases also include 520 pounds of the best flour, which will be kept in reserve, for we shall only use these provisions at the last extremity; 280 pounds of mutton, salted and done up in skins; 160 pounds of small raisins, very delicate in flavor, with no pips, called "kichmich," which will be mixed with rice, and only distributed later, when the cold, the salt meat, the forced marches, and the great altitude have brought about that state of weakness which is so like scurvy; 80 pounds of salt, though we are pretty safe to find plenty in the desert, upon the surface of the soil, or on the shores of the lakes; 80 pounds of sesamum oil for hasty puddings; tobacco, bags, pieces of felt, and 6000 pounds of barley for our horses, although the interpreter Abdullah, and a man named Parpa, an inhabitant of Kourla, tell us that we need not concern ourselves about them.

This Parpa was formerly in the service of Carey and Dalgleish, the English travelers, and we have engaged him in the hope that he will furnish us with useful information. This adventurer,

with a long black beard, very taciturn, and with a tragic air, is a native of the Ferghana, and he came with Yakoob-Beg into Chinese Turkestan. He gets the horses shod, makes saddles for the camels, and has the reputation of being a brave man.

The preparations are rapidly completed; we have treated with a Doungana whom we are to pay a high price, but he will bring



A BIT OF THE TARIM.

with him three servitors, two Dounganas and one Turkish Musliman from the Oasis of Hami.

October 7.—Returning to the house to-day, we find the servants of the Akim, who announce the coming of their master. Soon afterward there arrive, followed by an escort, some mandarins, dressed in the Mohammedan style, but with the Chinese head-dress—a globular hat, and wearing the pigtail, which is the mark of vassal-dom that the Chinese insist on from the Mohammedans, whose head is generally shaved. So the head men of the town, most of them advanced in years, enter our room. We offer them seats on the white felt which has been unrolled for

them, and wait for them to question us, without uttering a word. They begin the conversation in Chinese, politely asking as to our health, congratulating us upon having made a safe journey, and



INHABITANTS OF KOURLA.

promising us their help. Between whiles their attendants place before us an offering of dried fruits, melons, and almonds, in accordance with the custom of Turkestan. We thank them with the utmost cordiality for their good-nature, and then wait to see

what is to follow. It is easy to see that the chiefs are somewhat embarrassed; they exchange a few words, and then the one who is highest in rank begins to make a rather solemn speech, pointing out that it is a habit to ask strangers for their papers. To which I reply that it is a very good custom, as it is impossible to take too many precautions with regard to strangers who come on to the territory of others. As concerns ourselves, he has seen by our cards on red paper, and written in Chinese characters, that one of us is a prince allied to the Kings of the West, and that he must be aware that the White Pasha has facilitated our passage through his states, and that we hope the Emperor of China will not be less obliging. Although we did not understand why papers should be demanded of us at Kourla, after we had been allowed to cross the frontier and go through the province of Ili, we were willing, in order to please him, as he was so kind to us, to let him have the general pass, which had been seen by the Governor of the province of Ili. He asked our leave to keep it, which we give all the more readily because we know from Prjevalsky and others that in China papers are only of service at places where they are not required. After an interchange of respectful and dignified greetings the chiefs go off.

What will happen to-morrow? We foresee complications, and Rachmed, who is much affected by all this, fully realizes our position. He says, "It is the beginning of the 'old story,' and the Chinese are going to bother us as much as they can. It is not surprising on the part of people who eat pork." And so Rachmed rattles on, loading with opprobrium this people, which allows its women to have wooden legs, which emits an odor intolerable to a true Mussulman, and so on.

The chief result of this interview is to make us hurry forward our preparations, for we have seen the advance-guard to-day; the declaration of war will be brought us to-morrow.

The same evening before sunset the chiefs of Kourla arrive in full dress, and, almost before the greetings have been exchanged and the cups of tea served, the Akim tells us to visit the Gover-

nor of Karachar before continuing our journey. We reply that the Governor is a person of too little consequence for us to turn aside from our route to go and see him. "If he wishes to say anything to us, let him come and say it. Moreover, he must have seen our papers."

"Your papers are of no value, and, to tell you the truth, here is the order to arrest you which has arrived from Ouroumitchi at Karachar."

We display great surprise at this, and ask him to let one of our men read this order. And then the conversation is resumed as follows:

"Where is our pass then?"

"At Karachar."

"Well, we shall keep your order until you have restored the paper we confided to you, for you have it in your possession, and you are not speaking the truth."

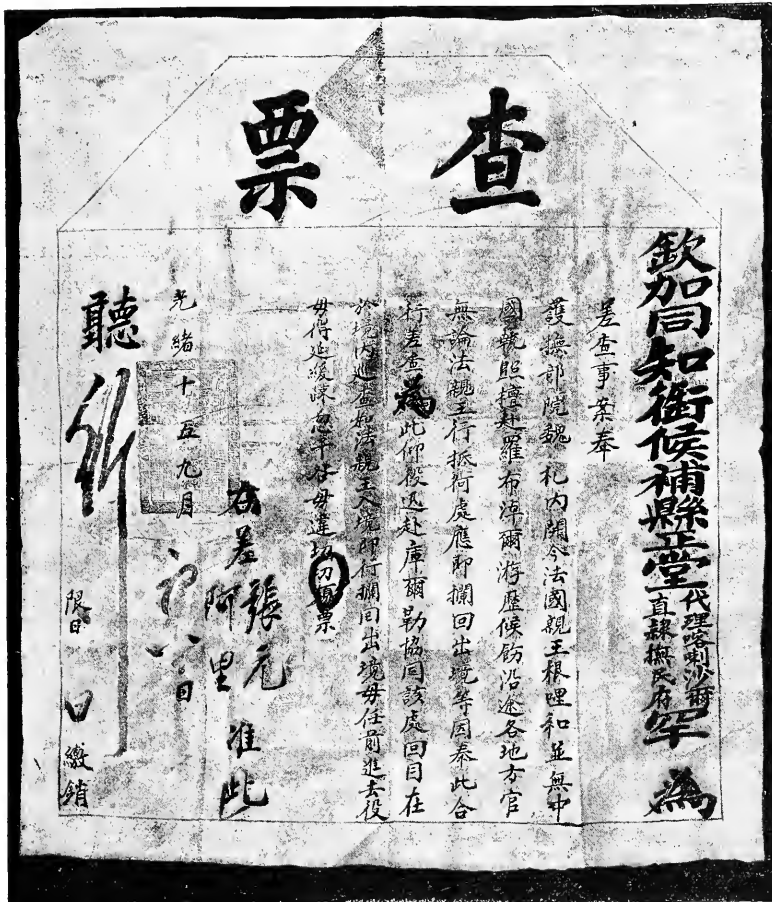
I accordingly take the order, put it into my pocket, and request them to go.

The small Chinese mandarin who had brought it gets as pale as his yellow complexion admits of his doing, and begs us to restore it, making a motion with his hand across his throat as much as to say that he will lose his head if he does not get the order back. I repeat that he shall have it if they restore us our pass, and when they again deny having it we make them leave, saying that the sun has set, and that we want to rest.

They go off very crestfallen, and a few minutes later one of the chiefs returns, holding the pass in his hand. He offers it to us and we take it back, promising to restore him his order, but only the next day, in order that we may have it photographed. This photograph is reproduced, and the translation has been made by the Marquis d'Hervey de St. Denys. It is as follows:

"I, Han, sub-prefect, having the honorary title of Foutchi, fulfilling the duties of prefect of the district of Kola-Chacul (Karachar), have received from the temporary governor Wei an order thus conceived: 'At the present time, a prince of the

blood in the kingdom of France, Ken-li-ho (Henry), traveling without a Chinese passport and on his own initiative, is making toward Lo-pou-ta-cul (Lob Nor). I order the local authorities, in no matter what place the French prince may be found, to pre-



A CHINESE WARRANT.

vent him continuing his route and to turn him back.' In consequence of this order my duty is to send out agents to gather information, and I accordingly direct two agents to proceed at once to Kou-cul-li (Kourla), and to act in concert with the Mus-

sulman chiefs of this locality in order to inspect the country. If the French prince is met, his progress must be arrested, and he must be prevented penetrating any further and compelled to turn back. The agents must not be guilty of negligence or delay, under pain of incurring penalties. This must not be disobeyed. Twice recommended, and his instructions are given to Tchang-Youy, and to A-li. They will take care to conform to them. The eighth day of the ninth moon of the fifteenth year of Kouang-Sin. Valid until the return, to be afterward given back and annulled."

I might, with reference to this order, say a good deal as to the perfidy of the Chinese with regard to Europeans of all kinds, even to Europeans who have behaved generously toward mandarins. But it would be a waste of space, for in the course of this narrative the reader will have opportunities of appreciating at its proper value the administration of provinces remote from the frontier and the coast. Thus, on the northern frontier, one encounters, side by side with the mandarins, Russian consuls who command not only respect but obedience, while on the coast there are consuls and persons of all nationalities who maintain amicable relations with the mandarins. But in the interior of the empire the situation is not the same.

October 8.—The chiefs of Kourla, with the Akim at their head, return to see us again, and we restore to them the order. They repeat that we cannot continue our route. We reply that nothing will stop us from going to the Lob Nor, where we wish to enjoy the chase. When we are ready, we shall load our beasts and start, and if any effort is made to stop us by force there will be bloodshed, and the blood will be upon their heads. We are not evil-doers; we do no harm to anyone, and why should we not enjoy the immunities accorded to the smallest of traders? We tell the Akim that this is our ultimatum, and bid him reflect. He hangs his head down, and, dropping the Chinese language in his emotion, says in his native Turkish: "I am only executing the orders given me. I do not wish you any harm. I can see

you are not bad people. What would you have me do? I am in a cruel position, for my life is at stake. Truly, I am like the nut between two stones; by Allah, I am."

And he heaves a sigh which does not seem to be assumed.

"Help me," he went on to say. "I will go to Karachar and see my superior. Let one of your party come with me; he will explain things, and, by the help of Allah, matters will all be arranged."

"It is impossible to do as you ask, Akim," I reply, "for the explanations are already given. We do not in any way recognize your sub-prefect; and the step would be quite useless, for if one of us were to go to Karachar, and your superior persisted in stopping us, we should start just the same."

The chief and his companions then rose and took leave of us.

October 9.—A fresh visit from the Akim, who insists, with a pretty firm air, upon our retracing our steps. Upon our categorically refusing, he gets up, without pressing the matter any further, and says that he shall have to resort to force—a threat which makes us laugh.

The Aksakal of the Russian subjects in Kourla then intervenes, and tells us that he has been threatened with having a chain put round his neck and being dragged off to Karachar if he lends us assistance. A strong force arrives from Karachar to reënforce the feeble garrison of Kourla, which consisted of sixty soldiers, who seemed to us more or less stupefied with opium.

We hurry on our preparations for starting. The purchases are completed, the saddles for the camels are sewn, and there is nothing to delay us any longer. At nightfall a delegation of chiefs, including the Aksakal of the Russian subjects, come and make a formal remonstrance with us, but at last they see that we are firmly resolved not to let ourselves be stopped.

After supper we let the men sleep until midnight, and then wake them up and give them orders to get all the loads ready, and not to utter a word. All the preliminaries of the start are soon got through. A few hours later I get up without making

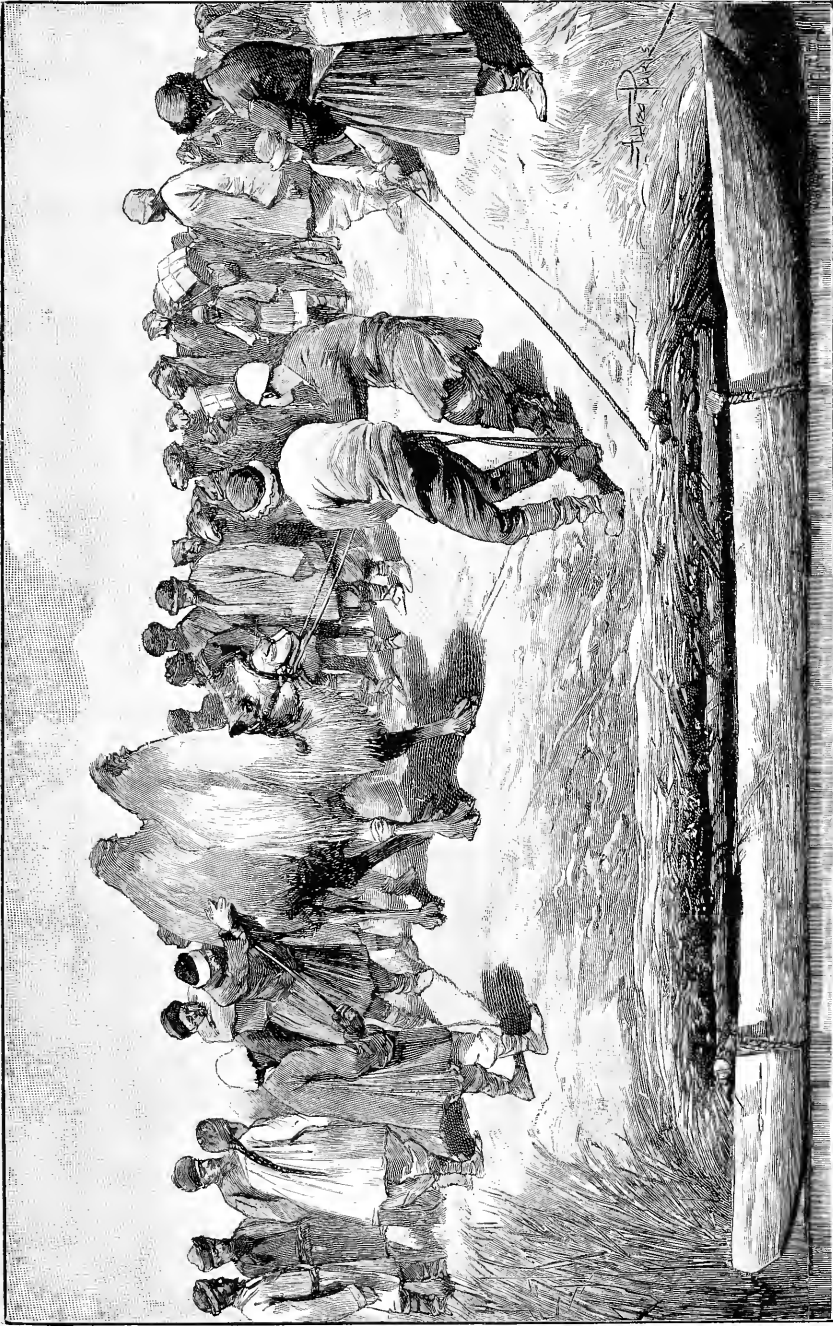
the slightest noise, and satisfy myself for the nonce that the soundest sleepers have sharp ears.

October 10.—At daylight all our camels and horses are ready, well shod and well saddled. The news of our starting soon spreads through the town, and the caravan is organized in the presence of a multitude which invades our courtyard, and which we are obliged to drive out with a good stout stick. Some pick-pockets have managed to sneak up to our things and steal whatever they can conceal about their persons. We prevent the recurrence of this by creating a void about us. Our attitude is at the same time a warning to the mandarins that we are prepared for any eventuality as yesterday.

Having been sent to the bazaar to procure a few delicacies, our Chinaman returns and says that the merchants are of opinion that the Akim has arranged the matter very well, for he has induced us to write to Karachar. I forgot, as a matter of fact, to mention yesterday that we had promised to send a few lines of explanation to the sub-prefect of Karachar. This letter had been translated into Turkish and Chinese, and we stated in it our intention of going to shoot in the neighborhood of the Lob Nor, where we should remain long enough for all the necessary papers to arrive from Peking or elsewhere. The Akim's friends consider that he has managed matters very adroitly, that he has gained a diplomatic victory; in short, to use the language of the country, that "he has had the wit to preserve the face and to add a plume to his hat."

The loading of the beasts of burden is completed, the presents have been distributed to our hosts and acquaintances, the men leap into the saddle, raise their hands to their beards, exclaiming "Allah is great!" And so *en route* for the Lob Nor.

Two of our men who are riding the best horses go on in front. They are told not to lose sight of the leading camel-driver, and I can see them both. In case of an alert they are to gallop back to us. Rachmed will go on ahead of all the rest, to see for himself, when we get close to the gate. Now, the caravan gets into



CROSSING THE KUTCHÉ-DARYA.



motion, and proceeds slowly along the street; the camels pack as close to one another as they can, and, swinging their necks and rolling from side to side, they methodically glide on with their long legs, quite indifferent to the teasing of the Chinese, but feeling perhaps the warmth of the superb autumn sun.

On such a delightful day I feel that nothing unpleasant can occur to us; Nature is too bright and smiling for that. While the camels are ruminating the sweet morning grass, I am ruminating what remains to be done, and I rejoice inwardly at having begun the second stage of our journey, which will terminate at the Lob Nor. While watching the idlers posted on the roofs, and the women with unveiled faces who are peeping through the half-open doors, replying at the same time by a "salaam" to the "salaam" of a boy with a merry and good-humored face, and by a brandishing of my whip to another not so well-behaved, I am reminded of similar starts from similar countries, and my imagination travels at a bound to Turkestan, Bokhara, and Khiva. I note here the same faces, the same gestures; and the same attitudes as there. I can perceive the same odors emitted from their houses, and the vast firmament over our heads is of the same inimitable blue, the reflection of which even the turquoise cannot reproduce.

It is impossible that our journey should be rudely interrupted, commenced as it is in such bright sunshine; the earth presents itself under too smiling an aspect to deceive us afterward.

For a little way we skirted the crenelated walls of the town, against which are built various earthen huts with creepers growing up them, and then we said good-by to Kourla and made southward. The road which leads out of the oasis is dusty, and it branches out into paths which get lost in the desert, like rivulets which dry up a river before it has reached the end of its course.

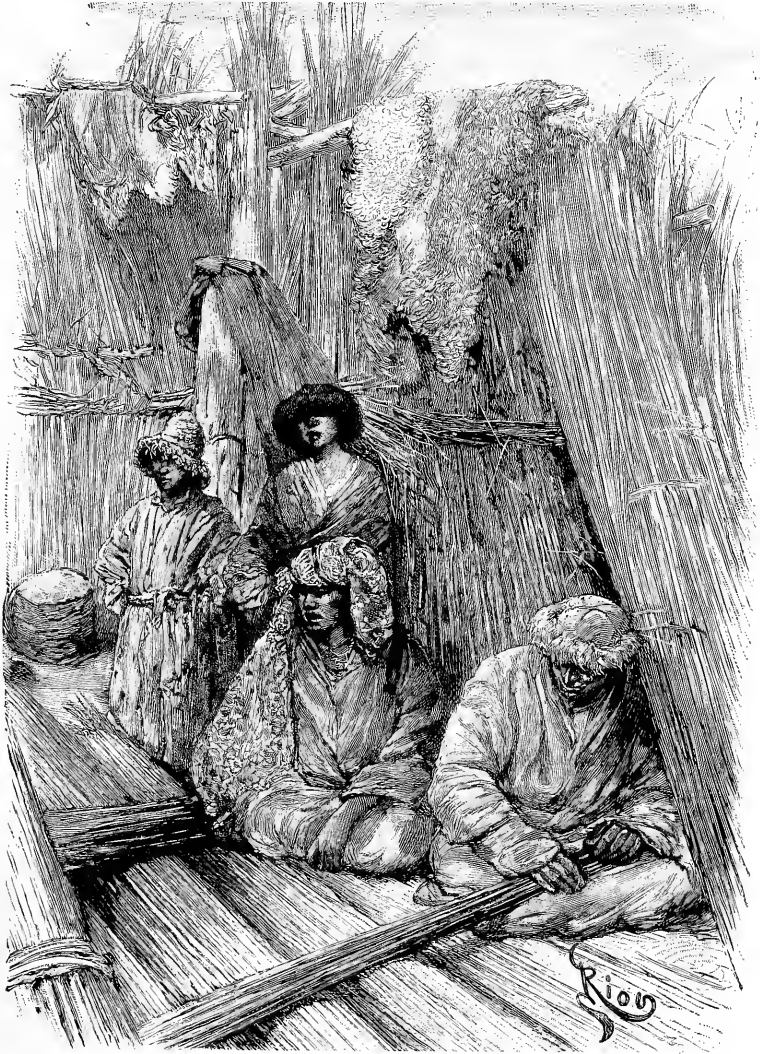
On reaching the last of the saklis, we bought some sheep from a friend of the Aksakal of the Russian subjects. Although we

are certain of having enough to feed men and beasts as far as the Lob Nor, it is as well to have with one a small flock of fat sheep, as a matter of precaution; and then, again, this will enable us to purchase others of the natives at a lower figure for our daily consumption, for when they see that we are not at their mercy, they will not put up their prices.

October 11.—We had loaded some of our camels when we saw the dust rising on the plain in the direction of Kourla, and presently recognize the chiefs of Kourla in full dress, accompanied by several horsemen. When they got close to our bivouac, they politely dismounted, and one of their attendants came to ask for an audience on the part of his masters. This we at once granted, and the chiefs advanced with a certain degree of haste, no doubt to signify thereby that they were under the influence of some strong emotion. They had smiling faces, they shook hands cordially with us, and leaned forward as they did so, their whole attitude being one of sympathy. They had no sooner seated themselves on the white felt which had been laid down in their honor, the younger ones remaining on their feet out of deference, than they hastened to tell us that they had come as friends, that they wished us a safe journey and good health. They had been compelled to execute the orders sent from Karachar, but had done so much against their own inclinations. They could see very clearly that we were great personages and honest people. One of them invited us to believe that the Akim was a very good fellow; another whispered into the ear of one of our men that we should do well to mark our gratitude and forgiveness by a few little presents, such as our hosts at Kourla had received the day before.

We thanked them politely and gave orders for presents to be handed to the chiefs, as souvenirs of our visit, and at the same time asked for a guide to introduce us to the people we should meet on the way, and who would facilitate the passage of the Kutché-Darya, a river which has no bridges or ferries, and which has to be crossed on a raft.

We were at once furnished with a man of about sixty, named Ata Raclmed, the same who formerly accompanied Prjevalsky



YANGI KOUL.

in his excursion to the Lob Nor. Our interpreter, Abdullah, recognized him and assured us that Raclmed was the best of

men. Formerly attached to the person of Yakoob, he passed into the service of the Akim of Kourla.

After having received our small gifts, the chiefs rose to their feet, wished us a safe journey once more, and pressed our hands very effusively; they then mounted their horses and cantered back toward Kourla, while we packed up our things and regained our caravan, which was making its way toward the small village of Tchinagi.

Such is the end of what I must style a "mandarinade," for this is the only name to give to the series of worries which the Chinese mandarins reserve for Europeans in order to prove to them that China possesses an "administration." I have related this incident too much in detail, perhaps; but I believe that I shall have done a service to future travelers by showing that it is not well to be alarmed by the threats of the mandarins, and that one may travel pretty comfortably in this region of the Chinese Empire, always provided that one keeps clear of the large centers of population, where a countless population does not scruple to commit acts of cowardice and ferocity with the certainty of escaping punishment.

After nine or ten miles of the desert, we bivouacked near the village of Tchinagi, on the banks of a canal planted with willows.

At Tchinagi, the aged Ata Rachmed got together a score of woebegone men, whom we promised to pay well if they would help us to construct our rafts on the Kutché-Darya. Among the number was one who had the broad face of the Kirghiz, the same small eyes, scanty beard, and guttural way of speaking. Upon being questioned he told us that he was a native of the neighborhood of Semipalatinsk, and that having come into the country in Yakoob-Beg's time, with one of his brothers, he had married there and settled in it. "That's like me," says our Russian Borodjin; "I served at Kuldja and then at Djarkent, where I married, and I never returned home to Tobolsk." I note this trifling incident in order to point out that, on many

occasions, I have observed that the Russians and the Turks move from place to place very readily, and especially that they soon abandon all idea of returning to their native country, even when they have left it more or less under compulsion. To inhabitants of the vast and monotonous plain, with horizons as boundless as those of the sea, it matters little at what point of the ocean—for such the plain really is—they may live; all they want is a few birch trees, lighting up the landscape with their silver trunks, a river full of fish, the banks of which, covered with reeds, give shelter to waterfowl and wild boars, and with that a few patches of cultivated ground around the small wooden or earthen hut.

The inhabitants of Tchinagi, who resemble the Sarthians of Turkestan, say that they came from Andidjan—that is to say, from Ferghana—about a hundred years ago. This does not mean anything definite, for Eastern people are incredibly negligent as to dates.

An old man talked to us of Russians whom he had seen in the country, and we know, as a matter of fact, that some of the old believers came as far as the Lob Nor in search of land a long time ago. Then we listened to some singers who played upon a two-stringed guitar, and, as we were free in distributing tea and rice, a good part of the village surrounded us, our men dancing to the sound of the accordion, after the custom of their country, and the evening passing in festivity. Even our old camel-driver, carried away by the music, executed a rude sort of a dance with his feeble legs, the Chinaman being the only one who did not stir. Upon our asking him to give us a specimen of the dancing in his district, he replied:

“Oh, we don't dance; we amuse ourselves by sitting down and doing nothing.”

“And what is your music like?”

“Oh! our music is very similar to that which you hear.” And he endeavors to prove this by singing an air, but the effort is so unmusical, despite his extreme seriousness, that we cannot

help laughing outright. It does not take much to amuse travelers.

After having crossed a strip of desert, we soon reach a regular forest of poplars. But they are not the same trees as the French poplars; for these grow on the sand, the bark is all wrinkled, and the hollow trunks are covered all over with bindweed. Their foliage varies very much, for the leaves are oblong in the lower branches, and resemble those of the willow, while above they are like those of the ordinary poplar. It is with these trees that we shall have to construct our rafts, and this will increase the difficulty not a little, for this *Populus diversifolia* is porous and dry internally, although its bark is extremely hard, while, if it remains long in the water, it sinks to the bottom.

Upon the advice of an old man who directs the work, and who affirms by his white beard, three rows of beams are placed one upon the other; they are tied together and flanked by thick bundles of reeds, so as to elevate the floating line. The raft will only be put into the water at the last moment. In this conjuncture our Russians, accustomed to the water, like all their fellow-countrymen, are very useful to us. As to Rachmed, who has nearly been drowned on several occasions, and who has a horror of all kinds of navigation, he bemoans his fate, and implores, with a very comical face, to be allowed to retrace his steps, for he is sure he shall be drowned.

October 12.—The evening is spent in getting together the trees which have been cut in the forest, or which have been hidden away on the river banks. They have already been used for making rafts, and the natives drag them to our camp with oxen.

October 13.—The smaller baggage is loaded in canoes, and a sort of ferry is organized by means of rafts. The raft is covered with earth to place our camels under the illusion that they are on *terra firma*. They are not at all fond of the water, and it is necessary, even, in order to get them on to the raft, to prepare a sort of landing-stage with stakes and fagots, for the bank is steep. At the first attempt we succeed in getting two camels on

to the raft; we keep their heads down by pulling at the ring placed in their noses. The raft is pulled across by a rope, and when the passengers have been landed it is brought back to the landing-stage by means of another rope. But this time there is the greatest difficulty in getting a camel to advance; persuasion, ruse, and blows are alike powerless, and at last the beast has to be carried. But it slips backward, its hind legs dropping into the water, and the rest of its body on the raft, and in this posture it is pulled across, like a schoolboy lolling over his desk. So we go on until they have all been got over, the horses as well as the sheep swimming across.

This operation lasts all day, and the work is accomplished in very good humor, the Mussulmans interlarding it with the prayers to which they are called by their mollah.

The natives again speak to us of Yakoob-Beg, and it is clear that they regret him very much. They would like to be delivered from the Chinese, who, they say, "eat dogs, and even children."

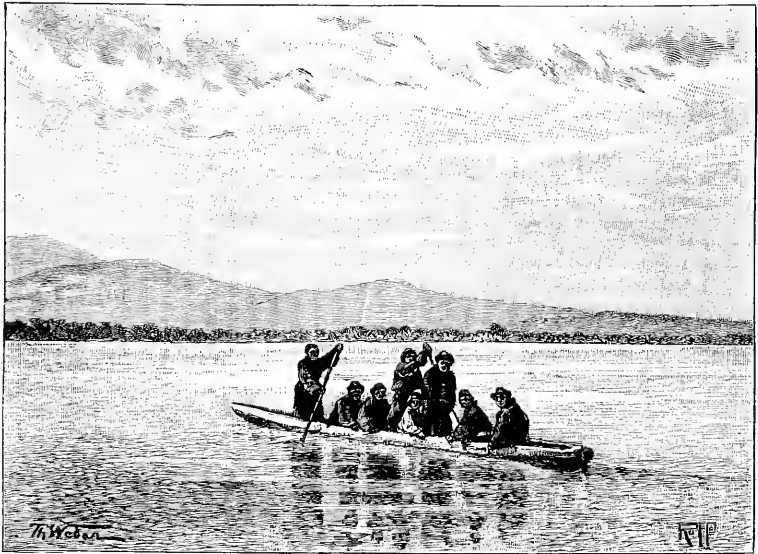
By nightfall the crossing of the Kutché-Darya is completed, and we distribute numerous "tips" to the workmen who have been employed, leaving them two sheep as well.

As the Huns and the Tartars mostly had horses, they were able to cross the rivers and streams pretty easily. The armies which possessed elephants could soon construct rafts, as these animals could drag trees along with their trunks, and probably hauled the baggage, and even people, as almost certainly happened with Hannibal in crossing the Rhône. The camel of Central Asia is made for a desert without water, and he only likes rivers that he may drink greedily of them.

We make for the Lob Nor by the itinerary which Prjevalsky and Carey followed. At times we are obliged to diverge from it, as inundations have modified the aspect of the country, and we prefer making a detour if we can thereby avoid constructing a raft.

October 14.—Our route lies through the tougrak woods, which

form a variety to the violet tamarisk trees. These tougrak, or poplars, are burnt in many places. Flocks of sheep have been roaming through the woods, and traces of them are visible upon the saline soil, into which the foot sinks as into ashes covered over with a light crust. The trees are less thick on the sand-



CANOE ON THE TARIM.

hills, for in this region a great many people come and go. In the afternoon we cross the Intchigué-Darya, a small river which forms another arm of the Tarim, but the crossing is effected by a bridge, which is repaired to admit of the camels going over it. In the evening we encamp at Goumbas, near a piece of water on a bare hill. The natives bring us some trout, and are very well satisfied with the pieces of money which we give them. For our bivouac we prefer a clearing where the breeze will rid us of the mosquitoes, which bite us to death even under our coverings. There is an abundance of waterfowl, wild geese, ducks, teal, and cormorants in the reed-beds. This region is very sparsely inhabited.

October 15.—To-day we start for Aktarma, which is noted on Prjevalsky's map. It is always the same sandy desert, which reminds some of us of the Gobi in Mongolia, others of the Kara Koum. Like the latter, it is dotted over with numerous tamarisk trees, which have helped to consolidate the sand-hills. The wind and the shrub are at war with each other, the latter seeking to retain by means of its roots the moving surface of the desert, clutching, as it were with tentacles, little heaps of sand and solidifying them, while the dust whirls round and the wind converts it into a diminutive piece of artillery for besieging the fortress. The pools are very numerous, lending to the plants the sustenance of their moisture, and making the struggle less unequal.

Coming to our first halt, we are advised to make to our right, in a westerly direction, and we thread our way between pools and pieces of water which remind one of fragments of river which have suddenly come to a stop, for, when the wind ruffles the water, one would imagine that it was flowing, but when the wind drops it is still. But our horizon, up to the present rather narrow, opens out, and the plain upon which we enter is, as we are told, that of Koul-toukmit-Koul. We see green djiddas of a very respectable size, while the prickly broom waves its white tufts in the depression of the soil, and between the low sand-hills runs a fine stream of clear water glistening in the sunlight. This is the Tarim, which flows along, as if fatigued by its long journey, toward the Lob Nor. One can guess without much difficulty that a large lake, or a number of pools, will be formed, for this river has no outlet into the ocean.

Marching away from the Tarim, in the afternoon we arrive at Aktarma, indicated in the desert by groups of poplars. A herd of cattle announce our approach in a very disagreeable manner, for they make a stampede in front of us, raising a column of dust. They are animals of very small stature, and exceedingly agile. We see men cultivating small patches of ground impregnated with salt, not far from the score or so of huts which con-

stitute what is one of the most important towns of the Tarim. These huts, made of reeds twisted into hurdles and mud, are for the present deserted.

The chief of Aktarma, surrounded by his council, offers us some very insipid melons, and inquires after our health. These people are very frightened and suspicious, like the true savages they are; they have round heads and eyes, appearing to be the produce of unions between the most divergent tribes, all that they have in common being their savage and poverty-stricken mien. One would imagine them to be outlaws who had come from all parts, and who had settled here from weariness of wandering. They assert that they are Kalmucks by descent, but they speak Turkish. Abdullah, who wants to ingratiate himself with them, says that he is himself a Kalmuck, and that the Emir Timour was also a Kalmuck, whence it is to be concluded, judging by the tone of our interpreter, that this nation has possessed at least two great men—the Emir Timour, long since defunct, and Abdullah, our interpreter, the greediest of created beings, who asked them to give him some melons for his own consumption, and who will fall ill from eating too many of them.

October 16.—We halt all to-day. As the village remains deserted, the news of our arrival has, perhaps, frightened away the people of Aktarma. But it would appear that at this season the population migrates with its flocks and herds to the banks of the Tarim and its pools, men, women, and children fishing, shooting, and drying fish for the winter while the cattle and sheep are feeding.

Beyond the wood men are at work digging the ground with the same simple implement which one meets with among all primitive peoples, consisting of two pieces of wood. The savages invented it first of all for delving into the earth and robbing it of its treasures. Here the people grow wheat, but not enough for their food, and they have to go and buy more at Kourla, where they sell sheepskins, dried fish, and a coarse sort of cloth. They

grow a little barley for their horses, which, though not numerous, are sturdy and good for their size.

October 17.—The plain across which we are traveling, with its gray October sky, forms a very typical Pomeranian landscape, and one might fancy one's self on the shores of the Baltic or the North Sea. The horizon is flat, water extends everywhere, and the lowlands seem to be floating on their surface, while the banks



CROSSING AN ARM OF THE TARIM AT ARKAN ON AN IMPROVISED RAFT.

of the river are too low to regulate its course. It would seem as if a mere scratch on the bank would suffice to open a way for the Tarim. The river is constantly overflowing, or, rather, it spreads out and forms pools or lakes in a hundred different spots, as evidenced by the name of the village of Yangi Koul (the "new lake"). We arrive there along a dusty road, shaded by reed-beds and thorns, running through ground with a good deal of salt on the surface, and we have to wind in and out so as to avoid the water. The village is perched upon the slope of a sandhill on the

opposite bank, and the walls of the houses, very irregularly built, look as if they were slipping down toward the river. Our arrival brings out the whole population, which comes to take a good look at us while we are having our tea. The women alone do not cross the stream, which is nearly 500 feet wide, but men and boys jump into the water and tuck up their clothes so as to reach the mole of sand which lines the course of the Tarim. The well-to-do, who have boots or shoes to their feet, get themselves carried across, or come over in canoes. They bring presents with them, including fish both fresh and preserved. One lad has brought a wild goose alive, and when, while refusing it, we make him a present, he shows our gift to the others, and the ice is broken.

The natives come so close that I have time to examine them, and can see that they are a mixture of all races, with noses and eyes of all shapes and colors, as in any large town of the West. I detect some regular Kirghiz, thick-set, with scarcely perceptible eyes, salient cheek-bones, and scanty beards; Sarthians with finer figures, and black, bushy beards, while gray eyes are not rare. A fair man, with a very fresh complexion and light eyes, wears a turned-up cap on his head, and the Siberians themselves are struck by his resemblance to a Russian. Moreover, we are told that the Russians have been here.

Our presence excites the greatest curiosity, and the canoes are kept busy, bringing the whole of the male population; and the women, clustering on the opposite bank, watch the spectacle, and doubtless wish that the etiquette of their sex did not prevent them from coming across. These people bring us some excellent melons and boiled fish, this meal having been prepared for us in a hurry. When we eat, the crowd kneel down and watch us with almost reverent interest. They exchange remarks in a low tone, and appear very pleased to see us, but one of them remarks: "Had you been Chinese, we should have made off." After making a few presents, we encamped some distance further on, on high ground, which is rather dryer.

October 18.—We traverse Oulong-Koul, the chief of which, a

Kirghiz by descent, accords us a hearty reception in his house, made of withes plastered with mud. He has some furniture in this house, including an X in wood upon which the Koran is placed, a mat which he unrolls, and which serves both as cloth and table, cushions made out of real silk taken from the stem of the teliga (asclepias), and bags made of a sort of wild hemp which is very abundant in this region. He drinks his tea out of Kashgar cups, and he has several wives, being altogether an important personage. Although we declined his proffered sheep, we offer him in return a present, as it is always well to encourage generous intentions when one is traveling.

We were able to observe here the action of the wind upon the sands of the Tarim: they are being slowly driven toward the northwest, for the prevailing wind is the southeast, though a wind from the southwest is said to blow occasionally. The aged chief who gives us this information tells us that they pay a tax every year to the Chinese; he acting as intermediary between the people and the chief at Kourla. The impost is levied upon the crops and the stock, a tenth of the former and a fortieth part of the latter.

October 19.—The route does not vary. Whenever we quit the banks of the river we return to the desert, through plantations where the tougrak trees, exuding their sap, which the natives employ as soap, lift their contorted heads, and past undulating sandhills driven along by the wind, but at so slow a pace that the natives do not notice their advance until after many years. The incidents of the route are the occasional securing of a bird or a mammifer, which goes to enrich our collection. Game is fairly abundant. First it is an antelope which springs up within shot, and is bagged, while our *menu* is varied by a hare or by some Mongolian pheasants. Then we see a wolf, at first mistaken for a dog, stealing through the rushes, or the fresh trace of a tiger, which makes us take extra precautions at night. We come across European birds, too, such as fieldfares and larks, while there is no lack of waterfowl. We have excellent camping-

ground, though the water is often bad, and not a day passes that it does not make some of our men ill. They are forbidden to drink water on the road, unless it is running, and even in that case it is necessary to be very careful, for there are rapid flowing rivers which are more or less poisoned by the vegetable matter in their beds, and by other plants which, growing on the banks, die and fall in, undergoing decomposition, and sowing the germs of disease.

October 20.—A strong wind from the southwest brings a little snow by way of warning that winter is at hand, and as we sit round the fires at night the conversation turns upon the lofty plateaux. Our interpreter, in his vanity, exaggerates the difficulties of the route, for, as he is the only person who has gone through a winter in these regions, he regards himself as a being of some special essence. In the village of Tchigali we halt in the hut of the chief. This village received its name from the abundance of the tehiga (asclepias), which the natives found when they settled there. Wherever we go we encounter this plant, as well as the poplar, the tamarisk, and the jujube tree, and it gives a special character to the valley of the Tarim.

October 21.—Before entering the desert, which has to be crossed to get to Aïriligane, we go through regular fields of tehiga. Of this the natives weave garments, the work being always executed by women. The grains of the "silk plant," as the asclepias of Europe is called, are surmounted by a silky substance as soft to the touch as the finest velvet. Cushions are made of it, and it also makes a very soft bed for children, and when the dark and hard pod which contains the grain is pressed, these emerge all at once in the shape of a bouquet of great delicacy, as by a magician's wand.

October 22.—The event of to-day is the visit of a chief who offers us presents, consisting of melons, fish, onions, and carrots. The carrots excite general enthusiasm, it being a long time since we had seen any of these excellent vegetables.

October 23.—We are still in the desert, and can see the Tarim

flowing lazily along its banks, all white with salt. We kill an enormous wild boar and some gazelles. The day is a magnificent one, after a minimum of 16° of frost at night, whereas during the day the temperature rises to 83° in the shade. The sky is overcast, and with the aspect of autumn we have the warmth of spring.

October 24.—Once more we are on the banks of one of the branches of the Tarim, and have no difficulty in constructing two rafts, one with a treble row of trunks of trees, the other with canoes brought us by the natives, who are more wretched-looking than those who live higher up the river, more suspicious, and more savage. They are amused and alarmed at a mere nothing, and even our camels inspire them with such terror that they will not go near them.

The men of Arkan (this being the name of the place) are poor wretches all in rags, dressed in pieces of coarse cloth, and fragments of a wadded coat, having on their feet abascas, boots without any heels, or strips of stuff wound round their legs. They are of a very marked type, being small, dark, very agile, showing little muscle, with skinny legs, and the calf high up toward the knee. They have broad faces, salient cheek-bones, and small round eyes of a dark color, while one is struck by the long nose, coming down to a chin ending in a very scanty beard. Their cheeks are hollowed as if by hunger, and their mouths are very large, with the corners puckered down, and with thick overlapping lips. Their necks are long and thin like those of the cormorants, which they resemble in the sense that they are in search of food from the hour of their birth. Their teeth, as a rule, are yellow, decayed, short, and worn sideways from gnawing at dried meat and munching grain. They are much amused at seeing us sneeze when we take some yellow snuff which they are constantly thrusting up their nostrils.

Savage and devoid of intelligence as they look, they have their code of honor. The Doungane camel-driver abuses them because they have pushed one of the camels into the water by their

awkward movements, so they steer clear of him, heap curses on his head, and intimate their intention of going away. They will not do anything for him, and we are compelled to intervene and explain that he is only hired by us, and that in reality it is for us that they are working. So they set to work again, but only on condition that the Doungane keeps away from them.

It so happens that this morning, by way of punishing them for some careless act, Parpa had taken a stick and beaten some of them, whereupon, instead of being angry, they had offered excuses and had promised to behave better. I asked one of their graybeards the meaning of this.

“Why do you say nothing to Parpa and get angry with the Doungane?”

“Parpa is a Mussulman, a sunni, like ourselves.”

“But the Doungane is a sunni too.”

“We do not believe it, for he wears a pigtail like a Chinese; he speaks their language, and knows nothing of ours, except insults. Whereas Parpa is one of our acquaintances, he speaks our language and does not insult our mothers or the tombs of our fathers. He beat the men who made such a stupid blunder, and he was quite right. He is not a Chinese with hair falling down his back, and, besides, blows are not like the words which proceed from an evil heart.”

As a matter of fact, the stick is used for chastisement in these Eastern countries, and there is nothing ignominious in the injuries which it inflicts. Insults, on the other hand—and I mean thereby the curses upon relatives, ancestors, and tombs, uttered with the object of dishonoring the person at whom they are leveled—are rarely forgiven.

October 26.—Having got the whole of the caravan across, we encamp to-day in a wood at Talkitchin, a name which signifies “the small poplar” in the dialect of the country. The scenery is much the same, and directly one leaves the banks of the river one is in the desert with the tamarisk tree, the tchiga, and tufts of reeds growing in its salt soil.

As I walk through the wood I observe that if it has been able to resist the desert it has not escaped the effects of time, for the leaves have been stripped from the trees earlier than they would have been if there had been much vigor in them, and the branches of the poplars are much twisted and bent. The trunks are either split or are devoid of bark, the ground is strewn with dead branches, and the roots, laid bare to the air, seem to have no hold in the ground. Seen from a distant elevation, these trees present the forlorn aspect of an abandoned vineyard, and the meager trunks, devoid of a single branch, rear their heads like the poles in a hop field which has been allowed to go out of cultivation. The effect of all I see around me is to depress the imagination, the sand being so slippery that the footprints made in it are effaced in a moment; there is no sign of life, and the pale sun goes down in a gray sky which it scarcely tinges with gold, while the silence is so complete that one can almost hear one's arteries beating.

The old Kirghiz Imatch indulges in some very comical reflections about the camels, of which he is very fond, as, indeed, he is of all animals, taking care that the horses and dogs are not left without food. His only failing is that he has a very coarse tongue, and a boundless store of rich invective. He points out to me that the kourouk (tail) of the sheep is not so thick as in the Ili, this being a proof that the pasturage is poor. There is nothing better than the fat of the sheep's tail.

October 27.—After a march through the sand, we encamp a little way beyond the ruined fortress constructed by Yakoob-Beg, and the four walls, still standing, serve as a refuge in bad weather. The spot where we encamp is called Bougon-Bachi, Bougon being the name given to the stags, which are pretty numerous in this country, while “Bachi” means head, the Tarim making a sharp bend, which is very like the head of a stag surmounted by his two horns.

October 28.—We direct our steps southward, delighted at the thought of entering the region of Lob. As we advance the

aspect of the country changes, the vegetation becoming rarer, while the trees have disappeared; the shrubs and plants are scantier, the hillocks further apart, and are frequently separated by the smooth surface of the takirs. There are traces of evaporation everywhere.

We take a south-south-westerly direction, with the wind at our backs. Quitting the banks of the Tarim for good, the desert becomes more and more in keeping with its name. All of a sudden we can see the glistening of water, a large sheet of which extends to our left, forming numerous creeks. Overhead thousands of birds are flying in clouds, while others allow themselves to be carried along the surface of the water by the wind, but at a considerable distance from the low banks, which are bare, coated with salt, and devoid of the thick belt of reeds which is to be found on most lakes. Further on is another sheet of water, and when we ascend a hillock we can distinguish an endless chain of them, with their sandhills, salt-coated shores, and water-fowl.

One of the guides says this region is the Lob, another that it is Kara-Bourane; but in reality it is called the "Black Tempest," to the extreme west of the Lob.

The stream which runs in a current through this stagnant water is the Tcherchene-Darya, which comes down from the high table-lands to the north. It is not so broad as the Tarim, and a very modest-sized bridge enables us to cross it, and to encamp in the island formed by it, the grass being good for the horses and camels.

The village of Lob is not far off, and the inhabitants come to pay us a visit. These starved and feeble-looking people offer us for sale smoked fish and duck, which they have snared, and a few presents soon make them friendly. They tell us that Petzoff, the Russian traveler, is expected shortly, and the Chinese have spread the report that smallpox is raging in the region of the Tcherchene, so that the inhabitants of Tcharkalik have made up their minds to take flight before the Russians arrive. In this

country smallpox terrifies the population, causing them to disperse in all directions, and even to abandon the sick.

October 29.—After having slowly steered our way through the marshes we again see the bare plain in the desert. To the



A NATIVE OF LOB.

south we can distinguish a tall peak rising out of the mist, like an island in the sky, and the guide, pointing to it with his whip, says, "Altin Tagh, the mountain of gold." It is the first of the

mountain walls which bar access to the high table-lands ; and as we are looking at it it vanishes like a dream.

We trot along a narrow, rough path, hewn, so to speak, out of the soil, wherein the feet of men and beasts have worked a series of holes some distance apart. The path gets smoother, and at last we enter a tamarisk wood, while the poplars are still green and the air warm as in spring when we enter the oasis of Tcharkalik. Here there is abundance of irrigation, and the fields are well cultivated. There are peach and apricot trees, and even vines with hedgerows inclosing the fields, and the presence of huts and cottages reminds one a little of the gardens outside large cities like Marseilles.

We are very well received by the elders of the village of Tcharkalik, who bring us a profusion of melons, peaches, and grapes, and have some cakes of new bread baked for us ; and in our delight at having reached the end of our second main stage we sacrifice a whole hecatomb of these good things.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EXCURSION TO LOB NOR.

(BY PRINCE HENRY OF ORLEANS.)

A Region of Salt—On the Tarim Again—Abdullah : the Place and the Man—Residence of the Chief—His Family—Wild Camels—Lost in the Darkness—More About Wild Camels—Waterfowl—An Exchange—Disappearance of a Lake—Down the Tarim in Canoes—Youtchap Khan—Another Native Type—Kamchap Khan—Straddling a River at Its Mouth—At Eutin—Ichthyophagists—A Native Legend—Probable Causes of the Drying up of the Lake—Native Customs—Another Abdullah—Festivities—Back to the First Abdullah—Tchai—A Couple of Good Shots—A Moonlight March—Tcharkalik Once More.

WE had already been four days at Tcharkalik, and were not nearly ready to start, having to engage men of the district in place of our Russians who were returning home, to get in provisions for the winter, to mend clothes, and to make covering for protecting the feet from the cold. All this takes time, and as Bouvalot had promised to see after this, Father Dedeken and myself, who could be of no service at Tcharkalik, availed ourselves of the compulsory halt of the caravan to explore the Lob Nor, starting on the 3d of November.

Our horses had already traveled more than 600 miles since we left Djarkent, and as we have still to tax their powers a great deal, we left them to rest at Tcharkalik. Riding some animals which we hired there, thick-set ponies, with deep chests, short and heavy necks, and small heads, and that seemed able to stand plenty of work, we found it as much as we could do to hold them at the start. Abdullah, who takes the attention which these stallion ponies bestow on the mare he is riding as meant for himself, casts a patronizing look at the natives who have come to see us off. He is in his element going to the Lob Nor, and thinks that he will be able to do as he likes with us, and keep us well away from the villages, while he remains there

eating, smoking, and flirting with the young ladies of the place. A smile of self-satisfaction plays over his face as he abandons himself to his reveries. In front of him Father Dedeken and Barachdin, both keen for the chase, are discounting their coming triumphs, while behind them Couzuintzoff, bent double, has as much as he can do to keep his pony in order, and, when he can find a quiet moment, wipes his spectacles, and hopes that we shall not kill too many birds for him to stuff.

A little way behind us come half a dozen small donkeys, accompanied by two Mussulmans from Tcharkalik, and carrying some provisions and our beds, which consist of a piece of felt and a coverlet. Abdullah declares that we shall find very good houses, and that it is useless to encumber ourselves with a tent. We have also two small barrels of water and a little dry wood.

When we left the encampment at 9 A. M. the weather was cold, but there was no wind or cloud. Still the sky was overcast, having that iron-gray tint which I have often noticed on the Terai in Nepaul, and which is caused by a mist intercepting a portion of the light.

M. Bonvalot came a little way with us through the oasis of Tcharkalik, as far as the limit of the desert. The arrangement was that if we found the shooting in the Lob Nor anything out of the common we were to let him know and he would join us. If not, we were to rejoin him in about a week.

As far as a small hillock where we took tea when coming from Lob, the road is the one over which we have already traveled, and we then turn to the right, that is, to the northeast. All day we go through the desert, with nothing but sand in view, in some places level and smooth as a carpet, in others wrinkled and raised into ridges which are close together like so many petrified waves. Sometimes, too, we notice small cavities in the soil, which are half full of saline crystallizations. These are *geodes* forming under our very eyes, and it is probably to all this salt that are due the mirages which are constantly tantalizing us in this arid region, where the passage of the caravans has

traced a rough sort of road which has been hardened by the drought, and which winds along in the distance like a furrow traced by the hand of man. One might imagine one's self to be transported into the scenery of the moon, and we really begin to forget where we are. Our march soon becomes horribly monotonous, and we cease singing and even talking, the solitude being quite contagious, and the general silence is only broken by the footfall of the horses when they are crossing dried-up ponds and their hoofs break through the crust. We are only aroused from our reveries by meeting with a caravan, and when we shake off our torpor we have the same feeling of returning to the reality which is experienced by the sleeper who wakes up with a start.

From time to time we pass emigrants from the Lob Nor who are going to spend the winter at Tcharkalik, with their luggage, their dwellings, and their furniture loaded on the backs of a few donkeys, and of their wives. In the midst of one of these convoys I am particularly struck by one family. The woman has a piece of felt on her back, with a gun slung across her shoulders, and she is driving the donkey along with a stick, while the husband follows quietly nursing a child in his arms. He does not seem to be the least astonished at meeting us, and continues his journey without even looking round; he would not be a whit more surprised if death were to overtake him, for he is a Mussulman and knows that "it is written."

Despite the sameness of the route, time passes quickly, and we have to think about encamping. We calculate that we have come about twenty-five miles, and though we are still in the midst of the desert our guides are not in the least at a loss to fasten up our horses, after having unloaded them. They make small holes in the ground and put the halters into them, then filling these holes up with sand and treading them down. This mode of fastening horses offers much more resistance than one might be inclined to think. Having spread out our pieces of felt, we light the dry wood we have brought with us, and our

frugal meal of caverdak,* washed down with tea, is soon over. It is not long before we roll ourselves up in our rugs, and with the desert for a mattress, the sky for a ceiling, and the moon for a night-light, we ask for nothing better, especially as we are very sleepy.

November 4.—We are awoke at break of day by a deep murmur over our heads. It is a rhythmical sound, similar to that produced by the paddles of a steamer as they strike the water, and it is produced by flocks of birds which are flying southward. The season is advancing, and it is time for them to get away from the cold.

And very cold it is, the thermometer marking only five degrees above zero, and, being anxious to start so as to re-establish our circulation, we do not lose much time in folding up our beds, preparing our tea, and loading our donkeys. Some wild geese that had got left behind are standing in long rows upon the sand, and seen from the distance they look gigantic, and give the idea of troops drawn up in battle array. We, no doubt, present a still more formidable appearance to them, for as soon as they catch sight of us they utter the most discordant cries and fly away, forming in the air immense triangles with the apex in front.

The sun bursts out at last, and though rather behind time he makes up for this by presenting a quite unlooked-for spectacle. The ground is covered with the seeds of reed grass carried hither by the wind, and this seed, white and silky, sparkles like an infinity of small stars in the horizontal rays. It seems as if the desert was ashamed of its horrible nudity, and that, in order to conceal it from our sight, it had borrowed from the star of day its rarest jewels and its most dazzling stones. Besides the brilliant diamonds, large round sapphires of a deep and splendid blue are represented by small circular pools, which owe their somber tints to the saltiness of the water. These pools of water indicate the vicinity of a river, and it is not long before we regain the course of the Tarim, which is fifty feet broad, with a limpid but shal-

* Caverdak is meat cut up into very small pieces and fried in the pan.

low current, flowing slowly between two sandy banks, which are covered in places with reeds.

Its course will guide us in future along our route, for we follow it pretty closely, putting to flight now and again herds of gazelles which have come to drink of its waters, but they are very wild, and we do not succeed in bringing any down.

But the sun is rapidly sinking beneath the horizon, and we see no trace of dwellings. The thirty versts, which, as the guide told us this morning, separated us from the village of Abdullah, seem to us very long ones; we have covered, indeed, quite double the distance, and it is night when we reach four or five wretched reed hovels. Can this be the village of Abdullah? Where are the houses built of stone, or, at all events, of earth, which he told us about? Where, too, are the trees, the wood of which was to have given us warmth? and why should he have dissuaded us from bringing our tents?

These are questions which we should have liked to put to Abdullah, but it is cold and late, and all that we can do is to content ourselves with what we have got, and settle ourselves as comfortably as possible, taking care to be on our guard in future against the information supplied by our interpreter. While our people are unloading the horses and donkeys, the natives emerge from their miserable hovels, and with many "salaams" and "alcons" beg us to accept their hospitality.

We enter one of these huts, the earthen floor of which is covered in places with old bits of felt, while in the center a cavity surrounded by flat stones serves as a fireplace. In the corner are sacks of corn and an old cartridge box, the latter being a *souvenir* of Prjevalsky's visit. This is all the furniture, and on the walls, constructed of reeds, are hung long guns with powder flasks, so the inmates are evidently given to shooting. The ceiling is made out of the branches of trees brought from Tcharkalik, the interstices being filled up with osiers, and a space is often left over the hearth to let the smoke escape. Bits

of cloth are stretched from one beam to another to prevent the droppings from the swallows' nests from falling on to the ground. These birds are held in great respect.

This is the residence of a chief, and having inspected the house I proceed to examine the figures of our hosts, lighted up by the fire made of the reeds and dry brushwood. In the foreground, close to the hearth, crouches a little old man, very bent and wrinkled. He resembles some of the Tarantchis that we saw at Kourla. With a more or less automatic motion of his lower jaw, he raises his white beard to the level of his hooked nose, this movement being all the easier because he has no teeth. This is Abdu Kérémata, who might be any age between 95 and 105, and as he is the chief of the family, the *baba*, he is, as such, held in great respect.

Around him are his sons, the youngest of whom is at least forty. They are all devoted to the chase—tall men, clad in sheepskins tied round the waist with a belt, with a fur cap on their head, and wearing sandals made of the skin of donkeys or wild camels. Their features show that they are not of pure blood, the forehead being narrow and the eyes more or less elongated, but not raised at the corners, as is the case with the yellow race. As a rule, they scarcely open their eyelids; the nose is large, and, usually, rather hooked, the lips thick and inclined to turn up, and the hair coarse and scanty. Such are their general characteristics, to which I may add one peculiarity which I noticed everywhere in the Lob Nor. The people get wrinkled from their early youth, and their faces show signs of this all over—on the forehead, round the eyes, under the cheeks, and at the corners of the mouth—this producing an air of premature age and of grimacing which makes men, who are, taking them altogether, rather handsome, appear very ugly. The family of Abdu Kérémata invite us to come round the fire; they pour us out tea and bring us the best bits of mutton—that is, the breast and the loin. Our hosts keep complete silence, only a word here and there being exchanged in an undertone while

we are eating. In the next room women are rocking cradles to a tune which produces the dull sound of a pestle being worked in a mortar, while at a respectful distance from the hearth children nearly naked look from us to their fathers, and keep quite silent out of timidity.

“Allah-Akbar!” exclaims Abdullah, passing his hands through his beard, while the guests express their satisfaction by some



VILLAGE OF ABDULLAH.

incongruous sounds. The meal being finished, it is time to talk, and there is a piece of good news for us, for some animals have just been eaten by a tiger, so perhaps we may have a chance of tracking him.

With regard to the wild camels, our hosts have killed four in the last two years, but they have cut up their skins. In telling us this, they guess that we should want them whole, with the head and the feet. The only Europeans who have come here before wanted them like this, so they suppose that “the people

of the West attach great importance to these skins; perhaps they extract valuable remedies from them."

Whatever may be their object, travelers never come to the Lob Nor without inquiring about the wild camels. One of the men present provided Prjevalsky with some. The tariff has always been sixty rubles and an article of European manufacture for a complete skin. But we spoil the market at the risk of incurring the displeasure of those who come after us. We are pressed for time, the wild camels are only to be found some way to the east, and a fortnight is soon gone; so we promise seventy rubles for each skin, and promise the men a gratuity even if they do not kill any. Abdullah goes bail for us, and in doing so incurs little risk, as he does not intend to return to the Lob Nor sooner than he can help.

November 5.—We are in the saddle before sunrise, following for another four miles the Tarim, which runs between high banks, and halting again at a fresh village with five or six reed huts similar to the one we have just left. This, again, is an Abdullah, and all that it has more than the first is a pole, to which we fasten our horses, on the "public square." Hospitality is offered us by a native about forty years old, with a straight, big nose, thick but not protruding lips, and a very wrinkled skin. He has a very genial face, and breathes an air of jollity which is quite communicative. This is Kunchi Kan Bey, whose portrait has already been drawn by Prjevalsky, who was his guest for more than a month. Like Abdu Kérémeta, he is the head of a family of hunters, and he promises to do what he can to procure us the skin of a wild camel; and when he hears our proposals he induces five of his men to get ready for a start into the desert. Other natives are longing to get on to the track of the tiger referred to above.

While Abdullah was interpreting our promises, garnished with some of his own inventions, Father Dedeken went up to two Mongolian yourtes (tents), close to which five camels were picketed. These tents were inhabited by five very dirty lamas,

who were preceding the Khan of the Kalmucks on his return from Lhassa. As we know that they have just traversed the highlands of Thibet, upon which we are about to enter, they may perhaps be able to give us some useful information. Father Dedeken accordingly calls out to them in Chinese, "Amour sen. Amour sen b  n  .* Come and take tea with us." They understand perfectly what is said to them, and accept the invitation with pleasure. The pleasure, however, is scarcely reciprocal, for they smell atrociously. Nor do they seem to understand this, as, the more I sheer off from them, the closer they come up to me. We feel that it will not do to be too particular, but we are poorly rewarded for our courage, as, while they drink our tea very readily, they will not tell us anything worth knowing, doing all they can do to deter us from going on.

The rest of the day is employed in shooting in the vicinity. The waterfowl are pretty numerous, and they keep to small pools, which, as a rule, are circular, and are surrounded by a belt of reeds fifteen or twenty feet high, forming a regular forest; the ground is marshy, covered in some places with rushes, which make the walking very bad. When one has got through these on to the bank, it is easy to have a double shot, but the birds all get up, and it is necessary to walk round the pond and go to the other side, or else pass on to the next. This is very fatiguing work, and so we soon return, after having seen a great deal of game but no great variety of species. This is not the time of year when there is a great passage of birds, and, as we have not enough cartridges to amuse ourselves by making a big bag, we must only kill what we require for our collections or for food.

On returning to Abdullah, I utilized the few remaining hours of daylight to get on my pony and ride back over yesterday's route, in the hope of seeing some more gazelles. I did not see a single one, but I was so absorbed in looking about for them that I let night overtake me. In these regions it comes all of a sudden, without any twilight. With a carelessness without excuse

* "Good health," in Mongolian.

in such a case, I had forgotten my compass. Only one resource was left to me, and that answered. I let the reins drop on my horse's neck, and he, after sniffing for a moment, set off without hesitation at a slow trot, and took me straight to the village, which I could not distinguish until I was within a hundred yards of it.

This nocturnal ride gave me an appetite, and I did justice to the meal which Kunchi Kan Bey and his sons shared with us, for our host had offered us a sheep, a Tcharkalik melon, and ten small sandwiches similar to those made in Russia, and called *pirochki*. The secret of making them was taught his wife by a Russian Cossack, and, whatever may have been the motive which actuated him, we bless this unknown philanthropist and quaff a cup of tea to his health. During our dinner, a woman prepares in the same room a dish of Chinese macaroni. She is not good-looking, being of the same type as the men, but her headdress gives her a more civilized air, while, after the fashion of the Russian peasants, she covers with a *fichu*, tied under the chin, her coarse, black hair. One might imagine that she was conscious of her ugliness, for she talked very little and did not take her food at the same time as the men, who have not the slightest notion of gallantry. The children are prettier than their mother, not being yet wrinkled, and there are some fine types among them; they are all nearly naked, and seem to be in excellent health. After they have had a good look at us, they withdraw into an adjoining room, followed by the women, who leave us alone with their husbands. The latter, having made a hearty meal, are in a good humor and ready to reply to the questions we put to them concerning their mode of life, their habits, and their pursuit of game. Wild camel, we are told, begin to be found six days to the north of Abdullah. In the summer they go up into the mountains, but they always return to the same spots, there being certain cantonments to which they are accustomed. They go about in troops, one male to fifteen or sixteen females, but it is only after terrific combats that the former becomes the undisputed lord of his harem. The females have two young in three years, and the



WOMEN OF ABDULLAH AND NATIVES OF THE LOB NOR.



male protects them until they are old enough to do without their mother's milk. It is very fatiguing and difficult to get near them, the only way for the hunter being to hide near the pond on the brink of which he has found their traces. He must be a very good shot, for having only a single-barreled gun he cannot get a second shot, and if the camel is only wounded it will make off with its companions and he will never get near it again. The best season for this sport is the winter, for the water is nearly everywhere frozen over, so that the places where the camels come to drink are very few, and you are pretty sure of finding them.

As to whether these camels have always been wild or are descended from domesticated ones, our hosts assured us that they had always been wild. "Our forefathers and tradition," they said, "represent them as being so. Moreover, a domesticated camel cannot do without man, but comes after him. Every domestic animal has a wild antecedent, but only in some secluded spot. The camel must have one like other animals.*"

"When the chase has been successful it is very profitable, as the camel's skin is in great demand for boots, while the hair of the younger animals is fine and silky, that of the older camels being close, and making very good cloth. But only rich people like Kunchi Khan can organize these expeditions, as it is necessary to send several men on in advance, forward provisions, furnish animals for transporting them which sometimes die, and altogether considerable risk has to be incurred."

It is much easier and less dangerous to capture the waterfowl. Snares are set among the reeds, and during the season a single native in the course of a single night will take as many as fifteen

* The reader is probably aware that the wild camel is spoken of as far back as the fifteenth century in the deserts of Central Asia, and that the fact of its existence has been confirmed in the last fifty years, but has also been definitely proved since Prjevalsky brought back some skins of that animal, which is rather smaller than the domesticated kind, with thinner limbs and no callosities at the knees. These characteristics are not distinctive. The question as to whether the wild camel is the parent stock of the domesticated one, or whether, upon the contrary, he descends from some tame camel, as has happened in Spain, and more recently in Guyana, is not yet settled, nor is it likely to be yet a while.

ducks.* The swans are more profitable than the ducks, coverlets and even clothing being made with their down. They are taken with snares, while in the winter they are decoyed by means of fish.

The chase and fishing form the staple industry of the inhabitants of Abdullah. They use nets similar to seines, and when the fish have been caught they are split in two, cleaned out, and then dried for use in winter. There are three varieties of fish, the most abundant of which has a thin and yellow skin like that of the tench, with a round mouth set off by appendages on each side. They are rarely more than twenty-two inches long.

The natives of Abdallah also eke out their livelihood by the rearing of stock, which they possess in large numbers. They do not till the ground, but they own some fields at Tcharkalik, which workmen cultivate for them, and they pay them in kind with a part of the crop and a few sheep. Altogether, the people of Abdullah are regarded as rich, and they are under the immediate protection of the Chinese—that is to say, the authorities of Turfan, to which they are attached, levy on them a tax which is equivalent to one ruble per horse, forty copecks per cow or ox, two rubles per hundred sheep, and nine skins of seals for the headdress of the mandarins. In return for this, the Celestial Empire declares them to be its well-beloved children. But although they are Chinese subjects they have not the characteristics of their masters, being less proud and more simple than the sons of Heaven. Before quitting us for the night, they show

* The swallows arrive at Abdullah in April, and leave again in September. A species of red duck, called here Turfan (in Chinese, *Choumi chizen*, red beak), arrives in large numbers in February, and leaves in July. The geese arrive from the 20th to 28th February, remaining till the middle of March, and then going to Siberia. They return from September to October, remaining a month, and then going southward. The swans arrive from the south at the end of July, remain throughout September, and then return south. They do not nest at the Lob Nor, because of the mosquitoes, according to the natives. The other ducks arrive toward the end of January, some remaining only ten days, but those which stay longer build their nests, like the puffins, the gulls, the herons, and other birds sedentary in the Lob Nor.

us in a very amusing way how preferable common sense is to conceited knowledge. In this instance common sense is represented by Kunchi Khan Bey, and instruction by Abdullah, who is a savant by comparison, as he can speak four languages, and has a great opinion of himself. The former shows a stereoscope and a musical box which Prjevalsky gave him. Abdullah thinks that if he were to send these two articles back by the Russians to his family at Djarkent, he would dazzle his compatriots, and appear a great man in their eyes, while Kunchi Khan Bey says to himself that if he had Abdullah's wadded coverlet he should be very warm in the winter. The exchange is accordingly made, each thinking that he has got the best of the bargain. I know which of the two really has, and I shall ask our "intelligent" interpreter, later on, if he thinks that Kunchi Khan Bey is nice and warm.

November 6.—We are anxious to get away to the Lob Nor and see the immense lake, the beginning of which we noticed near the village of Lob, and the surface of which, according to Abdullah, is dark with myriads of waterfowl.

"But," say the natives, "you are at the Lob Nor."

"What do you mean? Where then is the great lake?"

"There is no great lake."

"Then what becomes of the Tarim?"

"It gradually dwindles away, and finally disappears."

"But Prjevalsky saw a lake which he compared to a small sea."

"No doubt, but since the Russian general came here thirteen years ago the water has run off, and the largest liquid surface is that which you saw near Lob. Besides, there are no longer anything but small pools."

"Thank you. We are quite ready to believe you, but we should like to see for ourselves what the state of things is, and we propose to go down the Tarim a little way."

In order to carry out this project, all we have to do is to embark, with our beds and a few provisions, on two large canoes

hewn out of the trunk of a tree. These canoes are about twenty feet by three, and they hold four men, including two natives, one in the bow and the other in the stern, who use their paddles much after the fashion of the Venetian gondoliers. These boats are light and not very steady, so the wary Abdullah suggests that we should follow the example of Prjevalsky, and tie them together, but we did not follow his advice, time being short. The weather is fine, we have a light westerly breeze in the poop, and so we make rapid headway down stream, upon both banks of which are low hillocks of sand, with a few stunted tamarisk trees growing on them. The Tarim is from twenty-two to twenty-five feet broad, dividing at places into two branches and forming an eyot, upon one of which we halt for a little, and are overtaken by boats that have come from Lob loaded with provisions for the winter.

A few miles further on we come to Youtchap Khan, as four or five reed huts erected under a sandy hillock are called, the village having a small canal which was cut about fifteen years ago to let off the overflow of water.

At Youtchap Khan we make a fresh halt, to oblige Abdullah, who is not very fond of this sort of navigation, and the whole population comes out to have a look at us. The men are like those at Abdullah, but the women are even uglier, having snub noses, prominent cheek-bones, eyes almost on the level with the face, and large mouths some distance from the extremity of the nose, being altogether very much of the Mongolian type. Men and women receive us in very friendly fashion, and allow us to inspect their dwellings, and to photograph their implements, which are simple and few in number. The guns are the same as those we have seen before, with a single barrel, which is long, and has an iron prong attached to it. Spending most of their time in the chase, they breed a few sheep like the people at Abdullah, and make use of their wool, which they comb out by stretching it upon a rope fastened to a wooden handle, and making the rope vibrate by means of a sort of mallet. When they

have got the wool to the required degree of fineness they roll it on to a spinning-wheel, formed by two parallel indentated wheels, the points of which are fastened together with pieces of string. Besides wool, they use for their clothing the bark of a variety of wild hemp (*tehiga*), which they root up with a hoe made of a triangular piece of iron, with a cane as the stick. They cut their wood with a primitive sort of hatchet, which consists of a fragment of iron fixed on to the extremity of a piece of bent wood. The corn is ground between two flat stones, each fastened in the middle to a piece of wood. They use pumpkins instead of gourds, while the skins of antelopes, with the hair taken off, dried and scraped, are cut into long strips for making fishing-nets. Adding to these few articles of prime necessity a horse's tail for driving away the flies, and a reed mat which answers the purpose of a napkin, an exact idea may be formed of what is to be found in their dwellings.

Returning to our boats, we continue the descent of the Tarim, the sandbanks of which continue as far as Kamchap Khan ("Dug out from the Sand"), which is another collection of reed hovels. The inhabitants seem even more woebegone than the people already described, with nothing but a few pieces of ragged felt to barely cover them, while their enormous sheepskin caps, the wool of which is mixed up with their unkempt hair, make their physiognomy seem all the more savage. Yet, beneath this repulsive exterior, we find them very amiable and friendly. They are nine families in all, with about sixty members, and we cannot refuse their invitation to stay a few minutes and take a cup of tea. The sides of the house we enter are covered with white patches produced by the damp, and as the interior is dirty we are not sorry to be off.

The Tarim divides into two arms beyond Kamchap Khan, the greater part of the waters flowing to the left and forming a large marsh, with islets of sand rising above the surface here and there. At the rear of the village is a lake about 330 feet long, but not more than a foot or two deep, while beyond that

are peat-bogs, salt-ponds, and strips of ground covered by a few stunted gorse-bushes and reed-beds. At Kamchap Khan the sand banks come to an end, and the right arm of the Tarim, which continues to flow eastward, is only from seven to sixteen feet broad, its banks being scarcely visible, while the immense reeds which grow along them have their roots in the water. The stream, already so much shrunken, is still further diminished by the number of small furrows cut on the right bank by the natives to guard against certain inundations. The river bends very much, and we have a difficulty in getting round some of the bends, owing to the length of our canoes, but our boatmen have made up their minds to the inevitable, and they accompany the motion of their oars with a rhythmical song, ending with a sort of sigh which we all repeat in chorus. Soon we are navigating a stream about five feet wide; and, at the risk of wetting my feet, I cannot resist the temptation of standing astride one of the largest rivers of Central Asia at its mouth, and seeing it flow between my legs. In front, behind, on each side and above us, are nothing but bulrushes, with patches of sky on which stars are beginning to appear, for night is drawing on, and our men advance but slowly, while our stomachs remind us that it is high time to find a place of rest.

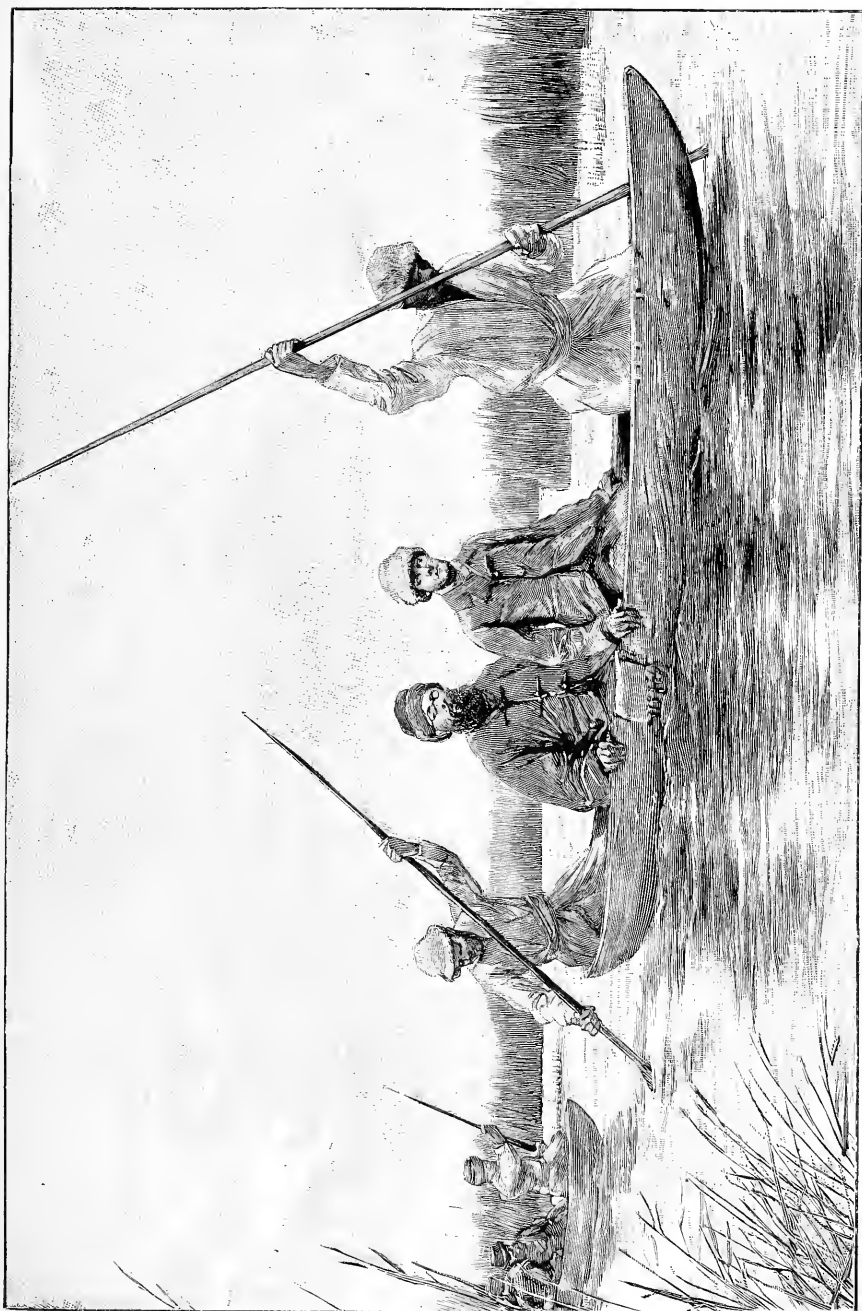
All of a sudden, as if by enchantment, at the bend of the stream we come upon a little creek to the left, a clear space amid the rushes, a mead coming down to the bank, and on the bank a man! I do not know whether he or our party are the more surprised.

On jumping ashore, my first impulse is to give him a cordial shake of the hand, as a man represents to my mind inhabitants, a village, fire, and dinner. But I cannot help being angry with our boatmen for having deceived us by saying that there was no village beyond Kamchap Khan.

I tell Abdullah to ask where we are.

“At Eutin.”

“Did the boatmen know of this village?”



ON THE TARIM.



“Yes, they belong to it.”

“Why did they not tell us of it?”

“They were afraid that we should steal their wives.”

“Reassure them, and say that we only ask them to give us shelter, and that we do not mean them any harm.”

Our men do as they are bid, and take us to the hamlet, the name of which means “a place that has been burnt,” for the houses are built upon a small clearing made by a fire in the midst of the reeds. There is a population of about fifty. Our boatmen had been away for several days, so their aged fathers greet them by kissing them on both cheeks; while they, in their turn, embrace their sons. We ingratiate ourselves with all the inhabitants by buying one of the two village sheep which had been fattened for the marriage of the chief’s son, and as soon as the animal has been killed and cut up it is cooked, we sharing the meal with our hosts. This is a great treat for them, as they rarely taste meat more than once a year; and, in addition to being too poor to afford it, they say that it would be bad for them to eat it frequently. Perhaps this is another case of “grapes being sour,” but, in any case, it is certain that, like certain peoples of Arabia, they are ichthyophagists, though they eat duck as well as fish. In their view, as in that of the mediæval monks, the flesh of ducks is not meat; though the motive for holding this view may not be the same. They also eat the young sprouts of the reeds, and the roots of the wild hemp, which they fry. I am delighted at their friendly feeling, and take advantage of their loquacity and of Abdullah’s good-humor to pursue the investigation which I had begun at Abdullah. We shall probably not go any farther on the Lob Nor, or ever return there, so it would be a pity to lose the opportunity of getting information with regard to regions of which so little is known.

Here, as in the other villages, we are seated in a circle round the hearth, the fire being made of bundles of dried reeds. The ends are lighted first, and the flame gradually consumes the

stalks, a little girl pushing the bundle further in as it burns. The flame is very vivid; so as we get a better light than we should from a lamp, and are well warmed into the bargain, we have nothing to complain of.

The bulk of our conversation is with an old woman, whose skin is so wrinkled that it is scarcely possible to distinguish her toothless mouth between her nose and her chin. According to the custom of the country, her head is covered with a fichu; her hands are mere skin and bones, and on one of her fingers is a ring with a small blue stone—a colored pebble, which has probably been palmed off upon her by a Chinaman. From the frontiers of Siberia to Tonquin, and even beyond, it is safe to say: “Wherever there is a robbery, a Chinaman is in it.” The old lady appears to be held in high esteem in her village, this being due to her age and to her musical talents; for whenever the conversation flags she takes up a two-stringed guitar and sings long legends to a monotonous, but soft and harmonious tune, relating the history of her ancestors, their origin, their struggles, their flight, and their return. She sings in a nasal, deliberate tone, in a Turkish dialect which Abdullah has a difficulty in following. But one of our boatmen, who knows the Tcharkalik language, assists him, and, with the help of Father Dedeken and his Chinese, I succeed in noting down a good part of the legend, as follows:

“Once upon a time four kings ruled the country, which was very prosperous with its Mussulman inhabitants. These kings were: Attagout Agha [Agha is a title], residing at Kargalik;* Nouniaz Agha, Mardjan Agha, both of whom resided at Gashar,† and Cher Agha, at Mienchari, near Abdullah.‡ Then came the Mongolians, who entered upon a struggle with them. They massacred a portion of the male inhabitants, and as the others did not choose to remain as slaves they fled, with some of the

* Kargalik, now Tcharkalik.

† Three days' march from Tcharkalik, on the route to Khotan.

‡ These residences were towns, the ruins of which are still visible in the desert.

women, and succeeded in escaping eastward three days' march from Eutin.*

"There was still water there then, though now there is only saltpeter, but as the fugitives had no house they dug down into the ground to make fire, whence the name of the place, Karahoutchoun (black chimneys). There they began to feed only on fish and ducks.

"They remained more than a century, but in the meanwhile the Mongolians had gone away, after having destroyed everything, and the exiles, driven from their new colony by the drought, gradually returned to the west.

"Some went along the banks of the Tarim, between Kourla and Lob. Others proceeded as far as the former site of Kargalik, the name of which they had forgotten. Seeing ruins, they re-excavated them in search of treasure, but the Mongolians had carried off everything, and the exiles found nothing but a spinning wheel. So they gave the name of Tcharkal, which means spinning-wheel, to the town which they built.

"The chase and the rearing of stock sufficed for their needs until the arrival of an aged chief from Khotan, Ismail Ata,† who offered to teach them tillage. His offer being accepted, he brought several companions with him. And now differences arose between the former owners of the soil and the Khotanese; and the latter have many sons, who take in marriage the daughters of the former. But our race has always remained intact, and has not been subjected to any mixture of blood."‡

She then abandons the domain of history for that of romance, and her improvisations, which seem to captivate the attention of her hearers, have less interest for us. I prefer learning all I can about the Lob Nor, and question those next to me.

I am told that it was also by exiles on their return from

* Some went as far as the Tsaïdam, where Prjevalsky discovered their tombs.

† We passed a night under his roof.

‡ She forgets that a good many of the people who came from Karahoutchoun took back their wives, although they had borne children or were heavy with child to the Mongolians, their masters.

Karahoutchoun that the little villages along the banks of the Tarim in the Lob Nor were founded. Ata (the aged father) was born at Karahoutchoun sixty-eight years ago, and thirty-five years ago founded the hamlet of Eutin. Beyond Eutin, going in the direction of Karahoutchoun, there are two villages: Karakayuk and Deutehné, the latter being already uninhabited, for the water has run off, the reeds have disappeared, and their places are taken by sand and salt. Karakayuk will soon be abandoned, as its two last inhabitants are collecting their wretched belongings before leaving, and the people of Eutin are on the point of migrating westward.

The fishermen are taking refuge in the oasis of Tcharkalik, and are becoming tillers of the soil. The inhabitants of the Lob Nor, like the waters of the Tarim, are gradually withdrawing; the hovels are falling in, the hamlets are disappearing, and their very sites are invaded by giant reeds, which, in turn, no longer having the water needed to nourish them, are drying up and withering away. Then will begin the slow but certain work of the sand, which will come and cover the ruins of ancient cities, the remnants of villages, the houses whether of mud or of wood, the withered rushes, and the dead reeds, spreading over all this district a vast pall which it will be impossible to raise, for the sand will have buried what is now the Lob Nor in everlasting oblivion.

This has already partly done its work, for the Lob Nor, as we see it, is not as it was in Prjevalsky's time, and the Russian general himself could not find the lake* which is marked upon the old Chinese maps, and the existence of which is confirmed by the old woman we are talking with. According to the tradition handed down from generation to generation, there was at one time here a vast inland sea, without any sedges or reeds.

* It is this great lake which, according to the tradition, has given the Lob Nor its name—Lob being a local word signifying wild animals. It was already given to the district when the Kalmuck caravans traversed it, and they added the Mongolian word Nor (great lake).

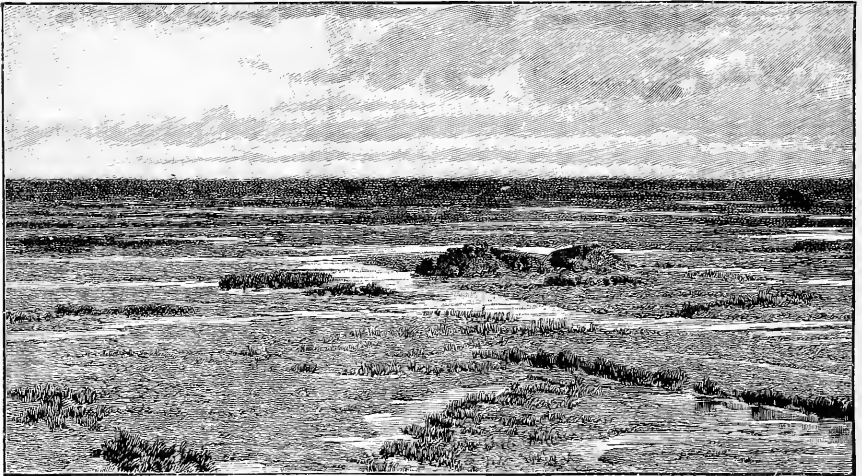
The old men of the tribe themselves had seen large lakes, though nothing to compare with the sea which they had heard spoken of. One of them says that the water recedes every day, and that it must be absorbed by the saltpeter. To this reason, which may be to some extent valid, I will add another—for the last ten years Chinese Turkestan, which was formerly the theater of constant civil wars, seems to have been pacified, at all events for a time, and the inhabitants take advantage of this truce to devote themselves to the cultivation of the fields, which they had been compelled for some time to abandon. In order to irrigate their fields they have diverted part of the waters of the Tarim, which are thus lost in irrigations or artificial inundations; while crops like cotton or rice, which require a great deal of moisture, are becoming more extensive each year, and consequently the body of water brought into the Lob Nor district is very considerably less.

In reply to our questions as to whether they enjoy good health, and to what complaints they are subject, they reply that their mode of life is a healthy one, and that epidemics are rare. They do not know what it is to have smallpox, and are never subject to the ulcers which are so frequent in the East. When they reach a certain age they generally live to be old; but among young children the mortality is at the rate of one in five. They tell us that the children have no malady, but “they will not keep alive,” and this is the best explanation we can get. The complaints from which adults suffer come chiefly from the damp—either a chill, or rheumatism in the legs, which sometimes partially paralyzes old people; or else a disease of the bones. This is often the consequence of rheumatism, and the old dame tells us that when this disease of the bones attacks a woman who is with child she is sure to die.

When a marriage takes place the father of the bridegroom gives the father of the bride ten bundles of wild hemp, ten packets of dried fish, ten cups of fish oil, a stewpan, twenty or thirty loaves of bread, from fifty to a hundred ducks, a flint and steel,

and a boat. This is the ordinary tariff, the rich giving a few additional fish or ducks. The eatables are, moreover, consumed at the wedding feast. The reader will gather from this list of presents that the principal occupation is shooting and fishing.

They can neither read nor write, and the traditions of the country are handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another. Some of these traditions comprise lofty ideas; for



THE LATTER END OF THE TARIM.

these people, though very poverty-stricken, are not savages. They are religious, and declare themselves proud of being Mohammedans—this constituting one of the reasons for their contempt of the Chinese and Mongolians, whom they describe as people having “no books.” Their religious practices consist in listening to a few verses of the Koran recited by one of the elders of the tribe; but their ceremonies are simple, being limited to burials. When a man dies, his hands and feet are tied, and if his family has any cloth a new garment is made for him; but if not he is dressed in an old one. An elder recites a few Mussulman prayers, and the corpse is then placed on a stretcher made of reeds and osiers. It is covered with rushes, and placed in the midst of the reeds,

and his relatives cut more reeds and heap them on the dead body; a pole bearing a bit of paper at the end is fixed in the ground, and so the ceremony ends.

All along the lower course of the Tarim the mode of procedure is the same, with this slight difference, that in certain places for the pile of reeds is substituted a small hillock of sand.

We have been conversing for a couple of hours, and before going to rest the aged Ata asks us in turn a question—he cannot believe that we are not Russians, and he wants to know why we do not come to deliver them from the Chinese. We promise him we will do what we can, and, in wishing each other good-night, we cordially agree in expressing our detestation of all the Chinese. The parents embrace their children, and the family affections are evidently strong among these good people. It is not a long business for them to go to bed, as they stretch themselves out on the ground, the women remaining in the same room as the men, separated only by a sort of awning made of rough canvas, and stretched on to reeds from the ceiling.

November 7.—It is very cold, and when we get up there are eight degrees of frost, with a strong northeast wind. Before leaving we endeavor to have a little sport in the reeds, but they are too thick, and we cannot go far. Moreover, we are told that the wild boars, which used to be very abundant here, have been driven away by a tiger. So we should gain nothing by going further eastward, and if we have any spare time, we prefer to ascend the Tarim, this side of Abdullah, toward Lole. Our return journey is accomplished without mishap, though we are overtaken by a tempest which at once freezes and blinds us, and we are compelled to wrap ourselves up in our touloupes, to pull our fur caps down over our ears and eyes, and, having thus voluntarily rendered ourselves deaf and blind, we sit quite still, at the risk of getting our feet frozen, so as not to disturb the equilibrium of our boats. So we are not sorry to see Couzetrzoff again, and the fire before which he is cooking some birds.

November 8.—One of my first visits is to the cemetery of

Abdullah, which is situated on three sandhills the other side of the Tarim, its site being indicated by poles on which are placed the heads of horses or the tails of yaks. Upon one of the hillocks, perhaps that reserved for the burial of the chiefs, is a small reed hut divided into two compartments, in each of which is a sort of wooden rack filled with the horns of deer and antelopes, while in front of the hut are more stags' antlers and antelope heads dried with the skin on them. I bring away a few of these horns, hiding them under my coat, and in the afternoon I go off for a ride with Barachdin and a guide who is to show us the way to a large lake to the southeast. As we leave the village we meet a Mongol caravan consisting of about fifty camels and twenty horses, most of them fully loaded, coming from Karachar. The Kalmucks who are riding them are on the way to meet their sovereign, who, as we learn, has lost most of his beasts of burden on his way from Lhassa. It is useless for us to stop and talk with them, for they would not give us any interesting information, so we continue our march. After riding about six miles, we reach two small depressions in the ground which are barely moist, and beyond that there is no vegetation, the stony desert extending to the first spurs of the Altyn-Tagh. There is not the slightest trace of the great lake we had been told of, but our guide says that it was there three months ago. He adds that half a day further on (extending his hand toward the south) there are ruins nearly buried in the sand, only the tops of the houses being visible, supposed to be the remains of a large town.

On our return, we find the village of Abdullah in a state of uproar, the whole population rushing about, shouting and gesticulating; the men saddling their horses in haste, the women and children crying, and two old women, bent double, groaning in quivering tones and exclaiming, "Allah! Allah!" The horses are soon ready, and the men, with Kunchi Khan Bey at their head, all make off in the same direction. We watch them till they disappear in a cloud of dust, and when we ask the meaning of this, the women, who have calmed down a little since the

departure of their husbands, soothed, perhaps, by the consoling tones of the gallant Abdullah, proceed to tell us, still sobbing at intervals, what has happened. They ask us if we do not see something in the direction which the horsemen have taken, and when we tell them "No, nothing but dust," they say that the men who went off on a shooting expedition a month ago have been seen, but that whereas three started only two have returned. Two of the three were sons of Kunchi Khan Bey. In the meanwhile the little band of sportsmen draws closer and then it is seen that all three are there, so that the lamentations are turned into rejoicings quite as noisy. The whole village went out to meet the three men, who were on foot, with emaciated faces and clothes much torn, walking very slowly and leading three donkeys. When asked what had become of the two other beasts, they said that they had died of cold, and the loss of these two animals excited fresh lamentations from among the old women.

After the elders who had gone out to meet them had got off their horses and kissed them, the young men were made to tell the story of their adventures. First they went southward and then eastward, and though they had seen a great many wild camels they had only killed two, the second at six days' march from here. The skins had been cut up into rectangular pieces and loaded on a donkey. Nearly all the hair had been rubbed off, and they had put it into a bag for fear of its being spoilt on the way.

The return of the *chasseurs** and our presence in the village are made an occasion for amusements in the evening. The women put on their smartest things, in most cases a watered silk dress, reminding one of the Bokhara stuffs, with red in front, while the wives † of the chief have a caftan trimmed with black sheep, while one of them wears her rings passed through one end of the

* *Note of the Translator.*—It seems a pity that we have not in English a comprehensive word like "chasseur" to designate those who go shooting, hunting, or fishing, as the case may be. Even "the chase" is only used in English now to designate hunting.

† It must be remembered that we are among Mussulmans, each of whom has at least two wives—they are fairly cheap.

fichu which she has on her head, having taken them off her fingers for fear of injuring them while cutting reeds for the fire. One of the women is rather pretty: a Khotanese, with regular features and a pale complexion, which brings into relief her big black eyes, surmounted by a finely-arched pair of eyebrows. Like her companions, she is short in stature, but, being better looking, she excites their jealousy. Madame Tocasch, to give her her name, very much regrets her native land, finding Abdullah too savage, and to mark her disapprobation she ran away a few days ago to her parents, who reside at Tcharkalik, but they, instead of taking her in, informed her husband, and helped him to get her back. An honest man, when he has sold his daughter and been paid for her, would consider that he had committed a theft if he took her back to the prejudice of his son-in-law, and as to the girl herself, she is not consulted in the matter.

Madame Tocasch shows her superiority over her companions by the grace with which she dances. She is accompanied in her dance by some of the men, who nod their heads as they move round, and stretch out their arms, which are hidden in the long sleeves of their kalat (large cloak). Although they are agile and light-footed, the dance—to which our Russian plays a tune upon his harmonium, two or three of the old women chanting in a nasal tone—soon becomes monotonous.

November 9.—The minimum of temperature is about one degree below zero, but although the morning is cold there is no wind, and it is, therefore, good weather for going up the Tarim. Before leaving Abdullah we make a few final purchases (of snares, dried fish, sandals made of donkey skin), payment being effected in Chinese money, which has to be weighed, a slow and troublesome operation to which we shall have to get accustomed. Kunchi Khan Bey and his family allow themselves to be photographed again, and he gives us a supply of small loaves of bread made by his wife and wishes us a safe journey. We promise him to return “some day,” but in the meanwhile we have to make a start, and, choosing between various modes of

locomotion, I go on foot as far as the first Abdullah, where I take a cup of tea (with a piece of butter in it) with the old centenarian, whose sons are sharpening their spears and getting their guns ready for the pursuit of the wild camels. They accompany us as far as our canoes, which have arrived from the other village of Abdullah, and, with the weather not so cold as it was yesterday, we remount the stream, our boatmen finding it very hard work to row against the strong current. Floating pieces of ice come into collision with our canoes, and we are at times almost hemmed in between them, the oars having no hold upon their surface. In the bends the river is completely frozen over, and we have to break the ice and clear a passage, reminding one of polar navigation. The two natives who are in charge of our big canoe sing all the time, one having a strong harsh voice and the other a shrill one. We imitate their singing in order to raise the drooping spirits of our own men; but in spite of all their efforts they cannot make much headway, and we have barely advanced ten miles in a straight line when we have to stop for the night. Our donkeys and horses have overtaken us, and having picketed them, we roll ourselves up in our rugs and pass a very pleasant night in the open, despite there being twenty-seven degrees of frost.

November 10.—Navigation, difficult as it was yesterday, now becomes impossible, and we have to be content to follow the Tarim by going along its banks. We meet boatmen whose canoes are firmly fixed in the ice, and they say they have been in this plight for three days, unable either to go back or to advance. They ask us to give them some food, which we do as far as our scanty means permit, and then resume our journey, coming, a few miles higher up, on a pile of bags, and of reeds which have been cut and laid out on the banks. This is opposite a small village called Tchaï, the inhabitants of which are about to migrate to Tcharkalik, and have already taken their baggage across. When they see us making for their bags they take us for thieves, and begin to run away; but when we assure them that we do

not mean them any harm, they gradually gain confidence, and on our offering them a cup of tea they become quite convinced that we are friends, and give us all the information we ask for. They tell us that the sheet of water from which we see the Tarim issue, a hundred yards or so above Tchäi, is the Karabouran, though it is little more than a series of inundations representing the largest stretch of water to be found in the Lob Nor. It begins at the village of Lob, and ends here, being interspersed at many points by lagoons or islets. It is nowhere more than three feet deep, in most places only a foot, while the lake which we skirted above Lob is the Kemezetiatché, which does not communicate with the Karabouran, for since Prjevalsky came into the district the course of the Tarim has been changed, and the level of the waters has dropped.

These indications save us the trouble of following the bank of the Karabouran, so that we determine to make a short cut across the country opposite Tchäi.

While the light still lasts I try for a little shooting on the Karabouran; but we have great difficulty in getting the canoe there, as the current of the Tarim is very strong at the entrance to the lake, and when we get there it is a sheet of ice, so we have to give up the idea of going any further. My excursion, though a brief one, is not altogether fruitless, for I succeed in bringing down, with No. 4 shot, a very fine white swan of the species which is domesticated with us, as he flies over my head, while with a bullet I kill a goose flying in the midst of a flock, these being two shots which I should be sorry to back myself to repeat. In the evening the natives attempt to surprise us by their learning, and they repeat the word "Padisouda," which they have retained in their memory since the visit of Prjevalsky.

November 11.—Commencing our march by moonlight, we observe for the first time the phenomenon which will strike us so often upon the highlands, viz., a sudden drop of the temperature as the moon appears above the horizon. We are at present very insufficiently protected against the cold, and although we

are walking we shiver from head to foot, while, for my own part, I do not know what to do with my hands, which are so numbed that I cannot get them warm. We have no choice but to wait till the sun has got up, when a fresh trouble arises. We are in a desert the sand of which is in many places covered with a layer of salt, and the refraction is so great that we are constantly being led astray by the mirages, while we are dazzled, blinded, and half-roasted by the sun into the bargain. It seems as if all the sun's rays were converging upon us, and as if there were no choice but to let ourselves be thoroughly baked.

Our horses do not seem to be so much affected by it as we are, and I really believe that they can smell their stable, though still more than thirty miles off. There is no road, and we have to guide ourselves by the compass; but the instinct of our horses is the best guide, and we speed along at such a rate that a courier sent forward by Bonvalot has scarcely time to hand us a letter. It arrives rather late, for we are already in the oasis, and before long we see a rivulet, some gorse, then some tamarisks, several small poplars,* and last of all, Rachmed, going off at a great pace after "those wretched hares." In a few minutes we are in the camp, which has the aspect of a small town, with people coming and going in all directions, buying and selling, gossiping, and nailing down boxes, while in the center of the camp is our little tent, beneath which Bonvalot, with his legs crossed Turkish fashion, is enjoying a meal of sparrows, cooked on a skewer with slices of sheep's liver in between them.

All is well at Tcharkalik, our Russians are preparing for their return, and two men of the country have been engaged to accompany us. The provisions are gradually accumulating; bread is being baked with plenty of salt in it, sheep's paunches are being filled with fat, the salt is being purified, and the preparations are well advanced. Our men, however, were very much obstructed in their work by a tempest which lasted two days, blew down the tent, and covered everything with sand. M. Bonvalot has effected a regular massacre of hares, and we, in return, give him

* *Populus diversifolia*.

an account of our excursion, which has lasted a week, and in the course of which we have traced the course of the Tarim in the Lob Nor, and have ascertained that this latter name does not apply to a lake, but to all the marshy portion of the country watered by the Tarim, from the village of Lob to the end of the river.



SPINNING WOMAN AT ABDULLAH.

The largest stretch of water in this region is the Karabouran, a tract under water between Lob and Tchäi. The waters of the Tarim are not salt, while there are springs of fresh water (Eutin) in the Lob Nor, but the water of the pools formed by the Tarim upon a saltpeter surface

is brackish. Each year the quantity of water which the Tarim brings into the country decreases, the pools dry up, and the reeds are more and more covered by the sand which is gradually driving the inhabitants toward Tcharkalik, so the time is not far distant when the region called the Lob Nor will no longer be distinguishable from the desert into the midst of which it now advances like a narrow ribbon of verdure unwinding itself from west to east for a distance of about seventy-five miles.

CHAPTER V.

FROM TCHARKALIK TO BOULAK BACHI.

“The Southern Road”—Taking Stock—New Recruits: Timour and Isa—Festivities at Tcharkalik—A Nomad Moralist and Poet—Tramps—Prince Henry’s Return—Taking a Chief into Custody—The Doungane and his Master—The Start—Yandachkak—The Altyn-Tagh—Valley of the Djahan-Saï—Tchoukour-Saï—Through a Cañon—Prince Henry Lost.

November 1.—We* are so far from having completed our work that what we have hitherto done has been little more than a simple excursion, attended by drawbacks so trifling that they merely gave an interest to the journey. I have said that the first stage was Kourla, the second is Tcharkalik, and the third would be Ba-Tang, if all continues to go as well as at present. Ba-Tang is a long way off, separated from us by deserts and the unknown. After Ba-Tang we hope to reach Tonquin, at the other end of Asia, but when traveling one has not, fortunately, much time to reflect upon the difficulties before one. In the meantime we have constantly in our minds the passage in the narrative of the English traveler Carey, published in the Proceedings of the Geographical Society of England, in which he speaks of a route going to Lhasa by the Kizil-Sou, a river supposed to be beyond the mountain chain which Prjevalsky saw, and which he named Columbo. Carey had heard the natives talk of this route, but they had never shown it to him. According to rumor it is more direct than that of the Tsaidame which joins the route of the Koukou-Nor, first traveled by Fathers Huc and Gabet, and afterward by Prjevalsky.

We must, therefore, at all costs discover this route which, in talking of it, we call “the southern road.” We send our men to make inquiries, and each of them endeavors to light upon the

* The narrative is here resumed by M. Bonvalot.—TRANSLATOR.

invaluable individual who knows it and is willing to guide us. But the mere fact of one of them having asked in a stupid sort of way is sufficient to prevent us getting any definite information. Moreover, very few of our men care to pursue the journey. Our three Siberians are going to leave us. They had agreed to come as far as the Lob Nor, but I cannot persuade them to come on farther, and the Doungane camel-driver is also anxious to come back, being only kept with us by the promise of high pay. So we look out for volunteers in the district, and two offer their services, one of them knowing the Bogalik road which Carey took. We promise them good wages, and their arrival helps to raise the spirits of the Dounganes.

The chief of our camel-drivers, the aged Imatch, though he walks with great difficulty, will hold on to the last, and will go wherever the Khotanlis go. Parpa has already been over the road, and he does not appear to bleed from the nose, but he has a mysterious way I don't much like when I speak to him of the southern route. If he is to be believed, he is acquainted with a very good guide, but does not know his name. He says, however, that he can find him, and begs permission to go and ask for information in the village and in the farms scattered about in the bush. He returns without bringing any important tidings, and I soon ascertain that he has been after something very different from the southern route.

As to our interpreter Abdullah, surnamed the "little man," he is still a terrible talker, and a busybody who sees that things are not progressing as he would like. He did not think we were in earnest when we talked at Kuldja of going to Ba-Tang, his idea being that we should perhaps go as far as Kourla, and then follow the main imperial road to Peking, or that, at the outside, we should go as far as the Lob Nor and then return. Now he is beginning to get anxious, and would like to dissuade us from going further, so we are convinced that we shall not get information of any value from him, though he professes to be more or less enthusiastic.

To judge by what we have seen of the two fresh recruits, we shall have reason to be satisfied with them later on. The elder is called Timour and has been a shepherd, while he goes in for gold-mining and the chase when he has leisure. He is a married man, and cultivates a small plot of ground, and as he has often explored the Altyn-Tagh and the Tchimen-Tagh he does not feel any hesitation about accompanying us over the high table-lands. He executes orders without any trouble, is a quick worker and



DONKEYS AND SHEEP ON THE ROAD.

has the credit of being indefatigable on the march, while he takes good care of the horses and camels. He is always in good spirits, and, this being a very important point, is content with his lot at Tcharkalik. A very small piece of sugar suffices to make him happy, and he seems to take an interest in all we do, for he looks at our arms with manifest pleasure and tells us the names of the birds we have prepared for our collection. In the evening we can hear him singing and telling stories, and when

Rachmed or one of the others is relating an anecdote, he follows all the details of it with close attention. In short, he is a poet and an adventurer. When asked if it will be cold in the southern mountains, he says yes, and thrusts his hands under his sleeves and warms them under his armpits. "But," he adds with a laugh, "that will be nothing." Withal he is not too tall nor too stout, is very alert, dances well, knows so many prayers by heart that he is taken for a mollah, and possesses remedies for various complaints.

The other man, who is only about twenty, is called Isa. He is full of vigor, and can skin a sheep very dexterously, and cook rice well. He is equally good at eating both, and he takes an interest in all that relates to cooking, while he is ready to split wood, light the fire and attend to it, fetch water, and clean out the saucepans. He has a very loud laugh, but so natural that one likes to hear it, especially as he is generally rather stern. He has a good memory, though he is said to be given to smoking *hasheesh* in small quantities, but those whom he has previously served give him a good character. I saw him one night sleeping on a mat before the fire with no covering except a *khalat*, torn in several places. He was sleeping very soundly, though the fire had gone out and the minimum temperature of the night was two degrees below zero. As he was very well the next day, and had not caught the slightest cold, I did not want to know more.

We renew our provisions, the important thing being to insure plenty for the subsistence of men and beasts, as from all we have read, and from all we can learn on the spot, those who have preceded us were obliged to turn back from want of provisions. It is as important to feed the beasts of burden well as the men, for when the means of transport fail all exploring is impossible.

As we can procure flour and barley here and get it made into bread, we employ all the women in the place, one procuring us one hundred pounds, and another fifty pounds, and we make them bake a small quantity at a time, and taste it to see that it is what

we want. We buy all the dried fruits we can get, as well as rope, horse-shoes, and nails, while we have winter clothing made for the horses and camels.

The men's pelisses are sewn and made larger, trousers and leggings are made out of sheepskins, and plenty of leather leggings are provided, as well as leather stockings, into which the foot is inserted after it has been well wrapped up in felt. One of our Russians is a shoemaker, and we employ him to make our felt boots, while the men prepare their own according to the fashion of their respective tribes.

There is a regular market every day upon the outskirts of our little camp, and what with the chaffering, the disputing, and the laughing, the scene is very animated. We gradually get on friendly terms with the natives, and at the end of a week have acquired a certain degree of authority at Tcharkalik. We have created a "French party" in the place, and it is among the members of this party that we shall find men to transport our provisions for a month or more.

On the birthday festival of Mohammed the authorities came in a body to pay a visit and offer us presents. They were anxious that we should participate in their rejoicings, for we were far from home and hearth, and it would be unbecoming if they were not to invite us. I thanked them and repeated the assurance that we had no bad intentions in our hearts, affirming that our acts would always be in keeping with our words. They said they believed what we told them, and asked permission to entertain our men. This, of course, I readily granted, and all day long the festival of Mohammed was celebrated by feasts, songs, dances, and sports, in which Rachmed, who is very agile, obtained marked success. Two sheep which we had given them were cooked in the immense pot belonging to the mosque. This pot came to a bad end, as we burst it while using it to refine crystallized salt—a mishap of evil omen which was atoned for by a present.

November 8.—A terrible tempest from the northeast howled all night, and compels us to construct a shelter for our kitchen. The

temperature drops very suddenly, and this morning the natives appear in the guise of Northerners, all of them wearing sheepskins and the furs of wild animals, such as foxes and wolves. Our people avail themselves of the opportunity to try on their winter costumes, and very odd some of them look.



PARPA.

A man arrived in the course of the morning from Abdullah village with donkeys and horses, bringing at the same time some wild duck, and a letter from Prince Henry. Another piece of news announces the arrival at Abdullah of four Kalmucks, who are believed to form the advance guard of the Khan of the Kalmucks, this personage being on his way back from a pilgrimage to Lhasa. He is expected to arrive in a very deplorable condition, as his caravan has been decimated, and he has lost two hundred camels and twenty men. He has made the return journey chiefly with koutasses (yaks), and has come by way of the Tsäi-

dame, for the messenger says that when the Khan of the Kalmucks attempted to reach the "City of the Spirits," some twenty years ago, by way of the Kizil-Sou, he had to turn back because the mountains were impassable.

The Aksakal of Khotanli having brought me some marmot fat as a cure for an attack of rheumatism from which I am suffering, I questioned him about the route of the Kizil-Sou, and, without giving a definite opinion, he let me understand that little importance was to be attached to what the Lobi say. As regards the difficulties of the route, he says there can be no doubt as to that, and that upon one occasion, when he went in the direction of Bogalik with one hundred and fifty asses to bring back gold and skins, he lost a number of his beasts and some of his

companions. Their death was due to the cold, and above all to the pestilential odors emitted from the soil, which were even more fatal to the asses than to the men. It is impossible to learn anything definite as to this route, the existence of which we regard as more than probable. The natives of Lob and Tcharkalik have never followed it, and the Kalmuck pilgrims have no information on the subject. Parpa asserts that a guide whom he knows is returning with the band of the Khan of the Torgoutes, and he asks leave to go and meet him at Abdullah. This leave I refuse, as he has two months' wages in his pocket, and with the cold weather setting in he might be tempted to return home.

After the tempest, the atmosphere is more free from dust, and the sky becomes clear. It freezes, however, harder than the natives care about, the minimum under the tent being 10° . This sudden fall of temperature has alarmed the population, all of whom have quitted their houses, and they make off into the bush, those who are strong enough to do so carrying a fagot on their backs. The Aryk is frozen over, and the fields in fallow are white with frost.

We, too, are impatient to follow the example of the swallows, the last of which have been driven by the tempest to warmer climes. After this storm had raged for two days, the sun reappeared, and, with the sparrows chirruping and the natives returning to our camp, business begins to look up again. For the purchase of the smallest bit of cloth or a pound of grapes interminable speeches are made, and the names of Allah and of Mohammed his prophet are incessantly invoked.

November 9.—The minimum is two degrees below zero, with a refreshing breeze from the northwest, while it is 60° in the sun. The natives have turned the waters of the Aryk into the wells, so as to secure a full supply for the winter; and for the last week the mills have been going in anticipation of this drought, each householder being anxious to have plenty of flour in store.

A singer, who seems to me very proficient, accompanies himself upon a guitar, and gives us a song as we sit in front of the

fire ; while the dancers, male and female, are going through their performances in more or less graceful attitudes. The burden of his song is that the world is all delusion, and that man is always looking for the realization of desires which it would be as difficult for him to obtain as it would be to seize the moon, though he sees her every month.

He is said to be the author of the couplets he sings, and we ask him to accompany us and bring with him his guitar, which is made of two pieces of poplar wood ; for a moralist like him would be a desirable acquisition to our party. He has traveled about a good deal, having been to Yarkand, and prospected for gold in all sorts of places, but he does not appear to have made his fortune, and it is his disappointments that have inspired him with this doleful song. He has the reputation of being an honest fellow, and at the festival of Mohammed he won the wrestling prize in the "Olympic" games. Although a native of Khotanli, he is the intimate friend of a certain Abdullah-Ousta who is very proficient in the art of iron-working, and who belongs to Lob. Some years ago Tokta, as the singer is called, did a considerable service to the aged Abdullah. The latter had got lost while pursuing wild camels, and would not have been able to rejoin his companions had not Tokta come upon him when he was almost dead with hunger and fatigue. From this time the two men have been very much attached to each other.

We have ordered some iron, nails, and pegs from Abdullah-Ousta, and we hope to enroll him in our party ; for Tokta assures us that there is no one better acquainted with the mountain than the old man, who is still very vigorous, though his beard is white. If he consents to accompany us his example will be followed by many others.

Tokta, before leaving us, says that we shall get plenty of help if the white-beards of the Lobis do not interfere, and that the Khotanlis are all in our favor.

Rachmed says that Tokta may be trusted, because he is "saia."

“What is ‘saia’?”

“A man like ourselves, who cannot stay long in one place owing to his mother’s fault.”

“Explain yourself.”

“That is what happened in my case, and must have done in that of Tokta. Our mothers, when pregnant with us, traveled through the desert on camels; and as they strained their eyes to see beyond the horizon they made of us ‘saia,’ or tramps. And that is why we are again about to march southward, and Allah alone knows when and where we shall stop. And we shall do well to start, for the route seems to me a long one, while those cursed camels do not go fast.”

Thereupon Rachmed reproaches me for having taken him into my service when he scarcely had any beard, of having made him grow more white hairs than black, and of having made him miss several desirable marriages. Then, being very volatile, he flies off at a tangent and plays some joke upon the man next him, loading him with the insults which the Uzbegs proffer in all good humor.

Rachmed is right; it is urgent that we should start, but all is not ready. The Doungane must make up his mind to go, and then we can apportion the loads according to the strength of the different animals. At least forty donkeys and ten men are required to relieve our own beasts a little, and feed them, as well as the men, for a month. The Khotanlis have as good as promised us half, but the question is whether the Lobis will supply the other half. It is always difficult to get prepared for every contingency when setting out for a long march. We find this out once more, and Rachmed confidently mentions that he has doubts with regard to the Doungane and the Lobi.

As soon as Prince Henry and Dedeken return from the Lob we shall settle these questions; in the meantime the best course will be to display great amiability, to pay liberally, and never to refuse a request for medicine or drugs.

November 11.—While busy eating some roast sparrows cooked

by Parpa, I heard the voice of Prince Henry, who arrived in high spirits after a journey of over forty miles since daybreak. He appears to be in excellent health and condition, and his first question, after inquiring how we all are, was as to when we were to start. While I was telling him how we are situated Father Dedeken arrived, and to celebrate our reunion we had tea got ready and a repast cooked. While it was in preparation we



AT THE FOOT OF THE ALTYN-TAGH.

talked of the Lob Nor, and their conclusion is that it is but a vast marsh interspersed with jungles, amid which are hidden the dwellings of fishermen.

Before starting we have to arrange for the return of our three Siberians, as they are to go back to Kuldja with our collections and letters, which the Russian consul will send on for us to Paris. We give them camels for conveying the packages to Kourla, where they will purchase an arba (sort of wagon), for it is their intention to return by the imperial highway of Ouromtsi,

making the circuit of the Celestial Mountains. We give them plenty of food and ammunition, and should have much liked to retain at least one of the three, but Barodjdine was married, and Maltzoff had undertaken the journey so as to make a small sum for his wedding, while the third, Kousnetzoff, whom we had engaged at Tioumen, would not have been as useful to us as either of the others, for he is no longer young, and is unfitted for very severe labor; but as an assistant in our naturalist work he has always been most conscientious and willing, using care, order, and patience. We cannot be too thankful to him or say too much in his favor.

November 12.—We ask the municipality to supply us, at a price to be mutually agreed upon, with horses and with donkeys to carry a portion of our provisions as far as the vicinity of the Kizil-Sou, by way of the Bogalik route. We are promised an answer for to-morrow, after a council has been held.

November 13.—This morning we see a large body of men approaching our camp; the chiefs and nearly all the people of the village, Khotanlis and Lobis alike, being present. They halt at the threshold of our temporary domain, and a tall fellow with a scanty goatee, whom we have not seen before, opens the conversation and explains himself to Rachmed, who interprets what he says. We learn that the speaker is the principal chief of the Lobis, and he says in so many words that they will give us neither men nor asses, because it is too cold for mountaineering, and that to travel over the mountains at this season is certain death, etc.

Rachmed, in very gentle terms, insists. He reminds his hearers "of the good we have done in the country, of the money we have spent in it, of the high prices we have paid for everything with the object of being of service to the poor vendors," then he asks how it is that the promises made to us but yesterday are not kept, and inquires whether we have given reason for supposing that we shall not pay as we have promised to do.

In the meanwhile we learn that secret orders have arrived from Kourla. The Lobi chiefs are said to have been prohibited

from rendering us any assistance, and as they have asked for the aid of the Chinese against the Khotanlis they are determined to obey orders and to put obstacles in our way.

The Lobi chief gets arrogant, and exclaims "By Jupiter! If you want donkeys you shall pay twice their value, and I won't sell you any. As to men for your service, not one shall leave the country. We are not under any bond to you, we do not pay you a tax, we pay it to the Chinese. No, we are under no bond to you, and we are not afraid of you! We have numbers on our side, we are brave, you cannot frighten us!"

As he spoke, Rachmed, who felt the necessity of immediate action, used the *argumentum ad hominem*, and began to belabor this great orator. His own people were inclined to defend him, but we drove them back by threatening them with our weapons, and kept the leader in custody, stating that we would only release him in exchange for the eighteen donkeys and five horses which constituted the contingent the Lobis were to supply. The Khotanlis then intervened and acted as mediators between the two parties, interceding for the chief, who was very downcast, and promising that they would make things all right.

We hear the exclamations of the women upon the roofs and in the brushwood; the dogs bark, the donkeys bray, and there is a general uproar.

However, the chief, whom we had in our clutches, was consoled with a cup of well-sugared tea. Timour advised him to think better of his decision, as he had everything to gain by obeying us, and as we were certain not to give him his liberty again until we had made sure of his co-operation.

The chief then asked for one of his men, and ordered him to "give them what they ask for." This messenger returned to the assembly which was being held some distance off, in front of the palace of a chief who has a wife belonging to Lob, though he is a native of Khotan. Some emissaries were at once sent back to us to ask that the king may be set at liberty. But we refused this unless certain guarantees were given us. The messengers

returned and a fresh council was held, with the result that they came back in a body, accompanied by the graybeards, who swore that we should have as many donkeys, guides, and gunners as we desired, but they were not to go further than the land of the Kalmucks of the Tsaidame.

They add: "We cannot show you the donkeys, because there has not been time to collect them, but here are the Lobis who will accompany you." The men are then made to step forward, and we are asked to examine them. Then follow declarations "by the beard" and "by Jupiter," and all the divinities are invoked, the crowd approves, gesticulates, and lifts up its voice, while all around us are people smiling, waving their arms with suppliant gestures, grinning amicably, and murmuring assent to whatever any of the others may say.

It is only at the last extremity that we agree to let the chief have his liberty, when the crowd and the chiefs who inhabit Tcharkalik have authorized us, by their beards, to indulge in reprisals if they fail in their promise to supply us with what we require. They instruct one of their men, who offered us hospitality on our arrival, and with whom we have always been on friendly terms, to organize the contingent. Our host assents with a nod, while the other chiefs inform us that they are going to be absent for several days, their duty being to go and meet the Khan of the Kalmucks on his way back from Lhassa.

The principal chief, having been set at liberty, soon comes to take leave of us, and, with his nose slightly swollen, repeats the promises already made, and swears that he has given orders for them to be executed. After a profuse display of politeness, he mounts his horse and rides off. Our camp relapses into comparative silence, the crowd having dispersed, but we hear on all sides fresh exclamations and positive lamentations. What can have happened? Upon inquiry we find that all the noise is being made by the women whose beasts have been requisitioned, and who are moaning and groaning to each other on the roofs over the sad fate of their jackasses!

We are not dissatisfied with the day's work; the submission of the Lobis has led to that of the Doungane camel-driver, who obstinately declined to go any further, despite the engagement he had entered into, and a treaty signed with his thumb, or rather to which he had applied his thumb smeared in ink. But although the Doungane resigns himself to his fate, it is not without heaping maledictions upon those who have acted as interpreters. He keeps on exclaiming, "I have been put into a bag," and vents his ill-humor upon his servitor Niaz, who is a native of Tourfan. And as Niaz has not been paid his wages, he retorts by asking for what is owing to him, and even for a little on account, as he is not clad warmly enough to encounter severe cold. But his master is sordidly mean, and, as Niaz says, is the worst-tempered person in China. We have to interfere on his behalf, whereupon the Doungane takes the opportunity of asking for an advance from us, for he says that he has to settle his accounts and send money to Kourla. Niaz tells us not to believe a word of this, and says that his master will not pay his debts, but will hoard up his money.

November 15.—All these petty things indicate that it is high time to be off, so we finish off our preparations, writing letters, and paying the men who are going back, as well as those who are coming with us, and others who have supplied us with provisions. We have added to our caravan three dogs of the country, two of which are enormous hounds of the kind here called "pista," forty donkeys, and a dozen men in two detachments, one under the orders of Abdullah-Ousta, the other commanded by Tokta, the Khotanli. We have, I think, taken every conceivable precaution against the unknown, for we have with us two canoes and paddles in case of our being brought to a standstill by a river, and if we do not want them for the water we may be glad of them as fuel.

November 16.—All is ready. We take with us 700 small bundles of hay to feed our horses, which are bound to die off the first. We have taken into account the probabilities, not to say the certainty, of deaths, in order to fix the quantity of rations

we need to take with us, and it is in proportion to the number of beasts of burden that we have ; so that the load may decrease as the animals die, and that the survivors may not be overburdened just when their strength has declined. Experience tells us about how much is wanted to feed the fourteen men of our regular army for five or, at the outside, six months.

The sight of these bags and chests imparts courage to Rachmed, who exclaims : "With the help of Allah, all will be well." Yet, if we are to believe the natives, we shall not go far, for they say that the camels will not be able to cross the Altyn-Tagh if they follow the route taken by the Englishman Carey, while the "little man" will have it that Prjevasky was of the same opinion. However, we are impatient to put the matter to the test, and the start is fixed for the 17th.

November 17.—In the morning the animals were loaded, amid a scene of great excitement, the whole population being present—women, children, friends, and relatives of those who are going with us. It was not merely the sight of our departure which attracted them, for they had come for the same reason as the sparrows, which, perched on the willows near the camp, were only waiting for our departure to swoop down upon the grains of barley on the ground, just as the crowd of onlookers was eager to seize the empty boxes and bits of cloth which we were leaving behind.

At last the caravan is ready, and we start, amid bright sunshine, accompanied by the chiefs on horseback, who will go with us to the camp, a few miles from Tcharkalik, the first stage being always a very short one. It terminates at the entrance to the desert, upon the other bank of the small stream which forms the oasis, and from which we shall once again get good water. This, to us, who have drunk so much brackish water, is the most delicious of liquids.

Forty minutes on horseback suffice to take us out of the oasis into the desert, and as we get out of the saddle to sit upon the felt where the chiefs offer us "the stirrup cup," we cast a glance

toward the Gobi, with its deceptive mirage of beautiful lakes, the mountains to the southeast just emerging out of the mist.

Before sunset the elders bid us farewell, the Soni chief, who is not the least cordial among them, being of the number. To him, as to the others, we offer a present, and they say, as they wish us a successful journey, "May Allah grant you good health, and take you back safe and sound to your families who are so far off. We are poor, and we have not been able to do as much for you as we could have wished. You will excuse us. May Allah protect you!"

We shook hands with them and thanked them, regretting there should have been a little misunderstanding, but they had never seen any men of our race, and were suspicious. We expressed a hope that they would henceforth receive any of our countrymen with open arms, and would not retain an unpleasant recollection of us, but regard us as friends. Then they exchanged confidences with the goldseekers and trappers who have determined to go with us, and who say, "Look after my father; urge my wife to be patient in my absence. Give her corn on credit; I will pay when I come back. Take care of yourself. May Allah keep you," etc. Then they embraced one another, those of the same family kissing lip to lip, while others squeezed the hand of their seniors, who imprinted a kiss upon their foreheads. Next a graybeard recited a prayer, and when he had done, they all raised their hands to the beard and exclaimed, "Allah is great."

The wife of Timour, a small and very active brunette, has remained with her husband. She is very quick at sewing bags, while her son, a little boy of four, clad in sheepskin, with a dirty face, snub nose, and the small and piercing black eyes of his father, amuses himself by tapping the boxes and singing, "There is only one Allah," until, at sunset, our three Russians make up their minds to part from their companions. After an exchange of embraces and good wishes, they return to our camp of the morning, where they have left their baggage. We hope that the letters they have taken will get to Europe in about three months,

and we go to sleep after having gossiped about the future, being all of us agreed that so far we have succeeded wonderfully well.

November 18.—The minimum temperature of the night was only 16 degrees of frost, but this was sufficient to freeze the river, and we take some ice out of it. We shall not get any drinkable water at the place where we encamp to-night, and in future these lumps of ice will be our only drink.

We are in the bare and stony desert, to our right being a dark and indistinct mass looming out of the mist, which the aged Abdullah says is the Altyn-Tagh, the gold mountains, which have not before been visible in our approach to them. They appear to be lofty, but none of their details can be distinguished, and no peak is visible. On the other side, he tells us, begins the land of ice, and we shall find it very cold.

Our troop is rather silent, and the men, instead of chatting cheerfully, as is their wont, flick their horses in a mechanical sort of way, with a fixed look on their faces. The morrow of separation is always melancholy, especially when one is bound for the unknown, and neither physically nor normally is one up to the mark.

We approach some sandhills on our left, the outposts of the Gobi. It is here that we are to encamp, our donkeys and the flock of sheep we take with us for food on the road following us very closely, and making a pretty picture as they are driven along by men wearing white frieze. From the sand we get on to takirs formed of clay, and then again on to the sand, going up and down hillocks formed by the crumbling away of the mountain and the sweepings of the plain.

Abdullah-Ousta, getting off his horse, begins to search for traces of water, which he is not long in discovering by the proximity to the salt on the surface, and when the donkeys have been unloaded, the men take their pickaxes and dig a hole, which is soon filled with salt water.

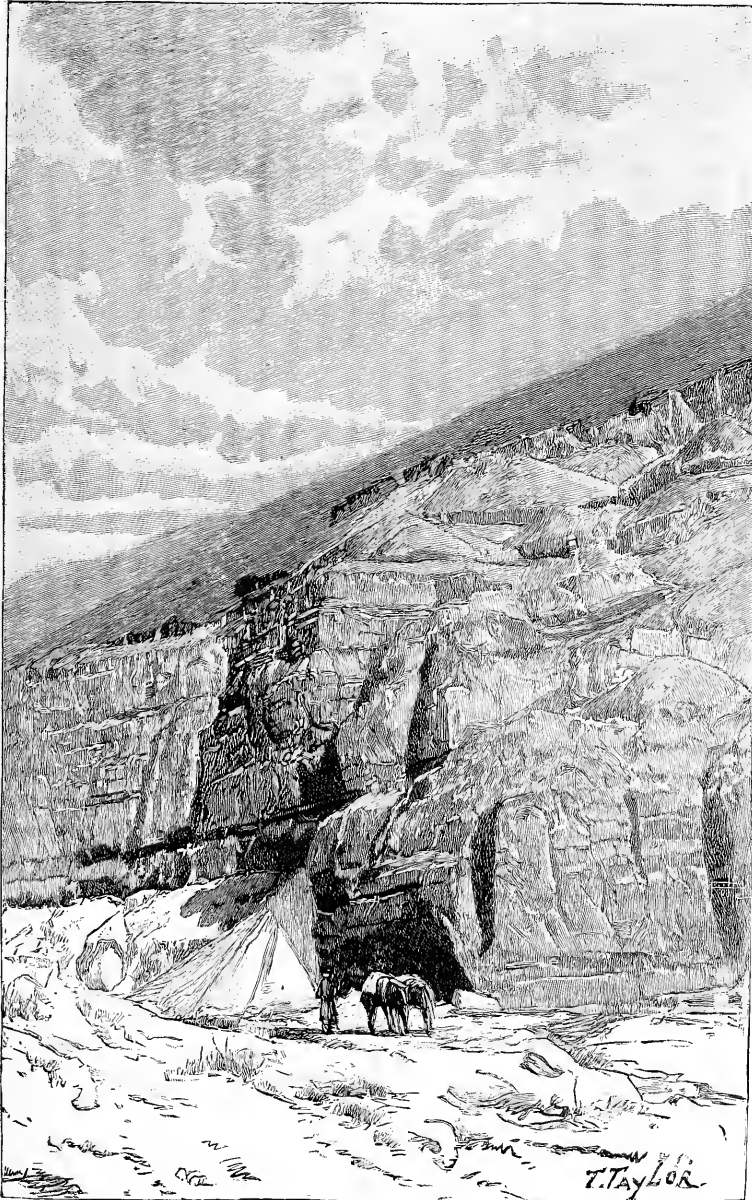
We make some tea, which we drink pending the arrival of the camels with the ice, and though it is not very nice we must

apprentice ourselves to the desert. I have often noticed that whenever one starts on a long expedition there are some cases of illness in the caravan, and to-day four or five men declare that they are quite done up, though the stage was a very short one and we had been favored with beautiful weather. This is what one may call desert sickness, similar to the discomfort experienced by some sailors for the first few days they are at sea.

This place, called Yandachkak, abounds with ioulgoun (tamarisks), and our brilliantly illuminated encampment reminds me of one in the Oustcourt, where there was an abundance of the saksaul. In the evening we have no fewer than four fires going at once, and our men might perhaps be more economical of their fuel, but the thought that, further on, they will not be able to get any, makes them anxious to make the most of the opportunity, and there is nothing more cheerful than the flames of a bright fire lighting up the gloom of the desert.

After supper Abdullah-Ousta, accompanied by some of the men, comes to talk to us and to ask if we are still determined to follow the "old road," as that taken by Carey is called. He points out that we shall be brought to a stop by two passes, and he repeats that Carey, with donkeys, had the greatest difficulty in passing them, as Parpa would tell us. The first is called the "sand pass," and one reaches the foot of it by so narrow a gorge that very probably the camels would not be able to traverse it. Moreover, there is no sort of track over the sand pass. The second is called the "pass of stones," and its name indicates that it is very dangerous to camels' feet. His conclusion is that we should follow the "road of the Kalmucks"—that is to say, the Tsaïdame route—which is the best, while by the old road we should be five days without water.

While thanking him for his observations, we repeat that we intend to follow the "old road," our conviction being that this is the branch of the southern route which we are intent on finding, and we add that nothing will induce us to change our minds till we get proof to the contrary. The men withdraw after promising



TCHOUKOUR-SAI.

to serve us faithfully and obey us implicitly, and we send them a little tea and sugar, which they drink while seated around the cheerful fires. The air is filled with melody, which proceeds from Tokta, our poet, who is scraping his "dambourak," and, with a pure voice, is singing a very plaintive song, which strikes one as charming in this environment. The song seems to be inspired by the sand, by the cavity out of which the brackish water is drawn, and by the sterility of the soil. It is the song of one who confesses to being overcome by nature—the plaint of a captive asking if he can ever escape from the forbidding solitude in which he is enveloped.

November 19.—At break of day, we hear that the camels are missing. Men start off in search of them in all directions, and it is not long before they are led back through the desert.

The route is monotonous and stony, and the higher we get the larger become the stones, which trappers have piled up at short intervals so as to mark off the road.

At last, the Altyn-Tagh is visible to our right, its slopes appearing devoid of all vegetation, eaten into as they have been by the waters; and the eye can follow the burrows in which the shadows wind along, deeper or shallower according as whether they denote the course of the streams, the torrents, or the rivulets, by which the water drains off the mountain.

Having marched for six hours nearly due east, we halt in a valley watered by the Djahan-Sai, which also bears the name of Kountchi Kân, a great Lob chief. He is said to have come from the Tsaidane with his flocks, and having discovered this river while on a hunting expedition, it took his fancy, and he brought his family to settle there. This river is said always to have plenty of water, which we can quite believe, as its whitish, milky color indicates that it proceeds from a glacier. The natives say, indeed, that there is a small glacier at its source. The volume of water in this river is considerable, but the sands suck it all up before it reaches the Lob. About ten miles to the north of our camp, half-way to Abdullah, the land is irrigated and cultivated,

and after the harvest is gathered the tillers of the soil go to live in various villages near Lake Lob.

These indications as to a discovery made by a chief coming from the Tsaidame render it probable that the natives of Thibet must have become intermixed with the Lobis, though not to any great extent, a supposition to a certain extent confirmed by the fact that, when we had penetrated into the center of Thibet, we heard the natives singing the same melodies as the people of the Lob Nor.

The valley of the Djahan-Saï is characterized by blocks of granite which have been scored, perforated, and fashioned by nature, and which affect the shape of boughs, bones, shoulder-blades, and shafts of columns, the aspect being that of a cemetery, the tombs of which have been profaned, and the corpses hacked to pieces and scattered to the winds.

We come upon traces of gazelles and also of donkeys, and we are told that some *chasseurs* from the Lob have recently returned with the remains of koulanes, a species of horse which roam in large troops over the highlands.

November 20.—In the morning the level of the river had risen a little. Its water is still white in color, and Abdullah-Ousta is confident that at a week's march southeast there is a glacier.

We encamp at Tchoukour-Saï, and on the way come across some "saxaouls," from which our men at once make some fagots, being well aware that there is no wood in this district which emits more heat. These shrubs still bear their berries, but unfortunately they are unfit for food.

Our camp is in the desert, beyond the Tchoukour-Saï—a deep gorge without one drop of water. We shall halt a day here, and send our animals to feed on the mountain, near to some water, as it is indispensable to undertake the passage of the Koum-Davane and the Tach-Davane with beasts which are fresh.

November 21.—To-day is accordingly devoted to rest, after a night during which the temperature was only about five degrees

below freezing, with a light breeze from the northwest, while in the daytime the thermometer rose to fifty degrees. We spend the day in effecting various repairs and cleaning, everybody being in good-humor except the Doungane camel-driver, who has set up his bivouac a little way from ours, and is sulking. His attendant Niaz says that he is in a viler humor than ever, and keeps on grumbling and declaring that he has been humbugged. Niaz adds that he is like a dog being led along with a string round his neck, showing his teeth all the time, and he is, therefore, glad to come to the fire with our men, being always sure they will give him a drink of tea.

November 22.—Three-quarters of an hour from the camp, after the first, but not the last, pass of this journey, we descend more than 100 yards into a cañon, which shapes its way southward, and comes out at the foot of the Koum-Davane. This cañon is very picturesque seen from above; it narrows as one gets higher, while immediately below us it is a narrow gorge, in which the water has left numerous deposits. From all sides the high and steep banks have caused the sand to silt down, and there are frequent lodgments of the alluvium, in the mass of which large cavities have been eaten out.

Advancing in this defile, we reached a narrow gallery paved with ice, and crept under the mountain which the water has eaten into. It would not require a great effort of the imagination fancy one's self in an enchanted palace. But if the entrance to this gallery was easy, it was more difficult to get out of it. We had to climb up steps formed by enormous stones which had rolled down from above, and which the camels would not get over. But after having examined the route further on, and concluded that it was practicable for these awkward animals, we determined to clear a passage for them at any cost. With their iron pickaxes our men succeeded in two hours' time in making the passage feasible; and, having got the camels through, we bent a little to the southeast, and encamped beside a stream which is not yet frozen over. The water, though a trifle salt, is

quite drinkable, and we should be very thankful never to taste worse.

In this region there are plenty of traces of wild animals, such as wolves, foxes, and gazelles. A troop of fine animals with curved horns looks down upon us from the crest of the hill as we



THE DOUNGANE.

get off our horses, and it is evident, from the footprints on the banks of the stream, that they are coming down to drink. Our appearance has brought them to a standstill, and when Prince Henry fires a shot at them, the whole troop scuttles off at a tremendous pace to the opposite side of the gorge. Prince Henry goes in pursuit and when night sets in he is still absent; so we go off in search of him, for fear of some accident having occurred, and discover him, not far from the camp, upon a rocky ledge, from which he can neither come down nor go back. At last, by means of ropes, we get him down, and he

returns to the camp very well satisfied at having made the acquaintance of the Koukou Yama (*Pseudo Ovis*, Burhell), but disappointed not to have found the one he had wounded.

Thus it is that we form acquaintance with the fauna peculiar to Thibet. The incident shows how quickly travel binds people together, for our men, though they had had a hard day, did not need any telling to go in search of Prince Henry, being sincerely anxious about him, and ready to start in a moment.

I thank them, as they sit round the fire, for their energy, and it is a good sign that they do not indulge in too many protestations, their silence indicating that they have not got any thoughts



GORGE AT THE FOOT OF THE KOUM-DAYANE.

to conceal. Seeing, close to our camp, traces of men and donkeys, we question Abdullah-Ousta on the subject, and he tells us that a month ago a party of fourteen men, including two of his sons, went on a shooting expedition in the direction of Bogalik. When we ask him if the Kizil-Sou is in that direction, he says it is, but that he has never been there.

It is clear that whenever one speaks of the Kizil-Sou, it is impossible to get any information, and I notice that Abdullah-Ousta appears to be ill at ease, while the others, who say nothing, could give us some information, if I am not mistaken. So I say :

“Has no one been to the Kizil-Sou? Yet it is said that there is a great deal of gold to be found there? Don't you know anyone, Abdullah, who has lived in those parts?”

“There is not one of us who has been to the Kizil-Sou. But I may say that a man of Lob is there at the present moment. He left the Lob last year, and we have no news of him.”

“What was his object in going?”

“To seek for gold, though he took arms with him for shooting, so that he might be able to supply himself with food, the country being uninhabited.”

“Is he alone?”

“Yes, he has not even a donkey with him. He is a poor man, beset by creditors, to whom, not having the means to pay them, he gave his only son in pledge, and as his son works for his principal creditor, the father, having resolved to procure his son's freedom, asked permission to go off on this expedition. He made his own powder, got some shot given him, took his pelisse and his tools, and set out for the region where gold is found. He begged his neighbors to give themselves no further concern about him, as he did not intend to return until he had secured a sum sufficient to pay his debts and make him free of creditors for the rest of his life. He went off at the beginning of last year, and we have heard nothing of him since.”

It is difficult to say whether this story, which has quite a Biblical flavor, is true, or whether it has been invented by Abdullah-Ousta, in order to show us that he is anxious to keep us well informed, for there is no reading the hearts of these Orientals. However, we must keep our weather eye open.

CHAPTER VI.

STRIKING THE SOUTHERN ROUTE.

Ascent of the Koum-Davane—The Beginning of Mountain Sickness—A Musical Evening—At Ouzoun-Tchor—Isa's Reformation—A Caravan Sighted—The Plain of Tchimen—A Providential Meeting—Bag-Tokai—The Southern Route Discovered at Last—Making for Namtso—Diplomacy.

November 25.—From Boulak Bachi—that is to say, the “head of the Source”—we made our way toward the first pass, which we have been led to expect with so much apprehension. After half an hour's march along the side of the gorge, we descended into the dry bed of a torrent, and halted at the foot of a sand mountain. This is the Koum-Davane, which has to be climbed, and as it is devoid of the slightest trace of a path, to us falls the doubtful honor of tracing one as best we can. It is useless to think of re-ascending the course of the torrent with our camels, and of following the donkeys which, after they have been unloaded, are hoisted up the steep path as if they were themselves so much baggage. There is nothing for it but to attack the Koum-Davane. Our troop sets to work and endeavors to trace some sort of a route for the camels by use of the feet, the pick-ax, the spade, etc., care being taken to render the ascent gradual. Then the file of camels is set in motion. The sand is extremely fine, and does not, on the slope, offer sufficient resistance for the camels to find a place where they can put down with safety the large hoofs of their clumsy feet. They keep falling on to their knees, and as this is their resting posture, they remain quite content and bar the passage to those behind. Our men have great trouble in getting them up, and in some cases they keep dragging themselves along on their knees till they are flogged on to their feet. It is a long business to get the camels over, and it is accompanied by a regular orgie of imprecations and curses, the

word "our," which means "flog," being the most frequent. The heavily loaded donkeys and the sheep bring up the rear, with drooping heads and ears.

After a repetition of the same incidents, and after having crossed two sandy ridges, we redescended by a steep path into the same valley which we had quitted in the morning. The ascent of the Koum-Davane had taken us eight hours, and although we had only got a few hundred yards higher than the camp of the previous day, our men complained of violent pains in the head, accompanied by cold feet. This was the beginning of mountain sickness, and old Imatch was the principal sufferer, for he was weak on the legs, and as he had to get off his horse and walk he was quite exhausted.

November 24.—We made our encampment not far from the Tach-Davane. The nearer we get to the mountain the more deserted does it seem. It is quite bare, and in all directions narrow ridges emerge out of the dust and sand. Mountain sickness continues to prevail, and this is beginning to be so alarming in its proportions that it will be a relief to have crossed the Tach-Davane, or "pass of stones," which, as we are assured, is more difficult than the "sand pass."

November 26.—To-day and yesterday have been devoted to the Tach-Davane, and our troop being quite exhausted, several of them have been bleeding from the nose, though we have not yet reached the altitude of Mont Blanc. The ascent is so steep that we have been compelled at times to hoist up the camels, and from the bottom men have had to carry the baggage. We are encamped in the midst of a narrow stony valley, quite arid, and without any sign of brushwood. Our provision of ice is diminishing, and the animals have not drunk for two days. So the new recruits who find themselves in this desolate mountain are quite out of heart, and full of gloomy forebodings. The Doungane, in particular, is very exasperated, and keeps on saying, "If the route is not better further on, what is to become of us? And there is very little chance of its improving, for from

the summit of this accursed spot we can only see in front of us mountain piled upon mountain." When little Abdullah goes up to the camel-driver and salutes him politely, in the hope of getting some of the Chinese delicacies, he is greeted with an outburst of insults and curses, the Doungane shaking his fist at him, spitting at him, and calling out with angry sobs, "Cursed dog, you have deceived me; you come to contemplate your work. You want to see whether I am near to dying. Be off with you!"

Little Abdullah makes off at his best pace, and I am much disappointed at not being able to get any of this Chinese paste; for, cut up small, cooked in water and with fat, and well seasoned with salt and pepper, it makes a rather agreeable article of food, in default of anything better.

The night was a particularly bad one, for Rachmed, who had been after the megalopartridges, did not return till very late, and when the anxiety which this had excited was alleviated, the men were kept awake for a long time by mountain sickness. We could hear them moving about and sitting up to relieve the oppression on the chest, while others vomited, and there was a long succession of groans and complaints, the pass being treated to plenty of curses in Chinese and Turkish.

Fortunately, Abdullah-Ousta promises them that the next encampment shall be close to a river, with brushwood and even a little grass, so that they may regain their strength, with which their courage will also return.

November 27.—We start with a northwest wind, which makes the 23 degrees of frost hard to endure, and at night the minimum was below zero. More than one of our men has to breathe on to



A KOUM.

his hands while handling the ropes, or even a compass, or the photographic apparatus. But we begin to descend, and the mountain sickness decreases, the men feeling their heads steadier on their shoulders, and the singing in their ears being less accentuated. The difference in altitude of a few hundred yards suffices to restore those who had been amiss, and when we are protected from the wind between the sides of the ravine a sensation of relief is experienced.

After five hours' march we arrived by the small pass of the Obo (Davine Island) on the banks of the Djahan-Sai, the sides of which have a fringe of ice, though in the middle of the stream the water flows along rapid, clear, and drinkable.

We had traversed hillocks of sand and of soil, where the camels found it no difficult matter to plant their feet. One might imagine that there is in this region a reserve of vegetable soil destined to cover the unfertile surfaces of our planet with the stratum of the black earth in which food-giving grain does so well.

The traces of animal life are frequent just here, the large hoof of the koulane being seen in many places near the river, as well as the forked foot of the arkan, while several koukouimane had been by the site of our camp a few minutes before our arrival. The camels go along with their eyes fixed on the ground, and now and again they inspect the mountain and its rocks. Abdullah declares that we are about to come upon abundance of game, and when asked about the route, he says that further on the stones are not so frequent, and that the ground is nearly everywhere soft. We take care not to speak to him of the Kizil-Sou and the southern route, as we must make it our business to discover it for ourselves.

While the evening meal is being cooked, the saddles and clothes are cleaned, and Rachmed makes a ramrod out of the branch of a tree. Parpa sews his boots, made of wild camel skin, with antelope tendons, which he softens by dipping them in his teacup. The horses and camels are allowed to roam about, and the dogs snarl and fight over the sheep's entrails.

A sumptuous feast is being got ready. The rice is washed for the palao which will follow the caverdak, this dish, which comes first, consisting of bits which we fry in the mutton fat. The caverdak is not allowed to simmer long in the pot, and it is eaten while only half-cooked. Little Abdullah, who has not the patience to wait for the palao, obtains, by dint of entreaties, a shoulder out of which only part of the bone has been taken, and he toasts it before the fire, tearing at it with his teeth and fingers, and exclaiming, "Here is a foretaste of Thibet and its cuisine." A light is thrown on to the pot by means of the branch of a tree which has been rubbed with mutton fat to make it answer as a torch. The repast being ready, the Khotanlis join our men, and there is quite a family party round the boxes which keep off the northwest wind. No one fails to do justice to the banquet, and Rachmed sarcastically observes that we shall not run short of warriors to fight battles of this kind. The fire lights up the tanned countenances and white teeth of the men as they dip their hands into the bowls and scoop up pieces of rice, which they jerk into their mouths. They eat till they are full, and the fragments, which are very considerable, are taken to the Lobis by the youngest, the arrival of the cooking pot, still half full, bringing a smile of contentment to the faces of these savages. We all appreciate the agreeable character of this evening, which obliterates the recollection of the fatigues and disappointments of the previous days. We even have some music, Tokta having brought with him his instrument—his Allah-Rabôb, as he calls it. This is because the rabôb, having only three strings, cannot be compared to the great rabôb of India, and only serves to play simple pieces, such as invocations to Allah, whence the "Allah-Rabôb." The Doungane, whom the prospect of watering his camels has made amiable, keeps open house, and offers his Chinese dough all round. Although the men have barely finished a copious repast, some of them accept the offer, and seem none the worse for this second meal when they return to the camp fire and go off to sleep. Most of them sleep without un-

dressing, merely lifting their arms out of the wide sleeves of their pelisse. The Lobis undress and sleep quite naked, curled up among their clothes, wherein they double themselves up, after having first warmed them in front of the fire to dry them and to drive away the vermin. They do not shelter themselves from



IN THE CAMP AT OUZOUN-TCHOR.

the wind behind their bundles, but behind the fires, so that the wind blows the heat of the flame on to them. This is the best plan when in the open air.

December 3.—We have reached Ouzoun-Tchor (the great salt pit) by way of Pachalik, Kara Chote, and Mandalik. These names do not signify that we met any habitations or human beings, for we have passed through an undulating desert, with a northwest wind blowing up a great deal of dust. We have followed pretty closely the route taking by Carey, but without finding any water at the points where he, in the month of May,

had seen rivulets running, whereas we have had to carry bags of ice with us. We intend to halt near the great salt-pit, for we want some salt. Yesterday we had a strong hurricane from the northwest, with twenty-seven degrees of frost. The minimum of the night was sixteen degrees below zero; so that there can be no mistake about winter being upon us. In the morning the wind falls, and the sun comes out in full splendor, the temperature rising to fifty-nine degrees, though in the shade it is four degrees below zero. (Time, 9 A. M.)

While the men were off to shoot, I went to see what I could discover, with my eyes never off the ground. To the south of our camp rises a very bare, deeply scored, and crumbling mountain, the slopes of which slip away as the foot, sinking into the sand, rests upon the surface, breaking away like sugar. This mountain is shedding its sand into the plain and gradually driving back the vegetation, while in the large basin to the east spreads the vast yellowish-green surface of the Ouzoun-Tchor, marbled with streaks of salt. In the more remote distance, between the east and the south, a small lake glitters, reflecting the hills which overshadow it, and close to its shores are some koulanes browsing, though they soon make off in great alarm. Beyond the basin in which the salt-pit is situated a steppe rises gradually toward other mountains, the summits of which are hidden in the mist. This chain diminishes in altitude northward, and seems to be connected with other jagged mountains which close the horizon to the west.

On getting back to the camp, I found that Prince Henry had killed a fine male koulane, this being his first, and that two men had gone off to cut up the beast and bring back his skin, with a little of the flesh.

We ascertained that the night minimum was twenty degrees below zero, but the northwest breeze was, fortunately, very slight. We had to wait until the sun had warmed our men, and had melted the frozen ropes, before we could prepare for a start. While we were drinking our tea, Timour made an exclamation,

and when I brought my glass to bear in the direction of the brushwood where I was the day previously, I could clearly distinguish two or three donkeys and some men armed with guns. All at once they disappeared, and then, as a thin column of smoke curled up into the air, we saw that they were halting to cook their food.

We at once sent Abdullah, who supposed that they are Lobis, to talk with them, but we let Rachmed follow at once after him, so that he might not set the newcomers against us, and prevent us from obtaining information. Soon afterward four men came to our camp, the two oldest offering as presents three foxes' skins and one wolf skin. They were somewhat intimidated by our presence, though our men crowded round them and pressed their hands, inviting them to come near the fire. But they did not venture to cross their legs, and were evidently very ill at ease.

These men are regular savages; their clothing, which is of frieze or sheepskin, being all in tatters, their faces sunken and their bodies wasted by privations and long marches, while their hands looked like veritable claws. They are small and thick-set, with the physiognomy of Turco-Mongolians, and they might be taken for Turkomans, with their long noses and thick nostrils, their prominent cheek-bones, and small brown eyes.

We treat them hospitably, and give them cooked meat, tea, bread, and sugar. They put away the meat, drink the tea, and scarcely touch the sugar, after they have just licked it. But they break the bread with great care, and eat it solemnly, as if it was food which would do honor to their bodies. Gradually their figures expand, and they seem to be very well satisfied. One of them, whom we have christened "the Tzigane," on account of his bushy black beard, leans over to his neighbor and mumbles a word with a smile. They exchange a look which can only be interpreted into surprise at being so kindly treated. Whether they think well of us for our reception of them, or are inclined to despise us for our weakness, it is impossible to say; for in the

desert men are not disposed to be very tender to one another, and first communications are rarely of a friendly character.

These savages are, perhaps, stupefied at the good-nature of the strangers, who, being better armed and stronger than themselves, treat them kindly, offer them a good price for their skins, and promise them some food for their journey to the Lob Nor, when it would have been so easy to despoil them. So we take advantage of their being well disposed to question them.

“Have you seen the son of your friend Abdullah-Ousta?” we ask.

“Yes,” replies one; “he has not found much gold, but he is shooting. He is in good health.”

“Have you seen any traces of wild camels?”

“No, though we know that they roam at times through this region.”

“Do you know the roads?”

“Abdullah knows them better than we do; he is a gray-beard.”

“You have not seen any Kalmucks?”

“No, not one. They live beyond the Tchimen-Tagh, which is the frontier we have mutually agreed upon. We do not go beyond it on our shooting expeditions.”

It is impossible to extract any further information from them, and we begin to think that they have nothing to keep back, and so we thank them, and our men give them many commissions for Tcharkalik. Tokta sends a message to his little boy, and Timour to his wife, whom he exhorts to be patient and not to desert his home. Isa, who sends a message to the son of his master, the Aksakal, has the bad habit of smoking hasheesh, and Rachmed had accordingly nicknamed him Bangi (which means smoker of hasheesh). This annoyed him so much that he came to complain to me, but I reasoned with him and got him to see that he deserved the appellation. So I advised him not to smoke any more, and then he would be treated as a good Mussulman, and I would make him a present. One fine morning he had broken

his hasheesh pipe, and as he had a little "bang" left in his bag, he availed himself of the visit of these men to send it to his friends, with the following message: "You will do well not to smoke any more 'bang,' but, if you do, smoke this which Isa sends you, and pray to Allah that our journey may be successful."

Thereupon the men went off, and after Rachmed had regretted not giving them a bigger piece of sugar, the tents were quickly struck, and in an hour and a quarter we reached the extremity of the Ouzoun-Tchor, which is not frozen over, and on the banks of which is a thick layer of salt. We wound round the end of the lake, following a rather narrow slope near the mountain, leading to a defile which is called the "neck of the Ouzoun-Tchor" ("ouzoun chornin boini"). Here we came upon traces of camels, but whether wild or domesticated it is impossible to say. As we were riding quickly on, exclamations arose: "Look, there are camels!" "No! yaks, I tell you." And, sure enough, about five miles to the east was a caravan with animals bearing loads and accompanied by horsemen. We concluded from the steady and regular march that this was a caravan of camels, and at once ordered Abdullah and Akkan, our Chinaman, to overtake the travelers, whom we presumed to be pilgrims in the suite of the Khan of the Torgoutes, who had recently gone through the Lob Nor. As they were trying to catch up the pilgrims we entered the defile of the Ouzoun-Tchor, which narrows as one gets higher up. The caravan had just been through it, and the footprints left by their camels prove that camels can go a long way. We also found traces of the Lobi *chasseurs*, and the examination of the soil caused us to lose a little time and enabled our Lobis to get ahead of us. They had not followed the route of the pilgrims, whose traces were along a very easy path, through the hills to the right of the defile.

Our inclination was first of all to make the advance guard turn back and to take this new route. But Abdullah-Ousta dissuaded us, declaring that the route was very bad. We did not believe

him, but followed his advice, pending the return of the two men we had sent on ahead, knowing that it would not be difficult for us to find the road again.

The defile terminates in a pass, from which we descend by a plateau called Tchimen, this being the beginning of the chain of that name, of which we catch a glimpse to the south in the mist. We trotted along an excellent road over a bare sandy table-land, then descended toward the plain of Tchimen along some spurs of hills. Suddenly two men, mounted on camels, appeared from behind a ridge just within range of our glasses. They were evidently frightened at the sight of us, for they set off at a slow trot, which is a dangerous pace for beasts on high ground. Our idea was that these travelers were rejoining the caravan which we had seen, and Dedeken, who speaks a little Mongolian, set out in pursuit at full speed. He caught them up, and questioned them, and returned quickly to tell us what he had gathered. They were two Torgoutes, belonging, as we thought, to the caravan, on their way back from Thibet, where they had been to worship the lama at Lhassa. As they were short of meat, they had gone off in search of game, and had killed a yak, which they then cut up, carrying off the best pieces for their comrades—and it was these quarters of meat which we had seen swaying as they hung from their saddle-bows. They had asked Dedeken where we were going, and he had prudently replied that our intention was to go hunting eastward, in the direction of Se-tchouen. These various meetings supplied food for thought, and gave us the hope that we had hit, if not our ideal road to the south, at all events a good one, for here were pilgrims who had followed it on camels—camels, too, which were still capable of trotting. Farther on there must be inhabitants, for these hunters told Dedeken that within half a day's march lived some Kalmucks.

These uplands form a glorious picture, but at the bottom of the pass, on the right, Timour points out to us three stones supporting a pole which is planted on the spot where lies the

body of one who, when out hunting, had died on the road. A barely perceptible path to the lowly tomb has been made by the feet of the few Mussulmans who go there to pray for one of their comrades.

From the eastward direction which Abdullah-Ousta makes us follow, it is evident that he means to take us to Tchong-iar, and thence to Tsaïdame. To-morrow we will modify our line of route.

We camp on a sort of terrace in the midst of some scrub and brushwood, and the nights being dark, and our camels not having arrived, we set fire to a thicket, and the flames bursting forth show our whereabouts as a lighthouse does the harbor. Abdullah and our Chinaman, the last to arrive, told us that they had counted twenty-one camels carrying chests protected by skins. They recognized these camels as belonging to the Kalmuck race; and they had evidently, too, come a considerable distance, for they were lean, and their harness much worn, while the covering of their loads bore signs of bad weather. Their feet, however, were neither cracked nor barked excessively, so it was plain that the road had not been a stony one. The only rider in the caravan was a veiled man, a lama with a gray mustache, who deigned to speak to them from the back of his camel, though unwilling to give them any information. He assured them that he was coming back from the Tsaïdame, from a place called Timourlik, and was on his way to Abdullah. He would not acknowledge that he was from Thibet, but asked them this question point-blank: "Are you in the service of the Russians?"

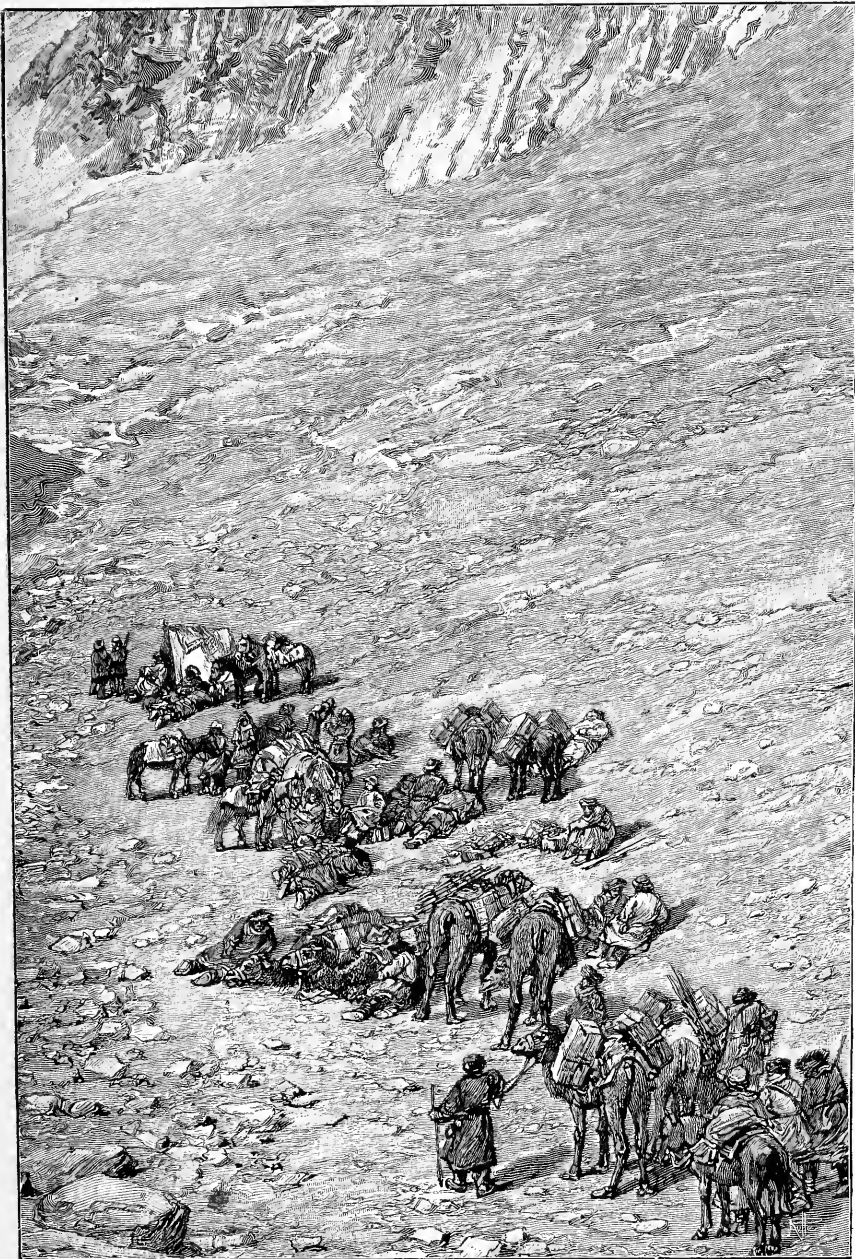
"No," they answered.

"We know that some Russians are anxious to penetrate as far as Lhassa, but they have not received permission to do so. If you are these Russians, don't forget that."

"We are in the service of some Frenchmen who have not the least desire to enter Thibet."

"What have they come here to do?"

"Hunt."



DEFILE OF THE OUZOUN-TCHOR.

At this reply the lama lowered his veil and said not another word. His servants gave out that he was "a living Buddha."

We summoned the hunters of Lob and Tcharkalik, and asked whether they know the road which this caravan has followed. After much pressure, we wrung an avowal from old Abdullah-Ousta. "Twenty-five years ago," he said, "I heard that some Kalmucks had returned from Thibet by a more direct and easier road than that from the Tsaidame. That's all I know."

Thereupon the old hunter asked permission for himself and his men to leave us. "The cold," he says, "is becoming more and more unendurable daily, our homes are farther off, and provisions diminishing." I promised an answer next morning, but this very night Rachmed informed him that we would let them go as soon as we had recovered the track of the caravan, and that they should be richly rewarded, for we were very well satisfied with them. We thus secured their assistance in hitting upon the right track.

They replied that they were happy to have met us, and their old chief swore that all would serve us faithfully to their last breath. Up to a late hour they kept up a whispered conversation round their fires. In spite of all their loud protestations I knew they would desert us at the very first opportunity, but we could very well do without them.

December 4.—A white-letter day in our travels. What a marvelous coincidence! Just at the decisive moment, just at the spot where the road separates, we providentially meet some pilgrims on their way back from Lhassa. It is too fortunate! and we must make the best of so valuable a piece of information. To-morrow we will again track the two yak hunters, and see where their traces lead.

December 5.—We set out in a southeasterly direction, leaving the Tsaidame on our left. Toward the east the vast plain, wrapped in what looks like smoke, attracts our attention. At first we imagine there must be an encampment there, but this

vapor unfolds in spirals just as the smoke does from the engine of a train, and we conclude that a herd of wild beasts is galloping over the soft ground. We are in a kind of dusty plain; after walking for five hours we enter a river bed where a torrent has brought down some roots and branches, which we carefully collect. They will serve to melt the ice which we have brought with us, for since the 20th of November we have had no water and have no idea when we shall get any; we are short, too, of grass.

December 6.—We set out toward the southwest, eager to arrive at the foot of the hills toward which lead the tracks of the pilgrim hunters, and we ask Abdullah-Ousta if he knows the next encampment. He says that he knows it by hearsay, and that it is good, calling it Bag-Tokai, which means the “garden of brushwood.”

When we approach Bag-Tokai, we find that the name of “garden” is not too grand a one. We are near a fresh-water river, as we gather from some bits of ice that sparkle in the dry bed of one of its affluents. The stream, on reaching the low grounds of the plain, has left behind it some large pools, frozen of course, and formed an endless number of arms; at the edge of the channel we can see the water running. The Kalmucks have camped here, and we soon see the prints of their camels on the ridges which they have scaled so as to avoid the ice on the river, while in the brushwood, which here forms a thick plantation, we easily recognize the spot where they lit their fires. Besides these very recent traces, there are others much older, which Abdullah-Ousta says are those of the Khan of the Kalmucks, who went to Lhasa by this road before the frost had set in, for the feet of the laden camels had sunk deeply into the soft ground, and then the frost preserved intact the traces of the first passage of the caravan.

At night we hold a council of war, questioning our hunters and our friends, and insisting that they undoubtedly knew the place already. Old Abdullah denies that he has ever set foot

at Bag-Tokai ; but, driven to extremities, and as the result, perhaps, of a talk with Timour, he tells us that the latter can give us some information, since he knows much more about it. The old hunter is unwilling to unsay his words, for fear he should be punished for his untruthfulness, though he owns to it, and, to pacify us, has charged Timour to tell us about the place. So the latter begins : “ Parpa can tell you, as well as I can, that we are now on the road to the pass of Amban-Achkan, for he has been here with two Europeans.* I believe that there is, beyond that pass, a road into Thibet. This is how I discovered it just eleven years ago exactly.” (Rachmed pours Timour out a cup of tea, and hands him a lump of sugar.) “ It was the year that Badoulet (Yakoob-Beg) was poisoned by those cursed Chinamen. I was hereabouts with some bold companions, on our way to Bogalik to seek for gold, when we came across a caravan returning from Lhassa, consisting of Kalmucks who were accompanying the mother of the present khan. They had camels and yaks. After following their road back as far as Amban-Achkan Davane, we saw with our own eyes that their tracks led southward. That is how we found out this route which the Kalmucks keep secret, for they only speak of that of the Tsaidame.”

I have no idea of reproaching Timour, for I am too pleased.

“ Does this road go to the south, once you have crossed the Amban-Achkan Davane ? Answer frankly, Timour.”

“ Yes, it does ; straight to the south. At least, the tracks disappeared in that direction.”

Decidedly we have hit the southern route so long sought for. The only thing now is not to lose it.

Our original idea was to go to Tonquin *via* Ba-Tang, crossing the Tsaidame, if we could strike the road which, we have been told, starts from Kizil-Sou. And now circumstances have dispensed with the need of our seeking the Kizil-Sou route. A caravan has gone and returned by the same road, and we will follow its track, and with due attention have every chance of recovering

* Carey and Dalgleish.

the trail, which must open out near Lhassa, toward which we will proceed as far as we can. Our beasts of burden are in good condition; we have provisions for four or five months more, plenty of ammunition, and men in good health, so that there is very little imprudence in making the venture. If circumstances only prove favorable, we have every chance of success, and why should we not go on with what we have so well begun? Such are the ideas that flit quickly through my mind, and prompt me to inform my comrades that we are going to spur due south so as to arrive straight at Namtso, at the "heavenly lake," near Lhassa. We shall certainly make some interesting discoveries, and once there, can think of Ba-Tang and Tonquin.

My companion, Prince Henry of Orleans, knew or guessed that for some time I had been thinking of Thibet. Though we had never said anything precise on the subject, I felt that we should have no trouble about agreeing, and when I now tell him my thoughts, he becomes enthusiastic, and replies, "You will see we shall succeed, I am sure of it, and let us set out at once. You can rely upon me. What a grand idea! I was certain you meant going to Thibet." Then I turned to Father Dedeken, who was coming up with his rifle over his shoulder. I had never mentioned to him the projects which I had in my mind, and he was now very surprised to hear them, for we shall not approach the direction in which he at first thought we were going, so he raised certain objections: "We have no papers. What shall we do? How are we to get out of the hands of the people of Thibet, who act under the direction of the Chinese?"

"Once there we shall see what to do," I replied. "But we are not yet in their hands."

After a moment's reflection he said, "I will go where you like, at once."

I called Rachmed, who came to our tent in which we were all three having our tea, and having knelt down, as is his wont, near the entrance, asked the news.

"We are going southward," said I. "We shall follow the

traces of the Kalmucks as long as they are distinguishable, and if we lose them through our own fault, we will each wear, for the rest of our life, a fool's cap. Don't you agree with me, and what do you think of my idea?"

"Master," he replied, "you are never happy unless you are seeking fresh roads. Though it was of China that you spoke to me before we set out, I knew it was of Thibet that you were thinking. Now, all we have to do is to keep our eyes well open, and spare our animals. We shall get out of the difficulty all right."

We next took into our confidence little Abdullah, who was by no means cheered by the news, though he does not dare to make any objection. As to the brave Toundja, also surnamed Akkan, Dedeken's Chinaman, he maliciously remarked that he was well acquainted with the cardinal points, and that we were not marching toward Ouroumtachi, nor yet toward Sinin-Fou, as we had promised him at first, but he would follow his master.

I thereupon urged our three faithful followers not to noise our conversation abroad, and to try and persuade the four Dounganes and the men of Tcharkalik that we meant to go hunting toward the south, with the firm intention, once the hunt is over, of making our way eastward, that is to say, in the direction of Bogalik, the gold district.

Before we retire for the night, Abdullah-Ousta's men come to inform us that they cannot go any further, that twice already they wanted to return, but we had prevented them from doing so. Now they really wish to leave us, for they are unacquainted with the road to the Amban-Achkan Davane. We reply that Parpa, the man who had been with Carey and Dalgleish, and Timour, the goldseeker, will serve us as guides, and that they themselves are perfectly capable of retracing their own steps. Then we promise them a handsome reward if they will consent to transport our baggage as far as the other end of the pass, while, at the same time, we guarantee them payment of a very different kind in case of their refusal. They consent accordingly to accom-

pany us so far, on my promising faithfully not to drag them on any further.

As to the Doungane camel-driver, he is far from being pleased to learn that we are not going to make for the Tsaidame, while his servant, honest Niaz, comes to our men's tent in a disconsolate mood, complaining bitterly of his master, and exclaiming: "What



AT BAG-TOKAL.

a wicked, wicked man! For the last fortnight he has been just bearable, but since yesterday evening his bad temper has again shown itself. He is constantly swearing at me, covering me with insults, while he reproaches me for the bread I eat. This morning he loaded his own ass, but so badly that to-night the animal has a sore on its back, and then he goes on at me for it, as if I had not enough to do in looking after his camels! And all because we are going southward, as if it were my fault." And Niaz sighed. "Ah!" he went on; "he says that he wants to be off, to return to Tcharkalik and abandon his camels. Allah grant

that he may! I will gladly stop with you, and I won't even claim the wages which he promised me, though he has never paid me more than a quarter of them."

Niaz begged Dedeken and Abdullah to go to the ill-tempered Doungane, who invited them to partake of a little dough, evidently with the intention of questioning them. Niaz followed them as they went, but very slowly, and muttering to himself, "Is it my fault that we are going south?"

Dedeken soon returned, and amused us by the account of his interview with the Doungane. He had received them with unheard-of politeness, had offered them cakes, obsequiously handed them chopsticks, and with every appearance of the keenest interest had asked after their health. Then when they had "licked the platter clean," he asked them, "Where are we going now?"

"We don't know," replied Dedeken.

"Ah! ah!" growled the Doungane in his boots. "Ah! ah! I really cannot understand your answer in the very least. How can I believe that 'great men,' men who are learned, know how to read, write, consult books, examine stars, have no idea where they are going? Ah! ah! Who could make anything out of what you say? Is it true that you do not know where we are going?"

"We know nothing about it."

"The new year is approaching. Shall we be in any decent place so as to keep it properly?"

"Doubtless," interrupted the candid Niaz, who had failed to grasp his master's idea; "we shall doubtless be at some spot, for are we not always somewhere?"

When Dedeken and Abdullah had gone, the Doungane invited our Chinaman to his table, and renewed his questions—"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Toward Europe," replied Akkan, who has no love for him. "Don't you see that we are making straight for it?"

The Doungane, unable to solve the riddle, sobbed bitterly.

“They have nonplused us completely,” he said; “all that remains for me to do is to pray to Allah to spare my life. What are they going to do southward? What astonishing ideas these Europeans have!” To give vent to his wrath, he abuses Niaz: “Idiot, cur! you don’t even know how to saddle a donkey. You don’t deserve to eat my meal. What did you put that cup here for? And what is that cord doing there? And those saddles, who put them away? . . .”

And Niaz, as soon as he can, makes his escape to our men, repeating, “I am lost. There is his old temper coming out again.”

CHAPTER VII.

A DEATH IN THE CARAVAN.

At Mula Kourghane—More Mountain Sickness—A Chinaman's Logic—Crossing the Amban-Achkan Davane—The Lake which does not Freeze—A Parting : “ Forward to the Highlands ”—The Caravan on Ice—Inquisitive Koulanes—Orongo Antelopes : their Strength and Courage—Camp de la Miséricorde—Niaz Sick Unto Death—Timour Missing—His Return—Remedy for Mountain Sickness—Rachmed Lost and Found—Naming a Volcano—Chinese Heartlessness—Death and Burial of Niaz—Another Volcano Named—A Hurricane—Keeping the New Year.

December 7.—To-day, without encountering any difficulty, we crossed the frozen pools formed by the river, which appears to descend from the southeast ; then we traversed a dusty plain as far as Balgoun Louk, where we encamped in the brush. The stage was a short one, about seven miles, and we take advantage of a fine day to make ready a koulane skin, and to repair all the objects which stand in need of mending. We have ice within reach, and as we are told that there is no brushwood further on, we prepare a palao for the last time, and several fires are lighted. In future, our only fuel will be the droppings of the yaks.

December 8.—We have come through the desert to Mula Kourghane, which is the name of a ferry over the river. Beyond this ferry the mountains open out a little ; and to the southeast is visible a group composed of two peaks connected by a ridge, hollow in the center, whence the name of Mula Kourghane, which our men translate by “ the camel's abandoned saddle.” Before the evening mist closes in the horizon, we could see to the south the depression in the chain of mountains which, as we are told, indicates the road to Amban-Achkan Davane.

From the top of the hill which I have climbed, partly for the view, partly in pursuit of some small hares which have an excellent flavor, I can see our caravan on its way. Presently it takes shelter from the northwest wind in a sort of ravine. The beasts

are unloaded, and the bales laid out in a trice, while the camels, the horses, and the donkeys go off in quest of a mouthful of grass. The sheep are sent away in the care of a watchman, for fear of the wolves.

December 9.—We encamp upon the northern slope of the pass, which we reached by an easy ascent, though much incommoded by a southwesterly wind.

Not far from our camp is a path going west, which is said to be that of the gold-seekers, and we are told that it would not take more than ten or twelve days to reach Tcherchène, and that, about half-way, there is a branch road toward Kia. This route is well known by the Khotanlis; and Timour, who has been along it before, says that it is a good one, passing up and down hills the soil of which is soft to the tread. Timour, who admits that he once spent several days beyond the pass, but without penetrating into the mountains of the south, adds: "This route is often used, as in the land of Khotan the custom is to pay the tax in gold; the Chinese confer upon the mountaineers of the extreme frontier the privilege of working the gold mines, which they know exist in the neighborhood of Bogalik, but they exact a tribute, payable in gold dust or nuggets. This is paid either once a month or once a year, and that is why the peoples of the districts of Kia and Tcherchène are in the habit of going in search of gold."

Traces of Kalmucks are clearly visible in a ravine, but they can scarcely be detected upon the frozen ground, and it is necessary to keep our eyes wide open if we are not to lose their track. We notice that in several cases their caravans have been broken up into sections, but for what reason we cannot discover.

We have plenty to shoot at to-day, there being enough game to provide sport for a whole army of sportsmen. First of all, on the slope of the mountain, there is a large herd of arkars, browsing under the watchful eye of some magnificent male animals of that species. Then there are some koulanes, with their quiet, not to say stupid look, while partridges are calling to one another

in the gorges; and hares, sitting behind stones, leap off alarmed by our dogs, or sit in their forms and let themselves be killed. They trust to the color of their fur, which confounds itself with that of the soil; or, perhaps it should rather be said, they are



ENCAMPING AT MULA KOURGHANE.

accustomed to immunity from the men who visit these parts, and their acquaintance with Europeans is made by means of powder and shot. The koulanes are wilder, and as to the arkars, they make off at once.

But if the sportsman has reasons for rejoicing, he has also cause for annoyance, as the altitude reminds him at each step that he is mortal, that it is idle to hurry, this being the exclusive privilege of the game he seeks to kill. He can only succeed by ruse, for he must glide along, stop, and take breath. The least hurry accelerates the action of his heart, and when he puts his

gun up he finds it impossible to take straight aim. We have not yet seen any wild yaks, and when we are told that three or four of these animals are quietly feeding not far from the camp, the sporting members of our party hurry off, the expedition terminating in a roar of laughter when it is found that these are tame yaks, with rings through their noses, which the Kalmucks have left behind. They had encamped upon a terrace above the spot where we are, and from the number of fires and the heaps of droppings, we conclude that the caravan we met could only have been a fraction of a large band of pilgrims.

Mountain sickness is still prevalent, and several of our men complain of it. This recrudescence of headache and ringing of the ears may be attributed to the southwest wind, which has been blowing during the day. Nothing is more fatiguing than the wind in one's face, when one has to open the mouth in climbing the hills.

Old Abdullah has killed a splendid koulane with one bullet from his little gun, and has brought back the skin and several pieces of flesh. But he is tired and has pains in his head, to relieve which he makes an incision in the middle of the forehead, just at the roots of the hair, and his companion bleeds him with the point of a knife. He does the same by his companion, and both of them declare that they are all the better for it. This is the remedy which the Lob shooting and hunting men employ against mountain sickness. A few days ago, Abdullah had a pain in the palm of the hand, and he cured this by rubbing it with the eye of a sheep mixed with fat, and by binding it up in this as a plaster during two or three days. Several of our men have had carbuncles, caused by the action of the cold upon sores made in handling the ropes, one curing himself by a plaster made out of the skin of a centipede. Portions of animals' bodies are often used in this region as remedies, and this is not astonishing, seeing that simples are scarce and that animals abound.

While on this subject, let me give an instance of what logic can effect in the narrow brain of a Chinaman. At Tcharkalik,

Akkan, the servant of Father Dedeken, fell ill on the very day that he had donned for the first time a fine cap made of fox-skin, and to measure. He had been seized with violent pains in the head, and an "inflammation of the lymphatic, subcutaneous glands of the neck" had been set up. He had not remarked that on the day he had donned this headdress, of which he was at first very proud, a severe tempest had burst over us, coming from the Lob Nor, and that he had caught cold. Starting with the assumption that his cap, which had kept him warm, had made him ill, he had concluded that the cold would do him good, and so he traveled, in the worst of weather, with nothing but a thin cap on his head. The result, as may be supposed, was that the mischief increased, and that the inflammation soon spread to the cheek and the ear. As soon as I saw what was the matter, I advised him to wrap up his head, and finding that he did not do so—the obstinacy and pride of a Chinaman being immeasurable—I told him that he would get a good flogging if he did not take proper care of himself, and handed him over to the care of Rachmed. The latter pushed the fur cap well over his ears, and applied to the swollen face a plaster composed of pieces of mutton fat fried in the pan and covered with some chopped onion, which had also been put into the pan. In five or six days the swelling went down, the Chinaman began to eat, his headache disappeared, and he soon got well despite the fatigues of the march and the cold and wind. His confidence in Rachmed was, for the future, unlimited.

December 11.—The passage of the Amban-Achkan Davane was effected without much difficulty, The ascent is not so very steep, the point at which it terminates being marked by an obo. Hares and partridges abound, but there is no sign of big game. From time to time we perceive ice in the gorges, and thin lines of salt run down the sides where before the water trickled.

Beyond the obo, the eye ranges over a vast open space shut in by mountains which are lost in the mist. The descent is easy, and the effect of a mirage causes us to see in the plain at our feet.

islands with the outline of stalactites. After some time we can distinguish fragments of ice and mirrors of salt, which have produced this illusion, and on making a bend, we see in the southwest a lake, which glitters so that one cannot tell whether its surface is ice or water. Prjevalsky named it the "lake which does not freeze." The southern slope of the pass is the more picturesque of the two, the northern one having the uniformity of the steppe, whereas here the mountain is lacerated by torrents, which have eaten out ravines, accumulated large stones, and so formed deltas and enlarged the route we are following. The chain of mountains winds along in the same direction as the valley, its ridges bristling with ragged rocks, and its sides streaked with dark furrows, the blocks of porphyry contrasting with the dark background of sandstone.

Down in the bottom, our path lies over a long stretch of land, and we forget the landscape for a moment in our search for traces of the Mongolians, which the wind and the storms have effaced. None the less, we lift up our eyes to look at the strange shapes of the mountain where it trends down to the plain, the crumbling sandstone shaping out into figures of animated beings and monsters of Chinese art, with gaping, grinning mouths.

We pitch our camp on the banks of a river, and right on the track of the Mongolians, which we had rediscovered on the plain of salt. There is very little grass, and a complete absence of brushwood, with wind blowing off the lake, so we should be better off elsewhere. But the traces of the Mongolians are very distinct, extending straight to the south, and this is all we think of.

Before emerging from the pass, Timour points out to us the path of Bogalik, leading straight eastward.

When we turn in, there is a bitterly cold wind from the west.

December 12.—The wind is still blowing, the minimum temperature of the night having been 18° below zero. Our people appear to be rather sleepy and not in the best of spirits. The men are crouching and bent back upon themselves, wrapped up

in their sheepskins and with their backs set against the wind. I have to shake them up a bit or they would fall into a state of lethargy, and their attitudes tell me that they have had pretty well enough of it. The Lobis alone are at all active, and they are getting ready to return. The others are pensive, and are evidently saying to one another that this is bad sort of weather for penetrating without guides into the mountains. The Doungane, while mumbling prayers, calculates that he would be much better off at Kourla, and curses in his breast the Europeans who act like madmen and not with the good sense of the Chinese. Little Abdullah, it is clear, would much prefer being seated before the fire at Djarkent amusing himself by cracking pistachio nuts on a stone. Parpa has a gloomy look, and Timour and Isa, our two best men, are thoughtful and undecided. Rachmed, old Imatch, and the obstinate Akkan, are the only ones who wear their everyday look. The others avoid looking me straight in the face; and even the Lobis are ill at ease, for they are afraid that we shall not keep our promise and let them go after we have got over the pass.

It is necessary to allot work to each man, for we are going to halt to-day, and so one is transformed into a tailor, another into a saddler, a third into a shoemaker, and soon the Lobis are told that they will be free to start to-morrow. They will be paid this evening, but they must go up into the mountain and fetch us a last supply of brushwood.

We make every possible effort to retain a friend of Timour—Tokta, the musician—but his younger brother entreats him, with tears in his eyes, not to accompany us, and Tokta is not at a loss for good reasons: “My father is very old, he is quite infirm, he is alone in the house with the youngest of his children. One of his sons came to help them, but the community drove him away because he came from Tcherchène, where there is an epidemic of smallpox. If I am not back soon, it may happen that our family will be expelled and our land seized. My presence is indispensable.”

We are sorry not to be able to keep Tokta, for he is a courageous fellow, of exceptional vigor, indefatigable, and always cheerful. I had known for the last two days that his mind was made up, for, before beginning to climb the pass, he had hidden away his musical instrument, carefully wrapped up, so as to pick it up on his return. If he had had the slightest intention of accompanying us he would not have parted from his inseparable Allah-Rabôb. To the best of our ability we recompensed this faithful follower, and in the evening paid the Lobi loaders and donkey-drivers, and purchased from them what little leather they possessed. We made them presents, and handed them letters for Europe and packages containing the collections we had made since leaving Tcharkalik. They promised to hand over these to the Aksakal of the Russian subjects at Kourla, who would send them on to the Consul at Kuldja. Let me add that these worthy fellows kept their word, and that not a single article intrusted to them was lost, the whole arriving safely in Paris.

Timour and Isa, having been questioned apart, promised to accompany us. Besides, they had given Parpa their word to follow him wherever he goes. Parpa also came to speak to us about his father. "He, like the father of Tokta, is incapable of looking after things alone, of seeing to our horses and donkeys. One of my brothers is with him, but he is an incorrigible gambler. I am afraid my father will run short of the necessaries of life before I return, as I can see that we have a long journey before us." He asks us for a rather large sum, which we advance without making any comment, and he says that he shall hand the money to Abdullah-Ousta.

So the day passes, and at night-time there is a good deal of stir in the camp, the men holding confabulations with one another in an undertone. Rachmed comes to me in the tent and says he believes they intend making off in a body. I tell him not to go to sleep, but to watch Parpa and to call me if necessary. I shall sleep with one eye open.

December 13.—At daybreak I was astir, and learned that

Rachmed had had to threaten Parpa. He had reminded him of the promise he made to accompany us until we allowed him to return. Rachmed told him that his services were more necessary than ever, that he was well paid, and that he could see by the presents made to the Lobis that it was to his interest to serve us well. Then Rachmed added that if he made off we should pursue him, and that we were quick enough on our legs to overtake him and shoot him. Rachmed repeated that if he served us well he would be handsomely rewarded, and Parpa had, upon reflection, decided to follow us.

I avoided intervening in the matter, and treated the men as if nothing had happened, distributing a few articles of confectionery and other objects, which they gave to the Lobis for their families. Small pocket mirrors were much appreciated, but these were only given to men who had specially distinguished themselves.

We commence loading rather late, although it is our intention to make a long march, it being important to isolate the men who are in an undecided state. The Lobis and the men of Tcharkalik who are about to return lend a helping hand to their comrades, strapping up the loads, bringing together the camels, and saddling the horses—doing all they can, in short, before leaving them.

When all is ready they sit round in a circle, the Lobis pouring out the tea themselves and handing round the cups; then they get up, and our men load Abdullah-Ousta with small packages, and charge him to give them to father, brother, wife, friend, or master, as the case is. Then they stand motionless, old Abdullah recites a prayer, and they all exclaim, "Allah is great!" lifting their hands to their beards as they do so. They kiss one another with tears in their eyes, and Timour commits his wife to the care of Tokta, who is to bid her "have patience, not leave the house, or go and live with someone else. I will come back with money for her"—a discourse which might have been addressed to Penelope.

"Allah is great!" exclaims Timour once more, and the others repeat it in chorus with him. They go down on their knees to

us, and we shake them by the hand and thank them, begging them to retain kindly recollections of us. They wish us a safe journey, and commit us to the care of Allah. They are all of them more or less affected, and if the tears in the eyes of some of them do not trickle down, it is only because the cold congeals them. And so we part, our cry being, "Forward to the highlands!" But we none the less advance slowly, and Prince Henry, Father Dedeken, and myself bring up the rear to guard against possible desertions.

First of all we walk on to the river, making for the hole which has been left in the ice. As we water our animals one after the other, which takes a good deal of time, we can see our companions disappearing through the pass, which presents, toward the east, a striking phenomenon with its succession of ridges.

At a little distance from the well which we have managed to improvise with our hatchets, we see upon the banks the skeletons of camels which have been gnawed bare by the wolves. A little further on we find emerging from the ice the almost intact humps of camels, and upon closer examination we see that part of a caravan has been drowned here, including the camel-driver, one of whose arms is raised as if in an attitude of menace or of entreaty. Beasts and men had been drowned one after the other, and this must have happened only a short time ago, when the ice was not thick enough to bear them. We have nothing of the kind to fear, for the minimum of the night was 18° below zero. Let me add that the Kalmucks whom we met averted their gaze from the victims and passed over to the right.

To-day begins the business of searching for the track, and how long it will last we cannot possibly tell. For my own part, I am afraid that, as we get further on, we shall encounter real difficulties, for the wind beyond the Altyn-Tagh often blows with great violence, and now that the Colombo Mountains (as Prjevalsky named them) have been crossed it is easy to see, by the aspect of the soil, and by the dust which obscures the horizon, that the wind will do all it can to make us lose our way,

the traces of the road being already effaced where it is not sheltered.

This first stage is very monotonous, as there is nothing but the salt and the desert, with a view of plains of tiskène. One or two koulanes watch us from a distance; the east wind is slight,



CAMELS ON THE ICE.

but piercingly cold, and our men tramp along with their heads down, regretting, no doubt, the past, and most certainly looking forward with dread to the future. Then, as we quit the plain, there appears a plateau, at the base of which are enormous waves of sand moving eastward. Turning round, the chain of mountains beyond the glittering lake is barely visible, and it is with difficulty that we can make out the peaks enveloped in mist. Advancing southward, we are soon deep down in the bottoms, following the dried-up bed of a river, going first up and then down, with the horizon bounded by the ridges of gray hills. Like a flock of birds lost upon the waters, our band marches along

without energy and without spirit. Is it because we no longer see the Colombo Mountains behind us? because, owing to lack of light, the heavens weigh down upon us, crushing us, and isolating us from the rest of nature? or is it the result of the separation effected this morning?

We encamp in a basin, as much as possible protected from the wind, and the men go off in different directions in search of roots and argol. The latter is very rare, but the tiskène, the kampir, and the ibachane suffice for us. These are the tiny plants which creep along these inhospitable heights, and which incessant winds twist about and flatten.

It was quite dark when the caravan had reassembled. Rachmed had been told off to form the rear-guard when Prince Henry and myself took the lead to show the way. The traces were easy to find in places, but in others they vanished altogether, so this first evening was not a cheerful one, and our men, tired out by a stage which I had intentionally made a long one, went to sleep without exchanging a word. The night was very bright, the wind having dropped and the cold being very severe.

December 13.—The air is very pure to-day, and we can distinctly see the Colombo chain. The Amban-Achkan Davane pass is just to the north of our camp, while to the southeast the Prjevalsky chain rears its snowy summits; and almost due south two peaks of ice some distance apart are connected, as it were, by a snowy dais of dazzling whiteness. Mountains, great and small, surround us.

The air is calm, and we have no difficulty in loading the beasts, but no sooner are we on the march than the wind begins to blow from the west, and the atmosphere at once gets thick with dust, preventing us from seeing any distance and from thinking about anything else. We are compelled to march along, keeping our eyes on the ground, right and left, for any traces of the Kalmucks, our road being on an undulating plateau, rising in a westerly direction, where it is bounded by

a chain of sandhills. The traces lead off in several directions, near a valley, within which is a frozen pool, and our caravan goes southward, halting in a depression of the soil, near a small stretch of ice just to the south of the pass of Amban-Achkan Davane.

Prince Henry and Father Dedeken have killed a fine yak, which they had to follow a long way, although he had several bullets in him. In future we shall have to shoot as little as possible, for there is nothing more fatiguing than the pursuit of game at such an altitude (14,700 feet). We are at the outset of our exploring, and no one is entitled to be intent upon anything but the discovery of the route; he has no right to tire his horse, to display his energy, to exhaust his strength, or to take a step which does not contribute toward the success of the enterprise. This is a point upon which we all agree, while discussing the events of the day, and my companions have no difficulty in persuading themselves that the art of traveling may be defined, very paradoxically, yet very accurately, as “the art of resting.”

December 14.—The night has been a bright one, with no wind and a minimum of 13° below zero. This morning the sky was overcast, and we tacked about so as to avoid the ravines and encamp on the other side of the plateau, at the source of a river which is now frozen over. We pitched our tent where the Kalmuck pilgrims had theirs, and lighted our fires with the argol of their yaks.

The river runs down between high banks westward, and the edges of the plateau we are leaving behind us are eaten away by the waters which invade it when the snow melts. All around us is grass of the late autumn, which seems green and delicious, and which our animals munch with evident satisfaction; while



NIJAZ.

the salt testifies to the presence of water during the rainy season. On the summit of the hills we can distinguish the forms of wild animals, but at too great a distance to tell what they are.

We again observe that the pilgrims have left traces indicating that they do not travel in a single caravan and only meet at certain fixed points, as was the case near the pass of Amban-Achkan and again to-day near this river. This custom may be explained in more ways than one. Some say—and this may be the case—that the pilgrims, not wishing to disclose the secret of this route, go intentionally in sections, so as not to trace any durable path which could serve as a guide to others. Others assert that they proceed by aouls, or tribes, because they have good guides and are not afraid of losing their way, and because by traveling in separate groups they can feed their animals better.

From our camp, we can see the path which the pilgrims followed, winding up along the hill which shuts off the route to the south, and curiosity impels me to climb this path and find out what awaits us to-morrow. Once on the top of the ridge, I see again the two large white peaks, which are reached by a green surface, dotted here and there with sheets of ice on the bottoms, with hills all around. Judging by what we have seen up to the present, this is a spectacle we shall often have before us. The Mongolian route appears to take a southwesterly course so as to strike, to the right of the white ridges, an easier way.

Below me, well out of shot, is a herd of koulanes, and they do not see me until I am within 650 yards of them, when three males look in my direction. As I stand still, they become reassured and go on feeding. In this way, I get to within 400 yards of them, but then the alarm is given, and the troop forms up, with the males at its head. But instead of bolting off, they advance toward me, and as I retreat they come on in a sort of semicircle, actuated, apparently, by curiosity. Can it be that they have a vague recollection of having once lived on good

terms with man, and that they would like to renew the acquaintance? However this may be, a shot from my gun cuts their reflections short, and they make off at a bound, leaving behind them one of the number which I have wounded, and which cannot keep up with the main body.

On returning to camp I learn that Niaz is ill, and that nearly all the men are complaining of headache. Above our heads are a number of crows which have followed in the track of the pilgrims and fed upon their dead, while we also notice some rats of the species peculiar to the steppe. Larks, and other birds, including the cha-tié, fly through the air at a great pace, as if anxious to get out of such an inhospitable region.

December 15.—We cross the chain of hills and make our way toward the peaks, doing our best to find easy going, and to avoid the marshes and ravines. As soon as possible, we steered a southerly course, and only discovered that we were on a sort of terrace, an immense table-land above the plains, when we got to the edge of it. In descending the slope, we were surprised to see a regular flock of orongos which were browsing in the bed of a torrent, silvered in places by layers of salt that seemed like pools of water or blocks of ice. Having no skins of these antelopes, which we had never seen before, we lost no time in killing some. It would be impossible to conceive anything more graceful than the way in which these animals carry themselves, combining at once so much elegance and strength. We admire their large black muzzles, their broad dark chests, their gray coats, and the fury with which the males attack one another.

The females get their young together and drive them up toward the hills, galloping after them at a great pace. The males, now on the flanks of the herd, now in the rear, and now going back to fetch one of the females which has lagged behind, bound along, head downward, with an agility which we envy all the more because we cannot go more than twenty yards without sitting down to rest. These antelopes display a certain amount of courage, for a male which Prince Henry had shot charged him,

and had to be dispatched with a revolver, while one which I had wounded tried to rip open the horse which Rachmed, who went close up to it, was riding. Father Dedeken also killed one, and the result of all this is that we are delayed in our march, that we cannot reach the frozen pool, and that we have to go to bed without drinking. We give this plain the name of the antelopes (Orongos) we have killed there, and it is to be hoped that any future explorer who may fail to see any there will not tax us with exaggeration.

December 16.—The whole of our troop was astir early, and lost no time in reaching the frozen river which supplies the snowy chain trending eastward. We shelter ourselves from the north-west wind at the foot of a terrace, and the day is spent in eating and drinking. A few delicacies are distributed by way of dessert, and, with the sun warming us a little in the afternoon, good-humor is restored. All the sick persons, excepting Niaz, are improving. Parpa, who was constantly groaning, looks better in the eye, and Rachmed assures me that there was not really much the matter with him. I hear my companions making all sorts of plans, and I am myself inclined to regard them as feasible. In the meanwhile it is decided not to start in future without two or three days' supply of ice and a corresponding quantity of argol. The reader can have no idea how difficult it is to induce men who are tired out to take the most primitive precautions against cold and thirst. We are encamped at an altitude of 15,400 feet and, looking back toward the north, we can again see the Colombo Mountains, and it seems as if we were separated from them by a smooth plain cut in two by a long ridge of cliffs.

December 17.—Winding round the chain of hills which protected us, and leaving on our left, to the east, the snow-capped mountains, we arrived by a small pass at the camping-ground of the Kalmucks, on the brink of a dried-up torrent, the carcasses of five camels indicating the route to follow. The stage was a fatiguing one, owing to a blinding nor'wester. We followed an easy path, winding along the spurs of hills, many of which ter-

minate at their culminating point in protuberances like warts on the human body.

Before making for the southwest we saw behind us, from the top of the pass, the hill of which we had first of all made the circuit. Its summit is jagged and broken up into battlements of Asiatic aspect, while it bristles with sharp points in the shape of arrows and Gothic steeples.

December 18.—All night the abominable northwest wind has been howling, with a minimum of 9° below zero. The men are all ill, with the usual symptoms. When we prepared for a start the thermometer was at 2° below zero, with a good deal of wind, and it was no pleasant business for the men to handle the ropes. We were still in a desert of sand and stones, with a few tufts of rank grass and salt, but after scrambling over a pass about 16,000 feet above the sea-level, with our camels, we descended into the valley through a gorge, where we get welcome protection from the wind. We believe that we are now on the other side of the Prjevalsky chain, and, according to Timour, this chain extends as far as Bogalik.

We halt in the midst of the sand, in a hollow where we can set the wind at defiance. All around us the ground undulates very much, and the horizon is so far familiar that we can make out the same peaks which have hitherto served as landmarks, though we believe that we are in another region. Presently the wind goes down and the sky becomes overcast. At nightfall, and with the temperature at only 3° above zero, we find it so pleasant that we call this place the Camp de la Miséricorde.

December 19.—To give further justification for this name, we were informed on waking this morning that nearly all our men were indisposed, especially Imatch, the bandy-legged. They attributed this indisposition to a hot wind which, they said, was blowing during the night. As to Niaz, he is so weak that he cannot stand up, and the men say that this hot wind must have been very bad for him. Yet the thermometer stood as low as 18° below zero during the night. Soon there is a fall of snow,

but only for a few minutes; then the sun comes out, and it would be just the weather for starting on the march, only we have no horses. They had been picketed out before daybreak, so as to enable them to graze upon the scanty herbage, but the poor animals, not having drunk for several days, went off in quest of a spring. As the reader may imagine, they had some distance to travel, and Timour, who had gone off in search of them, had not returned. Night set in, and still there were no signs of him. Rachmed has been scouring the country, and has found traces of Kalmucks going directly south through the sands. As soon as it gets dark a lantern is hoisted at the top of a pole and placed on a hillock, so that it may serve as a lighthouse for Timour. At intervals we fire off a gun or a revolver. All our men are haunted by the idea that he is calling out, and at intervals one of them gets up and fires off his gun. So it goes on all night.

December 20.—At 5 A. M. there is a fall of about half an inch of snow, as fine as sleet, and the temperature rises a little. The sky remains overcast, and then a southwest wind gets up and the sun comes out. The minimum for the night has been 25° below zero, and we feel very sorry for poor Timour, who has not yet returned. Parpa starts off on a camel, carrying a pelisse, some food, and water in the shape of ice, and he goes to the left, while Rachmed sets out to the right on foot, carrying a cudgel, a revolver, and some bread. He will go as far as he can, for not only is Timour his friend but he realizes what a disaster the loss of the horses would be. We watch him start at the rapid pace which his familiarity with life on lofty mountains alone renders possible, and await the result with no little anxiety.

About noon, Timour arrived on Parpa's camel, the latter following at a slower rate with the horses. We welcomed him back with delight, and he had tears in his eyes when he saw us again, being blue with cold and very tired. After he had consumed a good deal of tea and sugar, he related his adventures as follows:

“I found the track of the horses two hours after leaving the camp. First of all, they had gone somewhat at haphazard, wandering from right to left, and then one of them assumed the lead, taking the others a great distance. It was not till close upon the feeding-time for animals in winter (about three o'clock) that I caught sight of the first horse. I got on his back in order to reach the others, but finding that he was tired, I got off and led him. I gradually caught them all, beginning with those which were the most tired, and as I caught them I hobbled them with their halters. Then when I had secured them all—for I counted them—I got them together, and night set in. I marched on, driving them in front of me, but, despite the brilliancy of the stars, I could not find the camp. I called out, but I could get no answer, so I tied the horses together and slept leaning against one of them which had laid down. This warmed me a little, but it was bitterly cold, and I have a pain in my head.”

Everyone was overjoyed, for Timour is very much liked, no work being too much for him, while he is one of the best men we have to follow out a track. When traveling, one soon gets attached to men of this type, and soon learns in the same way to despise the selfish and the lazy.

The first thing was to give the horses water. First of all, we tried to obtain some by cutting into the ice of a small lake near our camp, but it was only a waste of time; for though we hacked and hewed away, there was no sign of any water. Then we piled up roots and argol, to which we set fire, passing the whole day in melting the ice, so as to distribute small quantities of water to the poor animals. This operation lasted all the afternoon and part of the evening, so, in future, whenever we get into camp, we will cut blocks of ice out of the surface of the lakes and let the horses crunch them.

In the afternoon we saw larks and other birds flying eastward, and rats emerging from the ground, attracted by the sunlight. In going to look for Rachmed—as it is he that is lost now—I climbed to the summit of a sandhill, the smooth base of which is scored

by rugged lines, forming one of a series of hillocks which remind me of barkhanes,* which have been brought to a standstill. In the first place, plants with an infinite growth of roots have enveloped them as it were in a web, then tufts of grass have fixed them in their place. The snow, as it melts, has acted like masonry, and the wind has ceased to have any hold except upon the very light grains which are sprinkled on the surface.

The snow has streaked with white this corner of the earth's surface, and the sun has, if I may so express myself, made the landscape look old-fashioned, like that which you see on a box of sweetmeats. The colors are in juxtaposition but they do not fuse, the effect being that of the chromo-lithographer rather than of the colorist. In all directions the soil has been scored by ephemeral torrents, which have left a little ice behind them in some corner or gully. At each step one takes, it becomes clear that this is not a country in which it would be possible to live, for the solitude is too great and the cold too intense. The lungs either do not act at all, or act too much, and if one happens to uncover the mouth while walking, the bronchial tube is inflamed or irritated by the cold air. Most of our men are coughing during the night, and everything gets so dry that our toe and finger nails snap off at the least touch, while wood breaks like glass. The beard does not grow, but loses its color, the hands chap, the skin cracks, and the lips swell. None of us escape the mountain sickness, to combat which great energy is required, for it saps all one's strength; and experience has shown me that the only way to obtain normal circulation of the blood is simply to keep moving quickly about after one has well lined one's stomach.

It is difficult to do anything on an empty stomach, for you at once have cold feet and a bad headache. As soon as you have taken food you feel better, and as you believe the mischief is past, and you are weak, you are tempted to lie down and wrap yourself well up. Your feet again get cold, and the headache returns,

* Turkish name for hillocks of shifting sand.

but as soon as you sit up you feel relieved, and if you go out for a quick walk the symptoms quickly disappear.

I have tried this several times upon myself and my men, and it has always been successful. It proved so to-day in the case of Imatch, who was complaining of a horrible headache till I made him take a good cup of tea with plenty of sugar, dipping into it a bit of bread as hard as a stone, and then go out and look for the sheep. He had a difficulty in making a start, but when he came back he was feeling better. It was the same with Isa and Parpa, and I have noticed that there were always more men ill on the days that we halted. First of all I thought this must be due to the reaction following on great fatigue, but I afterward ascertained that it was because the men gave way and remained without motion, instead of facilitating the circulation of the blood by exercise.

While I am noting down this fact, the lighted lantern is once more hoisted on top of our pole, as Rachmed has not yet returned. Some of our men have been sent out to look for him, but they have returned without finding him, having been forbidden to go very far, for fear they might get lost themselves. Well as we are acquainted with Rachmed's ability, and confident as we feel that he has not lost his way, we begin to be anxious about him. He must have gone a great distance and been overtaken by the darkness. We fire guns at intervals, and utter prolonged shouts, for the cold is intense, with gusts of wind from the southwest, and the poor fellow only took a light cloak with him so as to be able to walk with comfort. At 8 P. M., the thermometer marks 20° below zero, while the minimum of the night is 28° below zero, with a wind which freezes the blood in one's veins.

It may seem singular that our people lose their way so often; but it will be neither the first nor the last time, nothing being easier even for the most prudent and experienced. It is difficult to imagine how hard it is to find one's way among these highlands where man forgets all notions of perspective, his eye wandering over immense spaces without seeing at given distances

either trees, houses, human beings, animals, or edifices the height of which is known to him. It is by the incessant and unconscious comparison of these that he has learned to form an idea of distance.

Here in the desert we, in a few weeks, have lost this sense of distance which we had gained by the experience of our lifetime. All that one sees is so alike : one hill is like another ; according to the time of day a frozen pool either sparkles in the sun or disappears, so that one does not know whether it is large or small ; a little bird, fluttering its wings upon a clod of earth, looks like a wild animal which has been lying down and is getting up ; a crow, flying away with its prey in the morning mist, seems to be a gigantic condor carrying off a lamb in its claws, while at sunset this same crow, cleaning itself on the summit of a rock, looks the size of a yak or a bear.

And so the man who has lost sight of the caravan or camp is constantly being deceived. His eyes are affected by the smoke of the argol, the cold, the wind, and by having used them too much, and he is led astray by appearances. If the light fades, or the sky becomes overcast, he is lost. Night overtakes him, a black and starless night, and then he has only one thing to do, viz., to stay where he is until either the wind clears away the clouds, or the moon gets up, or until day dawns again. Should the sky clear before dawn, he may endeavor to make for his camp by means of the polar star. Or in the morning the sun will tell him where the east is. But a man must be very bold, or have a marvelous memory for the direction followed, to trust himself merely to the cardinal points. The surest, not to say the only way, is to retrace one's steps, and should they have been effaced by a tempest, the man may be regarded as lost.

All night long I hear the groans of Niaz, who is very ill and cannot recover. He is delirious, fancying that he can see two children holding his head. He complains of intolerable pains in the brain, and has no strength to eat or drink, while his tongue is swollen, his face and lips being tumefied and blue. We can do nothing for him, as what he wants is to be at a lower altitude,

and we shall probably be obliged to mount still higher to-morrow.

December 21.—This morning, Rachmed not having returned, Dedeken on horseback and Timour on a camel went to meet him, and soon returned followed by Rachmed, who, after mounting the camel, felt the cold a good deal, and preferred to walk. He does not seem to be very much done up, and after he has eaten and drunk heartily, we hear his story. He has been a long way, describing a large semicircle around the traces of a route, and as he saw nothing he went marching on until he got surprised by night. Then, thanks to a clear sky, he came upon the track of the Mongolians, and rested for a little beside a fire of argol which he lighted. "Then," he went on to say, "I returned in the direction of the camp, and the cold was so intense that I no longer dared to stop for fear of going to sleep and never waking again. So then I warmed myself again in my own way."

"How did you manage?"

"I unrolled the strips of wool which I had round my feet and legs, and put half of them next to my chest, under my clothes; and when I stopped to rest, I removed the strips I had round my feet, and substituted for them those which had been warmed by contact with my body. So I could stop for a minute without having my feet frozen. When the cold began to get trying, I started off again, and walked nearly the whole night."

We were delighted to see him back, and after a few minutes' rest, he was at work again as usual. He even wanted to strike our tents and establish the camp further on, where there is a little grass, but, it being late, we deferred the operation till to-morrow.

It is a consolation to know that there is no one missing, for we are so isolated in this immense desert that the very worst of our men is extremely precious. Perhaps this may be because man is scarce, and his value, like that of other things, is a question of supply and demand. But it is not merely for economic reasons that we are full of anxiety when one of our men is missing. It is because we are attached to him, because he belongs to our

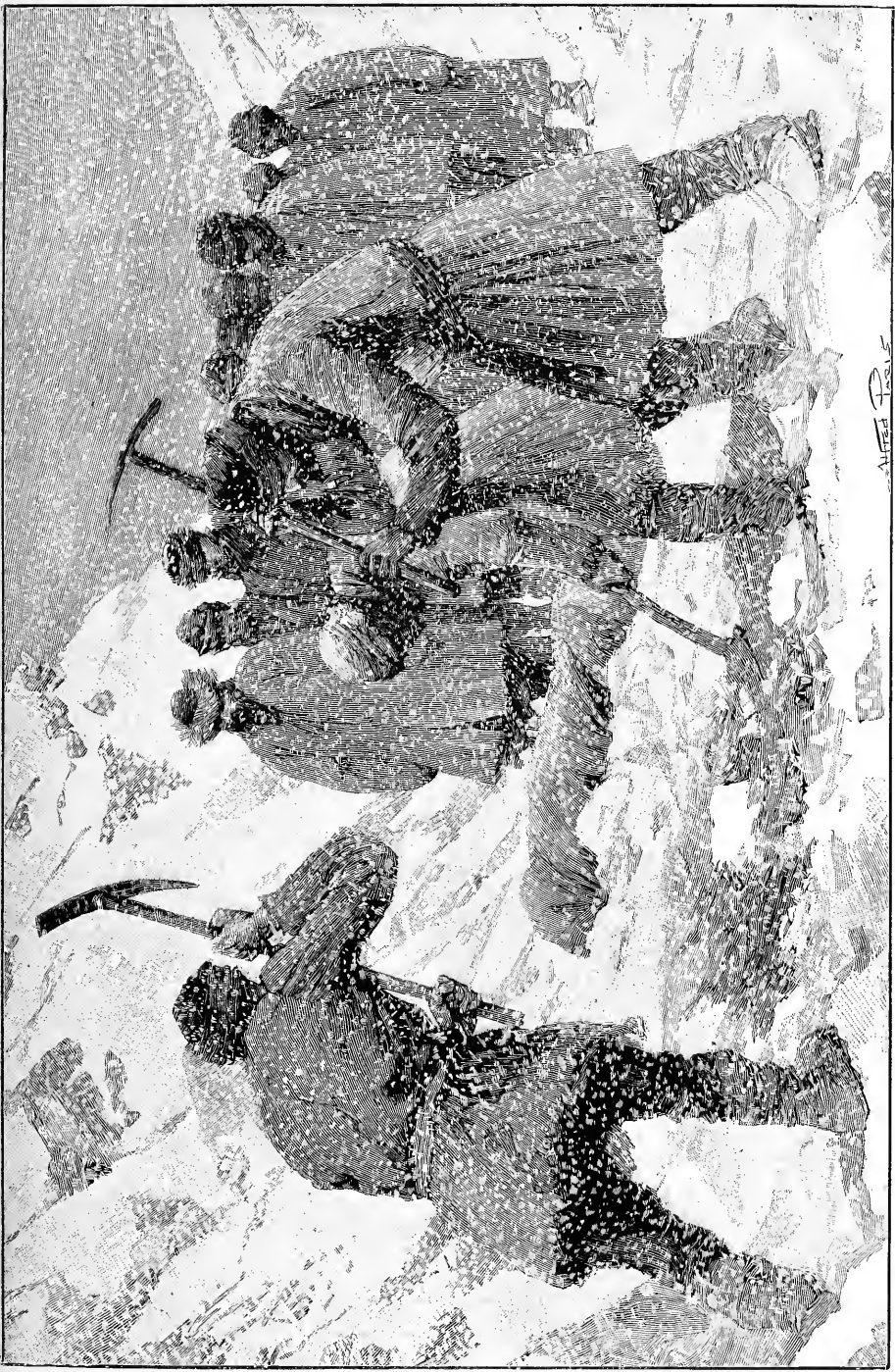
troop, to our party. When traveling, I have often watched the flocks of birds flying overhead, and going in families and troops like ourselves. I imagine that when they meet in the evening and compose themselves to sleep, each head of the family counts his flock, and if one is missing the companions of the absent one are all in distress. So it is with us.

December 22.—During the night there were gusts of wind from the southwest, with a minimum of 22° below zero. A horse has died, the first of the long series which must inevitably follow. After having passed several sandy mountain spurs, we reached a large valley extending from northwest to southeast. The sand, dotted with tufts of grass, was succeeded by denuded and stony surfaces, which appeared to have been washed bare by torrential floods.

All at once there rose to our right, westward, at a point where the chain we have before us seems to join on to that which we have left behind us, what looked like the peak of Stromboli, as I saw it for the first time when making for Sicily. Looking downward, I saw that the bed of the ravines we were going through was darkish in hue and sprinkled about with lava. We encamped in the lava plain, and as the volcano lets fall its long trailing mantle just west of us, we christen it after Reclus, the greatest of French geographers, who will be pleased to hear of our discovery. Eastward, amid a number of snowy peaks, there towers a giant more than 23,000 feet high, which we name after Ferrier, a French traveler little known to his countrymen, who, in his day, made a magnificent journey through Afghanistan. This valley is, of course, shut in by mountains, and it strikes us as being about a hundred miles long. To the north, the chain undulates in some places, and is jagged in others; while westward, we notice several cones beyond the Reclus volcano.

We have to go to bed without lighting a fire, and therefore without drinking any tea, as the roots we had picked up were too impregnated with salt to produce a flame. Niaz is dying.

A good many orongo antelopes are in sight, and wolves and



BURIAL OF NIAZ.

foxes are prowling about. They seem to live principally upon a small gray rodent with a large head, not unlike a guinea pig.

December 23.—A cold wind from the southeast, with a minimum of 22° below zero. When we started southward, where there appears to be a pass leading through the chain, the sky was clear, and the desert, up which we made our way by a very gradual ascent, bare and stony, furrowed by a few ravines, within which orongos were lying sheltered beside large slabs of salt. At our feet were cinders, lava, and a very dark surface, and the pass, wide where we entered it, gradually narrowed. But the route was a good one for the camels, being soft to the feet and dusty, with bits of schist lying about. As soon as we lost sight of the Reclus volcano there was an end to the lava.

The Doungane is in bad humor. This morning he beat his son and wanted to kill him, Rachmed being compelled to intervene. As to Niaz, he has become unconscious, and is strapped on to a camel to prevent him from falling off. When I came into the camp after all the others, I learned that when the Doungane got there he did not even make the camel kneel down, but that, unfastening the ropes, he let Niaz fall with all his weight to the ground. This heartlessness, which is characteristic of the Chinese race, is a thing to which neither we nor our Musulmans can accustom ourselves. It is just as well not to have a revolver about one when present at such scenes as this.

Our camp is pitched in the middle of the pass, at an altitude of about 17,340 feet, and it is bitterly cold. The wind has swept a little snow into the crevices, and it is carefully collected, some of it being given to the men, while the rest is put into the canoes, which will serve as drinking-troughs for our horses. They swallow the snow, which we have mixed with barley, with manifest satisfaction.

Niaz is at the last gasp, his face being hardly recognizable, and he cannot open his eyes. About six o'clock Timour comes to say that he thinks he is dead, but Rachmed finds that he is still breathing, though he cannot get through the night.

December 24.—At daybreak the tempest which had begun in the night is still raging; and Rachmed, when he comes to make his customary report, has a depressed look, with tears standing in his eyes. “It is all over,” he says, “with Niaz, but we have neither water nor wood to melt the ice, and we cannot wash the body according to the rule, nor array it in clean garments.”

“No matter; Allah will forgive you, for you are doing the best you can.”

“We will roll the body up in the white felt which I lent him to keep himself warm. But I do not think that we can dig him a grave. The mountain is too hard.”

“Inter him the best way you can.”

“I will do so myself, with the help of Timour, who is reciting the prayers, and of Parpa, who has sat at meat with Niaz’s sister.”

“Very good; we will help you too.”

The body of the faithful servant lies wrapped up in the pelisse near the tent of his ill-conditioned master. We cover it with white felt, and the body, which has been stiffened by the cold, is not heavy. The snow is falling in whirling flakes all around us, and the wind is piercingly cold, as our men take their pick-axes and try to break up the ground. This they fail to do, and then they resort to their hatchets and see what can be done with them, for the Mussulmans are not like the Buddhists, who leave their dead exposed, and they would give anything to put the body of Niaz beyond reach of the wild beasts. But the effort they make soon takes their breath away, and they have to stop and rest, the tears which run down their cheeks freezing on their beards, from which they hang like so many icicles. They are soon exhausted, for the tempest takes all their breath away, and they have only been able to make a very shallow grave—little more than one of those cavities which animals scoop out with their paws when they want to go to sleep.

Then Rachmed remembers that the dead man’s face should be turned toward the holy city of Mecca, and he is afraid whether

all this labor may not have been in vain. So he questions Parpa on the point; but Timour has thought of the Keblah, and, pointing to the southwest, he says, "It is over there, we can place him so."

Rachmed asks me if the needle of the compass tells the same story, and, upon my saying that it does, they take up the body carefully, lay it on the ground as a mother might her sleeping child, and raise the head, which is well covered up, on to a flat stone so that, as they think, Niaz may sleep better. They tuck him in as if he were in bed, and are surprised to find, as they move him, how illness has brought down his weight. Then, when he is carefully put to rest, they place the stones and the lumps of earth over him, and go on until the whole of the felt, which serves as a coffin for him, is hidden from sight. Then each of us, in order to complete the work, goes and gets a slab of schist out of the pocket of his cloak and places it over the grave, while Timour plants in the ground several straight pieces of wood at the place where the head is laid. That done, we have to say farewell to our worthy comrade. Father Dedeken first recites some prayers, and is followed by Timour. We are all of us sobbing, and Timour can scarcely finish his oration, which he winds up, in a paroxysm of grief, by affirming the greatness of Allah, the survivors taking up the refrain, "Allah is great! God is great!"

So we commit to his rest, each of us after our own customs and with sincere sorrow, sterling, honest Niaz.

Then the camels are loaded amid a violent snowstorm, and when all is ready the Doungane, who had treated his servant worse than a camel, comes and prostrates himself ceremoniously, as befitted a representative of the best bred people in Asia—I mean, of course, the Chinese.

When we start, the "bourane" becomes more intense, and it being hopeless to follow out a track in such weather, we have to guess our way until the sun, after being so long veiled behind the clouds, comes out and gives us fresh courage. We reach the summit of the pass, and deviate a little eastward to a gully,

down which we go, protected from all wind, and in which we can feel the warmth of the sun, our gloomy ideas evaporating under its cheering influence.

After coming out of the gully and crossing the chain where the body of Niaz is interred, we again find ourselves in a valley analogous to that "of the lava," but not so long or so broad, and extending eastward, with lakes, some of which are close to salt deposits that appear to be frozen over. There is a succession of dried beds of torrents, bare hills, and orongos roaming about, with snow accumulated in some of the crevices. This is the only modification to which the scenery, that varies so little in this region, is subject. The sky being cloudy, our horizon is a limited one, the traces of the pilgrims growing scarcer and scarcer, and being only visible where the camels have left their droppings. This occurs most frequently on the slopes which the camels have to climb, and we do all we can to follow them up.

December 25.—To-day there is a fall of snow. We see nothing but small lakes, salt, and sandy hills. One pass is very much like another, and when the sky is clear we can see mountain upon mountain, with a great variety of peaks, and a mixture of ice and snow. The route is strewn with the dead bodies of yaks, which had belonged to the Kalmucks, and the snow falls nearly every day, though in small quantities, the wind blowing from the southwest, while we have quite lost our way.

December 29.—The wind is to the west, and this does not mend our position, for we are going due south over a bare plain. We encamp in the midst of the lava, at the foot of a volcano to which we give the name of Ruysbrook, or Rubruquis, in compliment to the great Flemish traveler, the compatriot of Father Dedeken. To the west of the camp, Prince Henry and Timour come upon camel droppings, so the route which goes southward is again found. The marches are now very severe, for in addition to the twelve miles or so of mountain climbing we effect each day, we have to prospect the route for the following one. As soon as the tent has been pitched, sometimes while it is being

pitched, we go forward to see what lies before us, a slice of bread and a few dried apricots helping to keep one in trim. But it is tiring work, for no sooner do we get to what looks like a summit than we find there is a higher one beyond, and in this way we are often tempted on and on until night sets in, with difficulty finding our way to the camp.

After a still, starry night, with a minimum of 21° below zero, we started just as a west wind still more intolerable than yesterday's got up. We could not open our right eyes, and it was the same with the horses, whose right eyes were masked by a frozen tear. The traces of the preceding year were very apparent in the plain. The "Red Pass," as we



HEAD OF AN ORONGO ANTELOPE.

call it, because of the color of the soil, led us to the camp of the pilgrims, which had been pitched in a depression of the ground behind a volcano, of which there is a whole series just here. The wind did not stop till about 7 P. M., and we notice that this west wind generally gets up about 10 A. M.

December 30.—The night having been a quiet one, the men say they feel better, and the weather is now magnificent. To the northwest a volcano stands out very clear and distinct, capped with snow, and the sun sheds upon the scene a tinge of the picturesque to which our eye is not accustomed. For four hours we pass a good deal of lava, the largest blocks being the

furthest from the volcano, close to which there is a good deal of crumbling dust.

At first our route is a pleasant one, following a well-sheltered narrow ravine, in which it is quite warm. But this is too good to last, and we come out upon the steppe across which a bitter wind is blowing. Before the hurricane has reached its maximum of intensity I have time to distinguish in the west a vast chain of mountains with snowy peaks thirty or thirty-five miles away, as far as I can judge with my eyes so inflamed.

At times, we cannot see ten paces in front of us, and I have the camels brought close together, Prince Henry putting himself at their head and leading them, by means of the compass, in a southerly direction. Rachmed and myself endeavor to find the traces of the route, and the others shelter themselves as best they can behind the camels.

The tempest is gradually demolishing the crumbling hills and the barkhanes in the lower grounds. The laws of gravity prevail even here, and while at the foot of the hills we are assailed by what might be described as grains of corn, higher up there is a dust which forms into waves and which the tempest lifts and hurls in all directions. The scene is a fantastic one, and these mountains of sand form a singular spectacle. In the evening we come upon the pilgrims' camping-ground in a *harva*, within which we are glad to take rest.

December 31.—The tempest lasted all through the night, with a minimum of 21° below zero. We sorely need a lower altitude, for men, horses, and camels are alike in a bad way, and old Imatch has one of his feet badly swollen. All through this, the last day of the year, we marched along between sandhills, winding round the shores of a lake, our horses pretty well blinded by the dust and sand. The camels would not follow one another, for the wind blinded and stupefied them, and each one tried to shelter himself behind the other. This caused them to deviate from the straight line, and Prince Henry, with compass in hand,

leading the way, had constantly to turn round and put the caravan straight.

It is thus that we reached the camping-ground and found an *ad libitum* supply of argol and ice. This makes the encampment just tolerable, and we celebrate the New Year by slaughtering a sheep which has lost most of its fat, but which is none the less appreciated. Imatch, whose foot has swollen in an alarming way, complains of headache and ringing in the ears. Being afraid that the foot is frost-bitten, we relieve him a little with a plaster made of mutton fat, and, having put his foot into the smoking paunch of the sheep, he at once feels relieved.

Isa prepares a dish which is not at all inviting in appearance, but tastes better than it looks: it is made out of the sheep's entrails. Then we make an immense "tchouzma," this consisting of flour mixed with mutton fat, which is boiled in a small quantity of water, a little powdered sugar being then added. After great difficulty we get a little tea, for the wind is so violent that it takes hours to melt the ice and boil the water, just as the meat cannot be thoroughly cooked for the same reason. Then after expressing our best wishes for a "happy new year" to our relatives and friends at home, and securing the pegs of our tent, which the wind assails with unabated fury, we turn in as quickly as possible, Prince Henry trying to put the best face on things by observing that in such weather as this one would not be better off at sea.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WILDERNESS OF MOUNTAINS.

New Year's Greetings—The Ruysbrook Volcano—Abdullah Astray—Recovering the Track of the Pilgrims—Making for the Tengri Nor—Crossing the Lake of Cones on the Ice—"Lake Montcalm"—A Valley of Dry Bones—The "Dupleix Mountains"—Human Handiwork—Probable Source of the Yang-Tse-Kiang—Fossils at a Height of 19,000 Feet—Traces of Human Beings—48° Below Zero—Celebrating the Chinese New Year—"Crows with a Metallic Croak"—Mountains Everywhere—Running Water.



THE PRINCE IN HIS TRAVELING OUTFIT.

January 1, 1890.—After having exchanged greetings, we are delighted to find that the hurricane from the west has subsided to a wind which we should have thought intolerable four or five days ago, but which we now regard as little more than an ordinary breeze. The sky is comparatively clear, and the year opens auspiciously. We can make out where we are, and to N.N.W. the Ruysbrook volcano stands out so distinctly that one might imagine it had got closer to us. Snowy peaks, visible in all directions, show that we have got out of the desert. As we could not detect any traces of the pilgrims, we steered due south.

We emerged from the sandy valley to encamp on the hills, not far from the ice and sheltered from the west wind. The soil is covered with lava, and is of a very dark hue, the presence of all this lava being accounted for by the proximity of several cones of volcanoes. As soon as we arrived we broke up into small

parties to search for the traces of the pilgrims' route, but found none. At nightfall Abdullah was missing.

January 2.—Abdullah did not return all night, to our great disquietude, and this morning Rachmed and Timour went in search of him. Rachmed brought back his horse, without its saddle or piece of felt, and soon after Abdullah himself followed in a pitiable state. He had got astray in the storm, his horse had dropped out of sheer weakness, and, after having made a vain attempt to return, he had unsaddled the latter and taken its piece of felt to cover himself with. Having plenty of argol handy, he had lighted a fire with the butt end of his whip, and would have passed the night in comparative comfort had he not been so terribly hungry. But he soon made up for lost time.

After the comparative lull during the night and morning, the west wind got up again about nine o'clock, but, fortunately, the soil where we are is not very sandy. So we do not suffer so much from the dust, though in the valley below it blows in such clouds that there is nothing else to be seen.

When I go down to the banks of the stream to see if I cannot discover some traces of a route, I come upon the tracks of a wolf, and soon after I see the wolf himself in pursuit of a herd of antelopes. He has not much chance of overtaking them and, when he stops short, a bullet from my rifle rudely breaks in upon his reflections.

There is a good deal of animal life about, larks, black eagles, and falcons hovering in the air, and I notice that there are a great many animals of the rat species which have their holes in the slopes. They are a light gray in color, with large heads, powerful jaws, long bodies, and short legs. They seem to be fat and well-living, and I am almost tempted to envy them their warm holes in this bitter weather.

At nightfall Rachmed came in from the south, without having discovered the least trace of the passage of the pilgrims. Father Dedeken has been equally unsuccessful, and so, too, has Prince Henry, who came in dead tired, carrying on his back the heads

of two orongos which he had killed. Timour was still absent, and it was not for a long time, and after we had been shouting for him in all directions, that he made his appearance, with icicles hanging from his beard, and so done up that he could hardly stand. He had a difficulty in breathing and in getting out his words, but his face was radiant, for he had come upon plenty of traces, in proof of which he proudly produced some camel droppings from his pocket.

This piece of news puts all our troop in good-humor, especially as the droppings are so similar to those we have seen before that they clearly belong to the same camels.

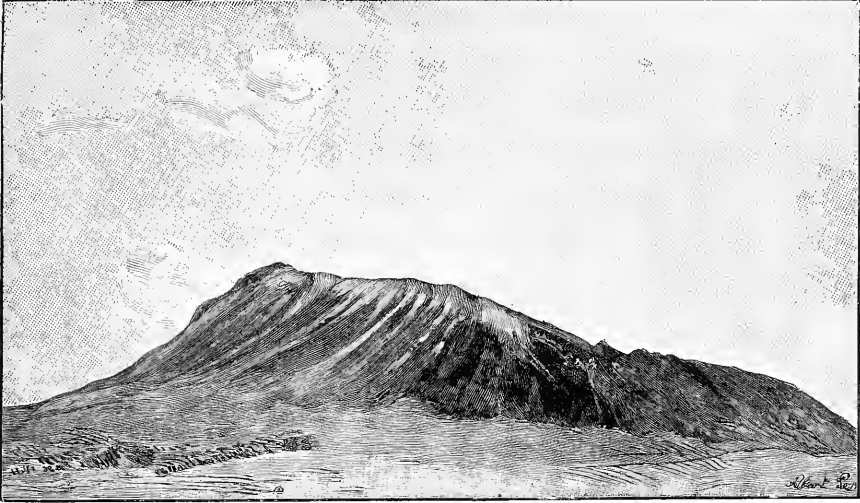
January 3.—We make rather to the east, so as to strike the pilgrims' route. Enormous yaks stand to watch us pass, and but for the disobedience of a dog, we might have killed one of these mountains of flesh. A camel which had seemed to be quite well died suddenly as we were climbing one of the many hills up and down which we went all day in this region so full of ravines. In the evening we find a shelter in the bottom of a small amphitheater of hills, amid the crumbling sandstone. The cliffs and banks, eaten out and scored by the wind, break the usual monotony of our horizon, and produce the effect of a country which is inhabited, or which has been.

The sky is clear, and the west wind has dropped almost completely, and, with the moon shining brightly, we shall have a sharp night.

January 4.—The thermometer marked a minimum of 35° below zero, and this morning is lovely. I need not describe our route, for it is always the same up hill and down dale, its monotony being only broken by the west wind, which seems always to get up about 10 A. M.

January 5.—It is as bitterly cold as ever, and after marching for some time, we see to the south, above a dark but not very lofty chain of hills, a number of icy peaks all in a line. They form part of a very high and jagged chain, covered with snow, and some of our men want to know how we are to cross this

mass of snow and ice, declaring that the further we advance the more intense is the cold and the higher the mountains. One chain after another bars the way, and how are we to get over



THE RUYSBROOK PEAK.

them. I endeavor to console them by pointing to the horizon behind us, and to the mountains, which look just as impassable as those in front of us.

We shall have some good tea this evening, for we come upon a lake with ice as pure as crystal, so we empty our sacks of the dirty ice they contained and take in a fresh supply. Pitching our camp in the lowest part of the valley near the lake, our arrival puts to flight a dozen orongos which were licking the surface of the ice, which shone in the sun like a mirror and reflected the graceful forms of these elegant animals. There are blocks of lava along the edge of this lake, the level of which has been gradually falling, for we can trace six successive circles on the banks, indicating the six successive changes of level. It seems certain, too, that there are some hot-water springs nearly in the center.

The night is magnificent, and as I walk along the shores of

this little lake, it sparkles almost as much as the moon, having, besides, a white halo of salt upon its banks. Our tent is pitched in a regular basin, while above us the lava has the appearance of a herd of cattle lying down, or of dark-plumaged birds waiting to swoop down upon some corpse. The stillness is unbroken until a camel, which is very thirsty, gets up and goes to drink, finding, much to his disappointment, that it is ice and not water on the surface. In due course he goes back and lies down beside his companions, and again the stillness is complete, except for the sort of humming sound in the ears peculiar to high altitudes.

Owing to the dryness of the air, the light falls in floods upon the hollow where we have our camp, projecting my shadow clearly upon the salt, and when I get back to the tent, the thermometer marks 29° below zero. Prince Henry reminds Father Dedeken that they had come upon the traces of a wolf before turning in, and they suggest that, as I am up, I should go in search of it.

January 6.—The thermometer marks 40° below zero, the point at which the mercury freezes, and there is still the west wind. We are surrounded to the northwest with lava apparently vomited from the mouth of a crater.

Loading our animals and starting southward, we came upon a pool of water about twenty minutes afterward, at the sight of which, horses, camels, sheep, and dogs, got into a state of great excitement, only to find that the water was so salt and brackish that they could not drink it. The enormous quantity of salt had kept the water liquid, but the poor animals could not know this, of course, and some of our men thought that it might be hot springs, which had prevented it from freezing.

I had omitted to say that we have given up looking for traces of the pilgrims, as the search gave more trouble than it was worth, and it may be that this route extends too much to the east, for we do not wish to come out by the grand route of Koukou Nor, followed by Fathers Huc and Gabet, and after-

ward by Prjevalsky. We are endeavoring to make the lake of Tengri Nor, trying to keep rather to its right than its left as we go southward. Marching on in front of the caravan as pioneers, my companions and myself do not intend to go after game except in so far as we require it for food and for our collections, our main object being to trace a route of our own without any sort of guide.

In the evening we encamp about a quarter of a mile from a fine piece of water which we call "the Lake of Cones," because of the shape of the mountains which surround it. We try to pierce the ice of a small pool to let the animals drink, but they cut themselves about the mouth. The horses remained for three hours munching the pieces of ice.

January 7.—We crossed the ice of the Lake of Cones in forty minutes. The southwest end of it does not seem to be frozen, and it is about twelve miles long by two broad. After going over a rather steep pass, we descended into a very deserted valley, where we killed a few hares, which, if small, are of excellent flavor. During the last few days we have seen nothing of any big game, and yet there has been very little snow and a certain quantity of grass, such as it is. Their absence may be due to the persistent winds or the great altitude, the blast of the tempest and an altitude of 18,000 feet not constituting any great attraction.

The day was cheerful, even for the most gloomy of our men, for the Doungane himself, since we came upon wood that had been fashioned by human hands, and upon saddle-bows for yaks, made of juniper wood. This discovery led to all sorts of comments, and while they were being made the Doungane came up smiling, although he has had to abandon another of his camels to-day, and said that he has seen some argol which has been turned over, this being done so that it might dry, a proof that the men who have done this intend to return. He invited Abdullah and several of the other men to come and eat some of his dough, and congratulated himself upon the prospect of fêting

the Chinese New Year, which is in thirteen days' time, under the shelter of a roof.

These hopes improve the *morale* of our men for a few days, but we know the old saying about "hope deferred," and it takes little to provoke a revulsion of feeling when men are worn out and cut off from the world of their fellows.

January 8.—The scouts we sent out came back and told us that, beyond the second chain of mountains, there is a large lake. This we go and inspect to-day, to find that it is not frozen over, and that its western extremity is about twenty-five miles off. Judging by the gaps we see in the midst of the mountains, we anticipate encountering a good many lakes, and it is only to be hoped that they are frozen over, and that we shall not be obliged to go out of our way to get around them.

We are at the mercy of the waves, so to speak, being on a boundless ocean, the billows of which keep rising before us in the shape of mountains, and our troop is made up of a number of swimmers tired of breasting wave after wave only to find a higher one before them.

After following a narrow valley, in which are a number of salt-water springs, we reached the extremity of the lake, which is gradually drying up, as we crossed what was formerly part of it, but which is now covered with a foot of salt. We imagined that we had got to the end of the lake, but upon breasting an eminence we recognized our mistake, as the hills had hidden from our view another stretch of water. We give the name of Montcalm to this fine piece of water, which extends from east to west for a length of forty-five or fifty miles. The islands and peninsulas prevent us from calculating its precise breadth, but we put it at from six to twelve miles. This water delights the eye, and gives one the illusion of the seashore, its aspect being particularly beautiful when, at sunset, the westerly wind causes its sparkling surface to undulate like the silvery scales of a fish.

January 9.—Winding our way round Lake Montcalm toward the southeast, we saw a great many wild animals, such as yaks,

koulanes, arkars, and even the chamois of the Himalaya, cheering up our men by pointing to the presence of animals which are indigenous to the frontiers of India.

Beyond a small pass, we came upon some hot-water springs, but they were salt, and upon a frozen river which, as seen through the mist, appears to be flowing southeast through a vast plain.

Can this be water running toward China? At once our thoughts revert to the sources of the great Blue River. We cannot say if we have lighted upon them, but in any case we can assert that it is somewhere in this direction that they must be sought. The idea that this ice feeds rivers which shed their waters in the Pacific Ocean seems to bring us back into contact with the world, for if our supposition is correct, all we should have to do would be to follow down the course of this stream to the coast.

January 10.—We had to see after the feet of our camels and to shoe our horses. The minimum yesterday was 26° below zero, while last night it was only 13° below, and this morning 2° above zero, so to us the temperature seems delicious.

In the afternoon, Prince Henry came back to camp for a camel to bring in the body of a yak which he had killed by lodging eight bullets in him. We took out the necessary instruments for skinning and cutting him up, and when we came upon him about three-quarters of a mile from the camp, found that he must be one of the seniors of Thibet, his muzzle being quite gray, his teeth worn, and his skin half tanned by age. It was no easy matter to skin him, and he was so heavy that it was as much as a camel could do to carry him.

The sky was clouded over all day, and had very much the same appearance as in the region of the Lob Nor, this moisture of the air being due to the proximity of Lake Montcalm, off which the wind blows.

Two of the horses died during the evening from having drunk too much water. It is fortunate they were the only two which

discovered these springs, or we should have lost them all. The camels are none the worse for having drunk; but they have only been allowed a limited quantity, and our drivers think that the bladder has contracted with all our animals, and that the slightest excess of drinking will be fatal. Imatch holds that it will be better not to water the camels at the hot springs if we come upon any later.

January 12.—We are in a valley strewn with the bones of animals, such as arkars, koulans, yaks, orongos, and *Nemorhodus Edwardi*.* We can only guess the cause of so many skeletons being assembled in one place. It may have been an epidemic, or a very severe winter, or it may be that the aged animals of the flock chose to come here to die.

January 14.—We encamp at the foot of the pass which we shall have to scale in order to cross an enormous chain of mountains, which we name after that distinguished Frenchman, Dupleix.

The enthusiasm excited by the discovery of the piece of wood wrought by human hands has quite subsided, for we are at a greater altitude than ever, some of the peaks beside our camp being at least 20,000 feet high, while for the last three days we have been groping for the path which will lead us to the other side of the chain, the solitude being deeper and weighing heavier than ever. There are numberless traces of wild animals and big game having been this way; but they have all cleared off, as if at the word of command, and we see nothing but a woe-begone crew, which seems to follow us with interest.

Our men are out of heart, for there seems to be no end to these lofty table-lands, and the west wind blows incessantly. Rachmed tries to cheer them up, and talks of India as if it were just round the corner; but the conclusion of his discourse is very

* A very interesting collection of animals, plants, etc., brought back by M. Bonvalot and his companions, has been exhibited during the summer and autumn in the Natural History Museum, Paris.—TRANSLATOR.

practical, for he says, "We have plenty of provisions; let us do like our horses, only look where we put down our feet, and go marching on."

January 15.—We cross a pass at about 16,500 feet, following a gentle slope, and to the west see the glaciers extending down to a valley, which we shall follow, marching over ice. In the mist we catch a glimpse of snowy peaks, which we calculate to be at least 26,000 feet high, and throughout the whole of this region there is a multiplicity of small lakes and pools. The hills, the soil of which is very friable, bear traces of the melting of the snows and of the inundations which follow, and there is abundance of ice.

January 16.—As we march over the frozen river, deep and broad, and its surface so slippery that our men can hardly keep their feet, we cannot help thinking that the Duplex Mountains must be the origin of a great river, or, at all events, one of its principal sources.

When the snow has fallen in the course of the next few months and the sun has come to melt it, there will be a tremendous inundation of the highlands, which will be traversed by rivers of liquid mud, a good deal of which will be left upon the flanks of the hills; these deposits will remain there until the summer following, for winter arrests the flow of the river, when the sun acts, liquefying the solid masses, which gradually break away and come down lower each year.

It is, of course, impossible to say positively, but my belief is that we are at the sources of the Yang-tse-Kiang. For some days past our men have been craving for the sight of their fellow-men, and all this because they caught sight of that bit of wood; so they are constantly scanning the horizon, examining the soil, fancying they have discovered traces, and triumphantly announcing their "find" to the others, getting quite angry if you seek to prove that they are mistaken. I try to persuade them that they are wrong in desiring the presence of their fellow-men, that they have nothing good to expect from them, that it

would be much better for us to be able quietly to continue our route, and that a few fat sheep, a little good drinking water, and an end of the west wind would be worth any number of Thibetans. But my reasons do not impress them, and nothing



THE BUSSY PEAK.

will satisfy them but to see men. After three days' slipping and tumbling upon the surface of the river, which descends by a narrow defile, we come out upon a plain, in the best of spirits, for we have made two or three discoveries which put everybody in good heart.

January 17.—We have found fossils at 19,000 feet, while about two o'clock I came, in a well-sheltered gorge, upon a calcined stone, standing by itself, with horse droppings all around. Lower down are other stones which have been placed side by side, for the lighting of a fire, which shows that man has been here. A fire has been lighted with argol and roots, while, as the snow has not covered the ashes, the fire must have been lighted

recently. Then I saw, clinging to the rock, a fragment of the skin of the Megalo partridge, with the feathers adhering to it, so shooters must have stopped here to take a meal, but they could not have passed the night, for there is no trace of any shelter having been erected.

Our caravan came up soon after, and my powers of description would fail to give an adequate idea of the unaffected delight of the men, Timour maintaining that the droppings are not more than three days old, and Isa declaring that the partridge feathers are also quite fresh. Abdullah, after an examination of the sticks and the ashes of the fire, exclaims that the men must be quite close.

Parpa alone is pessimistic. He says it does not follow we shall soon encounter men, for when shooting parties come out, they often wander far away from all human habitations. He suggests that they may perhaps be watching us without our observing them. Still, he thinks it is a good sign, and as he can master a few words of Chinese, he manages to say a few words to the Dounganes, whose chief enters quite amicably into conversation with Abdullah, whom he was going to kill only a few days ago. To me he exclaims: "Adam! Adam! [Man! Man!]," and when I ask him his opinion, he is emphatic that the fire was not lighted more than four days ago, and, moreover, that it was not lighted by lamas, as it is their habit, when they leave a fire, to disperse the stones.

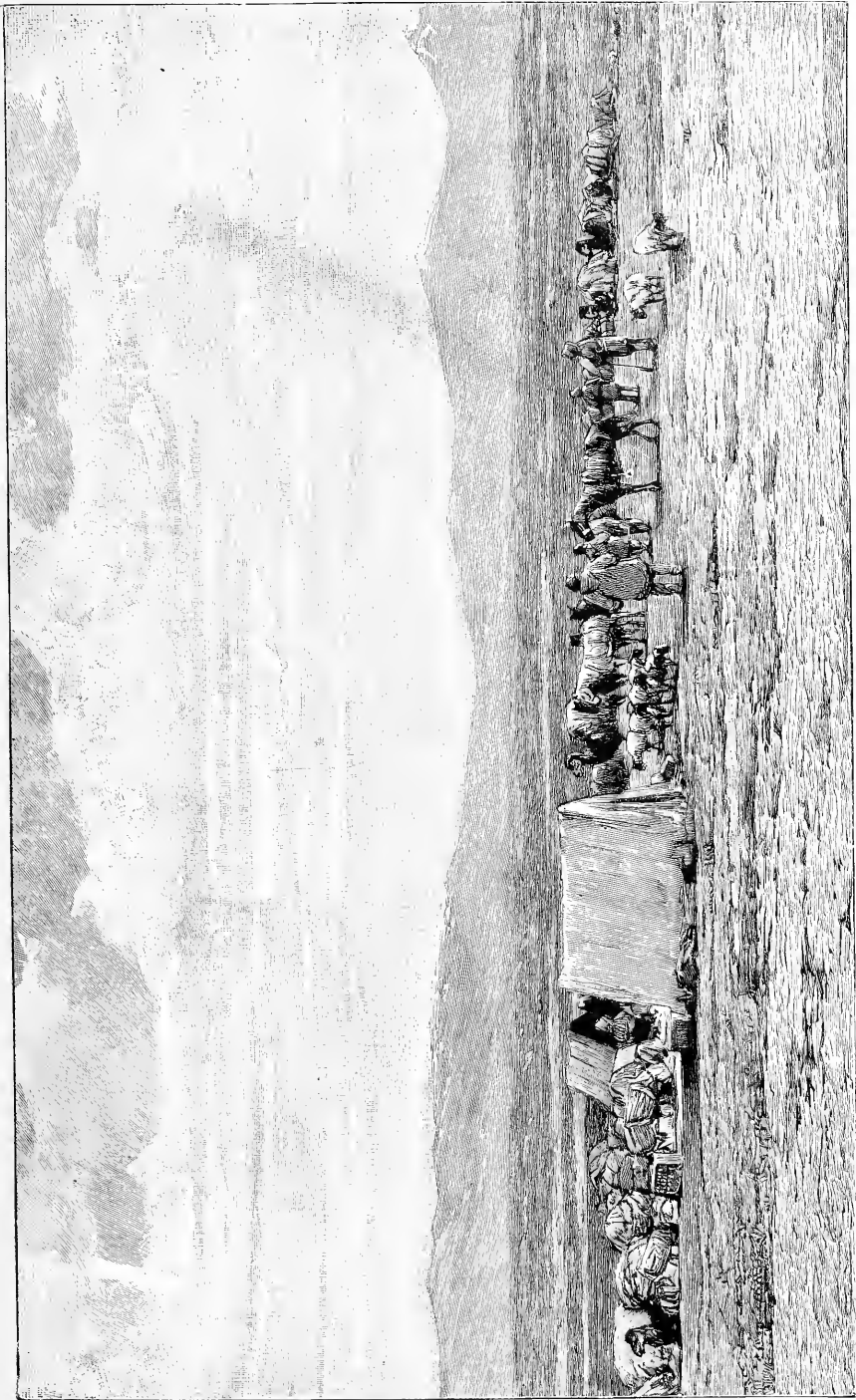
When we had had our confabulation, we started afresh with a much lighter gait, and Rachmed, who went off in pursuit of partridges, which he heard calling to one another on the mountain and hills, came back to say that he had seen the site of another fire, while I observed an "obo" on one of the summits. It is clear that men come into these parts, and I believe we should find them if we went more to the east.

January 18.—We see monkeys crossing the frozen river and playing upon the rocks which form its banks. But we cannot kill one of these animals, which are very short, with red hair and almost imperceptible tail and small head.

We pitch our tents near the river, just at the issue of the defile through which it winds its tortuous way down from the Duplex Mountains, and not far from there, on the plateau, are the remains of a "yourt" of nomad Thibetans. These consist of four small ovens with very rough masonry, the fragments of a bag made of yak wool, the site of a tent with pegs made of orongos' horns and the droppings of domesticated yaks smaller than those of the wild breeds. We catch a sight of wolves, and kill some red-footed hares, which we eat. And all this—monkeys, hares, the "yourt," the various tracks made by flocks, the plain which we are convinced we shall descry to the east when the snow ceases, the very snow, which is converted into excellent water, with the knowledge that we have descended to a rather lower altitude, and that the wind is not so strong—revives the drooping spirits of our men. Yet this night the thermometer went down to 48° below zero, whereas on the previous days the minimum had not been more than 22°.

January 19.—This morning we get some lark shooting and plainly see two valleys, one coming from the northeast and the other from the east, and converging at the point where we yesterday saw the monkeys playing on the river surface. At the foot of the mountain spurs, to the south of our camp, are some hot springs of drinkable water running over the ice, and in front is a level plain rising by very slow degrees to a tract of land, beyond which is a rather high mass of mountains. Fortunately the presence of man in this region is beyond doubt, or else the view of this fresh range of mountains would have affected our men very unfavorably.

It is surprising to see, in the midst of this plain of hot springs, cones of ice, twenty feet or more in diameter, about the height of a man and speckled over upon their surface—which is just like crystals—with grit and stones from the plain; these blocks have split perpendicularly like certain kinds of over-ripe fruit. We have before us frozen geysers, which have become covered with this solid headdress when their power of ejection was not sufficient



THE PARIS PEAK.

to cope with the frost. We also come upon some fine roots of iabchanes which form very fine bunches, and with these we make a very unsuccessful attempt to cook a palao.

We should much like to eat some of the rice we have carried such a long way but it is impossible to cook it on account of the altitude, and our meat, of course, does not cook any better. It does not spoil, as it is so hard frozen that when we want to put a piece in the pot, we have to chop it as if it were a piece of wood, while the fat we eat for butter is as hard as a stone and might be used as a projectile.

January 20.—The event of to-day is the discovery of the tracks of a horseman—tracks which are not new—and of a fragment of a saddle made in a particular way, which Abdullah says must have belonged to a camel. This suggestion is scouted by Parpa, who is a saddler by trade, and is not at all fond of the interpreter. The merest trifles are fastened upon, as is the case with navigators in search of land, but, while these are mere suppositions, we have as certain facts that the west wind does not go down or the cold decrease, the thermometer marking 27° below zero, that we are still going up and down hills, and that our animals are dying off very fast, while those which survive are devoid of all strength. Our horses are incapable of the slightest effort, and the camels are kept alive on dough and paste. The grass peculiar to the highlands is hard and ligneous—like zinc—and although the camels eat it, they are just as hungry as before, and it is necessary to hobble them to prevent them gnawing their saddles. We have ten camels and seven horses left, while the Doungane still has fourteen camels.

There are plenty of yaks in this region, but they are very wild, and make off before we can get within fair shooting distance of them.

January 21.—The Chinese New Year is celebrated with a certain amount of solemnity, thanks to a young stag shot by Rachmed. Its flesh is so good that we eat the whole of it, first raw, and then toasting slices of it on the argol. Isa is very funny

with his thigh-bone covered with meat, for he holds it in his hand like a scepter, while he is talking. When he wants to eat a piece he holds it before the fire, tears off with his wolf-like teeth the part which has got cooked, and so continues as long as there is any left.

January 22.—The men's attention is attracted by large leaves which prove to be those of the rhubarb plant, and yesterday Prince Henry saw some edelweiss.

Numerous flocks and herds have lived in this region during the summer, under the care of shepherds, for we can distinguish the paths made in the soil between the encampment and the pool where they were wont to go and drink, and they have left behind them heaps of dung which we found useful for fuel.

Around the old encampments we often see crows of a large size, with a crooked and large beak like that of the bigger birds of prey. They have very powerful claws, and instead of croaking like their European congeners, they emit harsh, cavernous, and vibrating sounds, like a lock that wants oil. This is why travelers have given them the name of "crows with a metallic croak," and though they doubtless are in the habit of coming to this place, we are evidently not the travelers they would like to see, for they nearly all make off after looking at us for a few minutes.

I need say nothing about the scenery, for it is always the same—first a pass, then a valley, then a halt near a lake, then another pass, and so on. We are still in a desert, but it is a desert which has been inhabited, and this makes our men much more cheerful, for they argue that the difficulties cannot be more insurmountable for them that they have been for others.

January 24.—Isa, on his return from fetching the camels, points southward, and says: "I have seen men in that direction; I have recognized flocks of yaks and sheep."

Timour and Rachmed start off at once to verify this statement, and the west wind announces a change of temperature, for it seems moister than usual, and as a hurricane of snow and dust

gets up, they come back without having been able to see anything. This unlooked-for moisture, and the diminution in the size of the snowflakes, lead us to believe that there are large lakes evaporating to the west of our route, and charging with vapor of water the winds which pass over them.

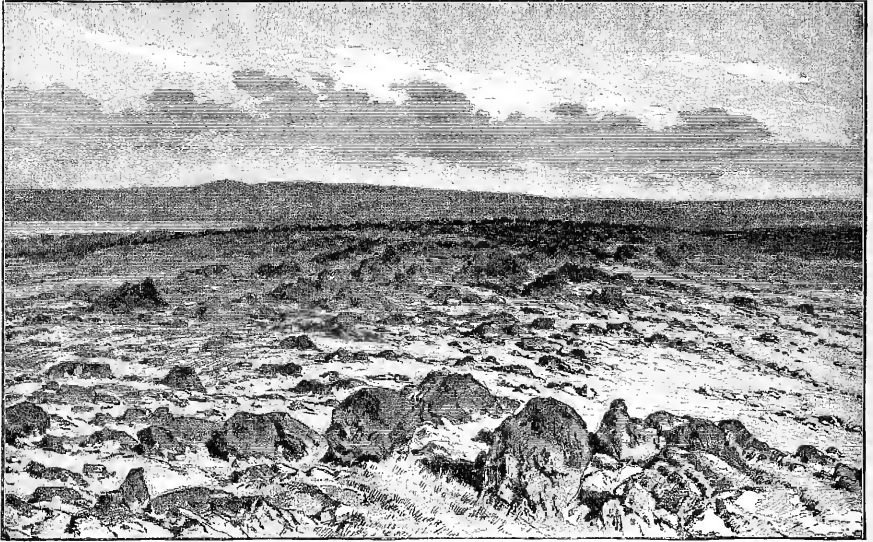
Proceeding forward in these snowstorms, we came suddenly upon a frozen geyser about thirty-three feet in diameter, and then the sky cleared and we were surprised to see a large herd of several hundred yaks roaming along the sides of the mountain, and feeding so quietly that we took them for domesticated animals, especially as we imagined we could see the shepherds looking after them. Having been able to get close to them without exciting their attention, we soon found that we were mistaken in thinking them tame, and when Prince Henry and Father Dedeken tried to stalk them, they made off. I could not get a shot when I encountered them again at nightfall, though I fired just for the form of the thing.

This evening our people say that the Doungane would do well to remove the little bell hanging from the neck of his camel, as it might attract the notice of men. It was only the other day that they were longing for the company of their fellows, but now they have got a sort of idea that they are being watched by invisible horsemen, childish as this fancy is.

January 27.—The minimum on the night of the 24th, owing to the snow, was only 11° below zero, as against 31° the next night, but the west wind had fallen during the night only to get up again in the morning about ten.

On the 26th we scaled rocks 18,300 feet high, and, looking in front of us, could see as many mountains as from the summit of the Tach Davane, when we arrived on the high plateaus. One of our men expresses surprise at there being so many mountains in the whole world, to say nothing of Thibet. We came upon a flock of crows of ordinary size perched upon some rocks, and croaking just as the birds which are found near to the dwellings of man do, so we are evidently near to human beings.

To-day (the 27th) we descend a pleasant little valley with a gentle slope, and the presence of some rhubarb, dandelion, and grass leads us to believe that this place must be quite habitable during the summer. There are numerous paths leading to



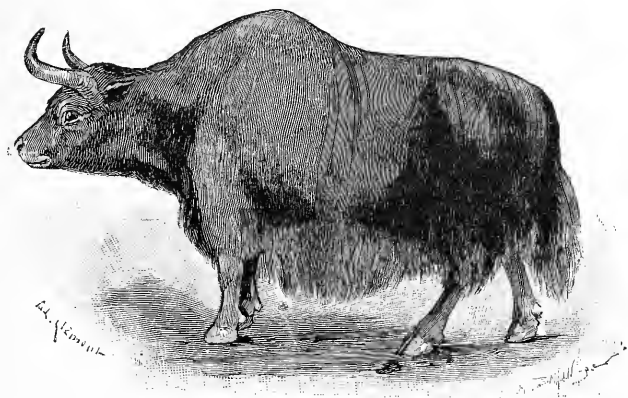
DISTANT VIEW OF THE "BINOCLE" LAKE.

abandoned encampments, and there can be no doubt that the Thibetans come and feed their flocks here during the fine weather, passing the winter in warmer or more sheltered regions. My belief is that their winter encampments are not very far off.

We go cheerfully on, and as the sun is shining brightly, and the wind does not blow in this little valley, we might imagine it to be spring-time. Down in the bottom, we see running water, and make a rush for it, finding it, to our delight, fresh and good to drink. It is a sight of which we have been deprived for a long time; for up till now all has been dead upon the high plateaus, whereas to-day we seem to be assisting at the resurrection of nature. Then, along the slopes of this valley, there is grass in abundance, while on a broad and sheltered terrace are great heaps of very dry argol. We find that this river is not

frozen, because it is fed by numerous hot-water springs which are only slightly salt, and it contains a quantity of small fish, whose evolutions suffice to amuse us. Abdullah is in high glee, and will have it that we are at the sources of the Brahma-Pootra, and that all we have to do is descend the river and we shall arrive at Lhassa. He is brimming over with happiness, declaring that we have already made a journey which no one else has, that it is reaching its close, and that, for his part, you will never catch him again in this accursed Thibet.

We cross to the right bank of the river, and, after going four or five miles, find that, as its banks gradually get lower, it is frozen over and ends in a kind of lake, on the ice of which the



WILD YAK.

water trickles until it has become solidified. While the tent is being pitched, I go out to reconnoiter, and find that the river has a very broad bed, but that it becomes lost in rather a large lake, which it may possibly pass through after the thaw. On my return Abdullah questions me, and when he learns the truth, his face grows very long, and he moans: "We shall never find our way through!"

Nevertheless, the day is spent in rejoicings, for these parallel paths run in the same direction, viz., to the southeast, and they

must form a main route of communication. All we need is to see men, in order to acquire the certainty that we are really on the road to Namtso (Tengri Nor) and Lhasa. Perhaps we shall come on them in a day or two, and then what will happen?

January 28.—We continue going downhill, much to our satisfaction, about six miles to the southeast, and have to shorten our stages in proportion to the forces of the men and the animals. The least imprudence would be fatal, and it is necessary to stop whenever we come upon grass or ice, of which there is such an abundance that there is no need to lay in a supply each morning for fear that we shall not have any at night.

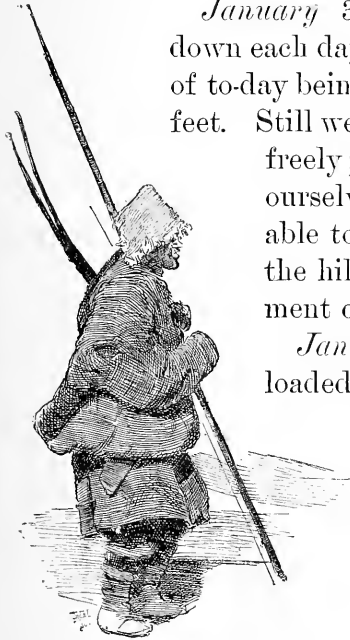
January 29.—Last evening we encamped at an elevation of 15,700 feet, and to-day we are at 14,500. We get up a lottery to be won by the person who makes the nearest guesses at the date when we shall encounter the Thibetans, the periods selected varying from twenty days to four.

CHAPTER IX.

AMONG THE THIBETANS.

“A Man is Coming”—Description of the First Thibetan Encountered—Thibetan Horsemen—Driving a Bargain—A Savage’s First Sight of a Watch—Uncomplimentary Comments—On the Highroad to Lhassa—Getting Information under Difficulties—English and Russians in Bad Odor—Lake Bourbentso—The Doungane Shows his Seals—Silos—A Thibetan Interior—A Native Woman—Imatch Done Up—Prayers Engraved on Stones—Taking a Prisoner—Death of Imatch—In Sight of the Ningling Tanla and the Namtso.

January 30.—Although we get a little lower down each day, the cold is still intense, the minimum of to-day being 31° below zero at an altitude of 14,200 feet. Still we feel much lighter and walk much more freely; while, as we have no longer to concern ourselves looking out for the route, we are able to examine more carefully the ridges of the hills, and see if there is any sign of movement or any spots resembling tents.



THE FIRST THIBETAN ENCOUNTERED.

January 31.—While the beasts are being loaded and we are sipping our tea in the tent, we hear shouts, and Abdullah comes rushing in, beaming with joy, and saying, “You can get out your purse and pay the winner: a man is coming.” We enjoin Abdullah to treat the stranger well, give him some tea, and take him up to the fire, trying to soften him down and coax what he can out of him. On the arrival of the Thibetan, he is greeted in Mongolian, and replies in the same language, all the men crowding round him and speaking at once. Rachmed comes and tells us that he is ugly beyond description, and that the very bears are better-looking. When we think that the ice has

been broken we come out, Prince Henry with his photographic apparatus in his hand; and our presence produces a certain effect upon our guest, as he rises when he sees us, calls us "bembo," that is to say, "chief," and, in order to salute us, lifts up his thumb and protrudes an enormous tongue. He is begged to sit down again, and we examine him while he is engaged in conversation with Abdullah, if conversation there can be when the two speakers have in common ten words of Mongolian and four of Thibetan.

He is a very little man, with a clean-shaven face covered with a layer of grease and smoke, and furrowed by a great number of deep wrinkles. His eye, sunken in the orbit, is little more than a black spot beneath the swollen eyelids, with brown pupils. The face is made to appear shorter by long locks of hair which fall down upon the hollow cheeks; the nose is large and the mouth toothless, with thick lips, and the square chin has no sign of hair. The man is weakly, and we can see that his hand is small and dirty, as he manipulates his snuffbox cut out of a piece of horn, shaking out some powdered red tobacco which he sniffs up into his nose.

His dress is in keeping with his person, his headgear consisting of a strip of skin, which is wound round the forehead and fastened at the back, leaving the summit of the head bare. From the top hangs down a tress of hair, coming as far as the loins, and passed through two or three rings made of animals' bones. The owner of this tress must rub fat over it occasionally, for that portion of his attire which it rubs against is more greasy and shiny than the rest. Not that the sheepskin pelisse which covers his bare body is absolutely unclean, merely being rather greasy at the back. It would be difficult to say how long he has worn this pelisse, which is fitted to his figure and looped up, in order to facilitate his walking, by means of a cord, so that it forms an enormous fold at about the level of the waist, with a pocket, from which he extracts his snuffbox, and in which he puts the bread and piece of meat we give him. He also takes out from this pocket a hand spinning-wheel, the handle of

which is made of polished orongo horn and the cross of wood which we take to be holly. His skinny legs are incased in a pair of woolen stockings split open at the calf and kept in their place by garters made of hemp, while, underneath, these stockings have a thick sole similar to that of the Spanish espadrille.

While asking us as to our journey, the Thibetan takes frequent pinches of snuff or quietly spins the yak-wool which he has with him. By means of signs we explain to him that most of our horses and camels are dead, and that the five or six sheep left have only been allowed to live because there is nothing to eat on them, and we ask him to sell us butter, horses, and sheep. In response to this, he invites us to follow him to his tent, which is beyond the rock visible in a westerly direction.

We thank him for his kindness, but beg to be excused, because we are going to the southeast. Then, with the falsity and impudence of the savage, he endeavors to dissuade us from this by saying that Lhassa is not in that direction, but to the west, asking us, incidentally, and clasping his hands in a reverential attitude, if we are going to offer prayers to the *Tale Lama*. We tell him that we are, and he then again urges us to come and stay for a little in his encampment, where we shall find all kinds of provision and grass for our beasts.

While we are discussing this, we see several flocks descending the slopes of the hills, escorted by men on horseback, who come toward us. The old man then gets up as if to go, but we offer him another cup of tea, and show him some "iambas" (bars of silver), which we will give him in exchange for sheep. He calls out to a shepherd, who comes trotting up, and explains what we propose, whereupon the latter drives his flock toward us. This second shepherd does not seem to us to be as old as the first, rather taller, and quite as thin. We are struck by the brusqueness of his movements, his irregular gait, his short, quick steps, and a peculiar way of throwing out the knee, giving him the appearance of a being with a human body and the legs of a goat. In fact he reminds me of the offspring of a minotaur with his broad long head, his short, snub nose, salient cheek bones, large mouth

from which protrude two teeth that keep the thick lips constantly apart, and pronounced lower jaw.

He leans upon a long, sharp-pointed lance, which he grasps in a hand black with dirt, and having fingers of nearly equal size, while round the waist he carries a sword, the sheath of which is made of wood with iron plates, while the blade is rather notched. In order that it may not interfere with his movements on the march, he carries this sword horizontally, and he also has slung over the back a short gun, of small caliber, terminating in a prong made of orongo horn. The stock is short and square, in the shape of Oriental weapons, and the gun is fired by means of a fuse, the lance seeming the more formidable of his weapons. Pending the arrival of the flock of sheep, the two Thibetans have a talk, and feel the weight of our bags and chests, and they would carry their indiscretions still further if we did not, in jest, flourish a revolver at them. This weapon takes off their attention, and they examine its six chambers with manifest surprise, being much astonished at the size of the bullets. When they see that all our men carry a leather case round their waists, they imagine that each of them has his revolver.

The man with the lance asks us if we are from Bomba and Calacata (Bombay and Calcutta), and when we say no, but that we are people from the West, they express their satisfaction; explaining that they are not friends with the people of Bomba and Calacata by joining their two thumbs nail to nail.

In the meanwhile the flock of sheep has come up, in charge of two lads as dirty as their seniors, and in the distance is another person on horseback, whom we find upon looking through the glass to be a young woman. She is very small, clad in a sheep-skin pelisse coming down to the heels, and bareheaded, her face being hidden in the tresses of her hair. She seems to us to have her cheeks blackened with some kind of ointment.

A lad having failed to catch with the lasso one of the sheep in the flock which his master picks out, the latter takes it from him and, with surprising quickness, throws it round the horns of a ram. This animal has very fine, silky wool, and a small and well-

shaped head, but we reject him, as the flesh would be hard and stringy. The Thibetans are amused at our knowing a good sheep from a bad one, and having, like all savages, first tried to deceive us, show us some fat young sheep, which they secure with the lasso. We pay them in silver bars weighed in Chinese scales, and they examine both the silver and the scales very carefully, and rub the silver with a stone, to see that it contains no lead. Then they break off little bits and put them in their mouths, trying to coax us into giving a few grains more. They are very greedy, and when we exchange a horse which is much done up for three sheep, they bargain in a way that shows they are not easily "got over."

We offer to pay them high prices for suitable animals, and they promise to bring us some to-morrow, showing us at the same time the ponies they are riding. These are ponies with long coats, such as are bred in the countries of the north, with rather short, powerful heads; and when we observe their depth of chest and strong necks, we do not wonder at their going along so well on their well-made legs. Their masters ride them with a plain halter, never using a bit, their gestures and whip answering every purpose. These ponies, though they will let their masters do anything with them, are frightened by our strange attire, and will not allow us to come near them and examine their saddles, which are of wood, with very short stirrups not coming below their bellies, so that the rider sits with his knees on the level of his stomach.

After having completed our purchases, we get ready for a start, the Thibetans remaining with us and feeling the canvas of the tent and the texture of our garments, while the English saddles puzzle them not a little, as they turn them round and round. They want us to explain to them how we use our weapons, and are astounded at the distance to which a bullet from the Berdan rifle carries, though it is clear that the revolvers make the deepest impression upon them.

We put a watch up against the ear of one of the lads, and he is delighted to hear it tick. He looks at the hands, too; but it

is the beating of the heart within that chiefly excites his wonder. We take advantage of his friendly attitude to ask him in what direction Lhasa lies, and he points not to the west, like his father, but to the southeast. We reward him with a bit of sugar, to which these people have taken a great fancy, though they would have liked to have the canvas of our tent, and some tea and tobacco. Having found that we should not go westward, where, as they say, their tents are, they make off toward the plain with their flocks, whistling and swinging their lassos.

It is curious to hear the reflections of our men as soon as they have gone. A few days ago you might have sworn that they would have taken any of their fellow-men into their affections, but now they make the most uncomplimentary comments on the ugliness and dirtiness of these natives, their greed, and their suspiciousness. The young woman is described as a monster with her besmeared face, and it is only the sheep and horses which are exempt from unfavorable criticism. Nevertheless, the moral tone of our men has been improved, and the downheartedness and despair engendered by solitude have disappeared, as I can see this evening when our tent is pitched in the middle of a river-bed partly dry. The men are anxious to guard against being taken by surprise and attacked at night, and the tents are placed in a triangular shape, so that a lookout may be kept in all directions, while the horses and camels are hobbled and placed in the center of the camp. Arms are examined and well greased, and we shall sleep with our guns out of their cases. For have we not come again upon our brethren, part of the great human family?

We are on the highroad to Lhasa; of that there can be no doubt, and the certainty will save us a great deal of trouble, for the further we go the better marked the route will be. The worst part of the business is that our animals are nearly done up, and that several of our men have great difficulty in advancing. Old Imatch is the worse, his feet being frost-bitten. One of his big toes is nearly dropping off, and his sores are so dreadful that it is a wonder he can keep on his horse. He is constantly suffering from mountain sickness, and we can do nothing

to relieve it, for what he needs is his native steppe on the level of the sea, which he will probably never see again.

If we could only come upon a suitable spot to halt and nurse him! But the whole of this region is the same; it is a lofty steppe, inhabited by a few wretched nomads, with the west wind ever blowing. Our stages are short; for, although the route is as good as could be desired, we cannot go more than twelve miles a day without fatiguing poor Imatch, while Abdullah is a bad walker, and Parpa is so weak that he can scarcely follow the camels.

If we had a few vigorous and determined men, we might, by a *coup de main*, seize as many of the Thibetans' horses as we require, load them, and march direct on Lhassa. But there are not enough of us, and we must resign ourselves to dragging along and awaiting more favorable circumstances.

February 1.—This morning, with a west wind and a cloudy sky, we came in sight of a flock of yaks and sheep making for the region we had just traversed. Not one of them came our way, and perhaps some kind friend had told them we want animals of different kinds and are armed to the teeth!

Just as we were loading and about to start, not reckoning that our friends of yesterday would bring us the animals we offered to buy, five horsemen appeared in sight, pulled up at a distance of two or three hundred yards, put the horses in charge of one of their number, and came on foot into our camp. We recognize the little old man of yesterday, and he again very politely puts out his tongue, being imitated by his companions, whom we had not seen before. One of them has an aquiline profile, his pig-tail being ornamented with agates, inferior turquoises, and copper rings, while his pelisse is edged with panther-skin. These people place at our feet a small jar of milk, which emits an odor sufficient to prevent any of us making a rush for it, as well as a pat of rancid butter rolled up in a piece of skin, and a small bag of zamba, or roasted barley-meal.

They examine us with great curiosity, are very reserved in their replies to our questions, and display remarkable rapacity.

The old man, whom we ask about the horses he has promised us, says that there are none, they having gone off westward. We can get nothing out of these fellows, who pretend not to understand whenever we pronounce the names of Lhassa, Namtso, or Ningling Tanla. Fortunately, one of the four is less suspicious or more intelligent, and while the three others are having their attention drawn off, we enter into negotiations with this poor wretch, who is barely clad, and has the profile of a negro, with scarcely perceptible eyes, and the forehead of a child. We begin by offering him a lump of sugar, one or two dried apricots, and some raisins, all of which he thinks delicious. Then we tell him that we are going to offer prayer to the Tale-Lama, whereupon the fervent Thibetan at once throws his cap to the ground, falls on his knees, clasps his hands, and turns by instinct in the direction of Lhassa, as he mumbles his "Om mane Padumé houm," which we repeat after him. We explain that all the contents of our chests are for the Tale-Lama, and he at once approves of this, nothing being too good for that divinity, but he at the same time stretches out his hand and makes a gesture as of eating. So we give him some more apricots, and crack the stone of one, showing him how to get at the kernel. He imitates the operation, and makes a movement of satisfaction with his tongue.

We, then, pointing to the direction in which he was prostrating himself just now, whisper:

"Lhassa?"

And he, first looking to see whether his companions are watching him, makes an affirmative motion with his head. We then said to him, in Thibetan, "How many days to Lhassa?" But he, instead of answering, put out his hand for a piece of sugar, then, having hidden himself behind our tent, traced on the sand a curved line in a southeasterly direction, and, taking some argol, placed it at the end of the line, and said, putting his finger on the argol, "Lhassa."

Then we spoke to him about the great salt deposit of Bourbentso, as it is called on the maps, and which he pronounced



TALKING OVER THE FIRST THIBETANS.



“Boultso”; whereupon he placed another piece of dung on the curved line. When we pronounced the name of Namtso (the Tengri Nor of the Mongolians), he put an argol upon the curved line a little further; and when we suddenly say, “Ningling Tanla,” he falls on his knees, places an argol to the south of Lake Namtso, and prays fervently to the holy mountain. He gets up and puts out his hand for another and yet another apricot, and, by way of thanking us, opens a mouth like that of a crocodile, from which emerges a massive tongue like that of an ox, covering the whole of his chin. Father Dedeken thinks it would fill the whole of an ox-tongue tin.

He is gradually getting more familiar, and in reply to our inquiries says it is three days' journey to Boultso, eight to Namtso, and twelve to Lhasa.

If he is speaking the truth, as seems probable, his estimates refer to the time he himself took on the journey, not to the time we should take. We find it difficult to get rid of him, so greedy is he for more apricots; but he goes at last, and, despite the amiable invitation of the Thibetans to visit their camp to the west, we follow the route leading southeast. It traverses the steppe coated with snow; and as the horizon is misty, we see no high chain, only ridges divided by valleys, in which domesticated flocks are roaming not far from wild animals. Now and again we catch a glimpse of black tents, and over them “prayers” fluttering from the end of a pole; but we do not approach any of these dwellings, as they are some way off the road.

February 2.—A body of horsemen, well mounted, and all of them armed, after watching us from a distance, draw near. Greetings are exchanged, and we try to persuade them to sell us some horses. They look at the silver, but do not reply, so, being anxious to know what they mean, we take possession of an animal which would suit us. Its owner remains with us, but the others go off; and when we name a price, the Thibetan refuses, explaining that the “bembo,” or chief, would punish him if he sold the horse without permission. So we let him go, after having made him a present and urged him to bring us plenty of

"zamba" for our animals. He replies that he will be willing enough, but that only the "bembo" can decide.

February 3.—Two natives come to offer us some dried sheep carcasses, and after a good deal of preliminary fencing we obtain information. According to one of these men, the route goes through the plain as far as Ningling Tanla, and there is plenty of grass, ice, and snow. He seems to be unusually intelligent, as he endeavors to let Father Dedeken understand him by pronouncing with great distinctness the names of the places he mentions. He was rendered thus loquacious by the present of a handglass; and the promise of a small chromo-lithograph if he spoke the truth stimulated his desire to be of use. As he rode along by our side, we passed some camel-droppings, and on our asking him what these were, he replied, "Tangout," this being the name given to the Kalmucks; so that we have come again upon the traces of our pilgrims at the same time that we have discovered the highroad. He gave us to understand that there is no more direct route than this to Lhasa. One soon gets used to these barbarian physiognomies, for we begin to detect intelligence in this vendor of dried meat. As he accompanied us to our bivouac, and night set in, we invited him to stay with our men, but he preferred going off to his "*kiim*" (dwelling), after letting his horse browse on a few roots of grass. The moon was up, and he pointed to it, as much as to say he should be able to find his way. He thanked us effusively, with uplifted thumbs and protruding tongue, for all the presents we had given him; and when we gave him back the meat we did not want, and told him to keep the price of it, he prostrated himself and explained that our generosity was well placed, because "those you saw yesterday are the chiefs and I am poor." So there are rich and poor everywhere.

With bright moonlight and a light westerly breeze, we have a minimum of 24° below zero, and no longer camp in sheltered corners, but on elevated places, where we at once command the plain, and are sufficiently removed from the heights to have time to fire several shots at horsemen who might gallop down on us.

Our dogs form excellent watchmen, and keep us informed of all that is going on in the camp. One of them, a mastiff with a long red coat, is in the habit of sleeping at a distance of over 300 feet from the camp, and of keeping on the watch all night, so that he would warn the two bassets set to look after the tents. These excellent animals seem to have understood the importance of their task, and will not let any Thibetan come near without our permission, so we can sleep in perfect peace.

February 4.—This morning their barking announced the approach of some twenty horsemen, who halted at a distance of about a third of a mile, pitched their tent, unsaddled their horses, and settled themselves in. Two of them came toward us, but the dogs kept them at a distance, and they sat down and made signs, as if to ask for an audience. The dogs having been called in, one of them opened the conversation in Mongolian with Abdullah, who had been taught what to say; and when the Thibetans asked where we came from, he replied, "From the North."

"Where are you going?"

"In search of a good place."

"What are you doing?"

"We have come on the chase, and we have been led on toward the south. Our horses and camels are dying of hunger, and even some of our men have died. We are very fatigued, and should like to rest."

"Stay here."

"Here, and eat the stones! Until we have found a good place we shall not stop."

"What is your country?"

"We are men of the West."

"You are Pa-Lang, no doubt?"

"No."

"Ah, if you are Pa-Lang, I shall get into trouble if I let you pass. Come and talk with me in my tent."

"I must ask permission of my chiefs."

Abdullah came and told us what had occurred, and received permission to go and converse with the ambassadors, though he

was strictly cautioned to keep a watch over his words and to appear ignorant when asked any awkward question. On his return he reported that the men said that on the first day of our arrival they sent a letter to Lhasa asking for orders, and that the reply had come :

“ If they are Pa-Lang [that is, English or Russian] let them not come further, but let them be supplied with what they require for returning. If they are not Pa-Lang, ask them for their passport and send them on to Lhasa.”

The Thibetan chief expressed a wish to have an interview with the chief of our party, but Abdullah put him off by saying that his chief was taking his rest ; adding, “ When he is ready, I will inform you, and then you can come and bring him some butter.” When the Thibetan chief did come, Abdullah said, “ You are too petty chiefs to converse with ours ; but if you will sell some horses, we will buy them of you ; if not, you may be off.” Whereupon they went off without saying anything, and sat down about a hundred yards away.

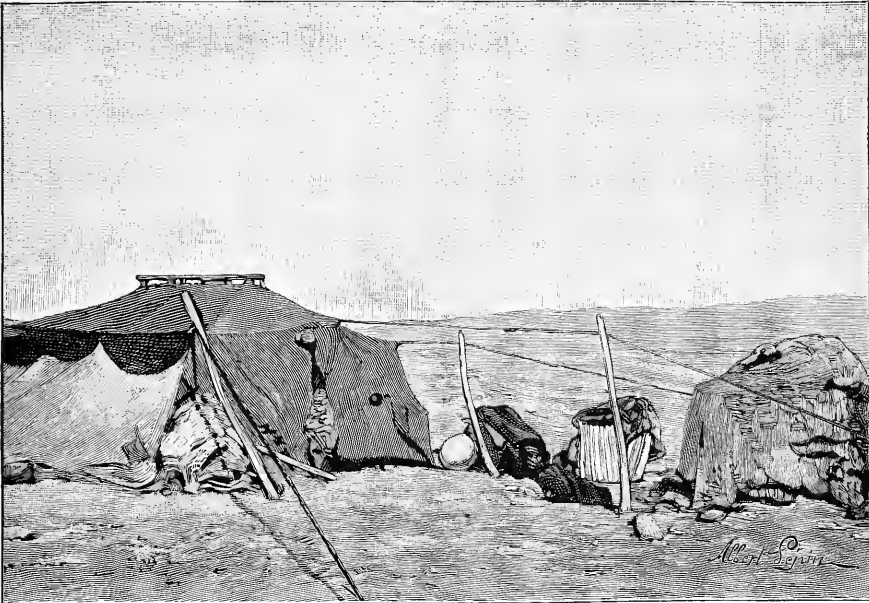
In the meanwhile we packed our things and went on our way, arriving by a pass of 15,700 feet upon a plateau, at the foot of which, to the east, is a rather large lake, which we supposed to be the “ Boultsou,” as the shores are covered with salt, and we had been told the water of this lake was so salt that one could not keep it in the mouth.

We closed in as we drew near this lake, for numerous detachments of armed horsemen appeared on the ridges, some of whom were coming toward us. Once altogether, we encamped to the west of the lake, near a frozen spring, the water of which is drinkable, and which receives the downpour from the hills, where most of the Thibetan horsemen are going to pass the night. They will be about a third of a mile from us, and we can see them lighting their fires and wandering about the plain to pick up argol.

The Boultsou, or Bourbentso, runs back into the mountains, where it seems to form gulfs. So, at least, we judge by the sun, which transforms it into a picturesque enlarged lake of Lucerne.

But this view is incorrect, for it is evident that we are the victims of mirages, and that the water we fancy we can see in the distance does not exist.

The Bourbentso is a vast salt-pit enveloping what remains of a lake, judging by what is seen on the banks. At the foot of the platform which was formerly perhaps the shore to which the



TENT AT BOURBENTSO.

water attained, we find the traces of numerous camels, and by the footmarks it is clear they must have remained several days. It is probable that the Torgutes sojourned here and pastured their animals, for the grass is cropped very close, and ours do not find anything to eat. There is, moreover, a total lack of snow.

When we unload, the Thibetans come close up, and we recognize among them the meat-vendors of the previous day, but we pretend not to see them, and leave the dogs to keep them at a distance. So they return to their rocks, where they will pass the night. They walk along very slowly, in conversation, and I have no trouble in catching them up, being anxious to get a

close view of them and to make the acquaintance of the old man whom our interpreter describes as their chief. He is a little, old man, dressed like his subordinates and quite as dirty, but he has a nose which seems as if it were formed of three enormous mulberries, one representing the tip, and the two others



THIBETANS AT BOURBENTSO.

the nostrils. This magisterial appendix, flanked by two small but intelligent eyes, does not prevent good-nature from being depicted upon his face, over which grows a natural wig, reminding one of that worn by the Grand Monarque. We look at each other with keen interest, and having greeted Mongolian fashion, "Sen Béné, Sen Béné!" I give him my card, in the shape of a lump of sugar. He eyes me, mumbling something I

cannot catch, and his companions, whenever I look at them, turn their eyes away with alarm. One of them attracts my special attention, for he is thin and lanky, with hair hanging down his cheeks, an elongated neck, and emaciated face—quite the type of the "scholasticus" in the farces of the Middle Ages. I can scarcely help laughing when I look at him; but he is stiff and upright, and turns his face away from mine, half in terror, half in disgust, muttering "Pa-Lang, Pa-Lang," as if I were some sort of unclean animal. They look at me again for a moment, and then make off with the short rapid steps which are peculiar to them, while their looped-up pelisses flap against their thighs like petticoats.

February 5.—The cold is still intense, the minimum of last night being 22° below zero; but the wind has gone down. This morning the old chief with a Louis XIV. head of hair returns, escorted by twenty Thibetans. He again explains to the interpreter what a delicate position he is in, and that he will be punished if he lets us through. Why could we not await the orders from Lhassa in a nice place where we should get grass, fresh meat, water, and everything we could desire? He would like to present his respects to us in person; but we decline to receive him until he has sold us some horses. We want them, and if he is well-disposed, that is the best way of showing it. To this he replies that he will sell or even give us sheep, but that he dares not let us have horses without an order.

Father Dedeken then goes to see him, and the old man offers him three lumps of fat sewn up in a skin, which he places upon a light piece of stuff (called "of happiness") spread upon the ground, putting the other end of the stuff upon Father Dedeken's knee. The latter asks him if this salt-pit is really the Bourbentso, and the old man taps him on the arm, as much as to say, "Don't make fun of me; you know the country as well as I do."

He is very puzzled to know what to make of us, for we have no Thibetans in our troop, and we have arrived by a route which he does not know himself, while we have no guide, and our band is composed of men of all races and kinds. We go along without

asking our way, halting near the ice at places where others have already encamped, as if we were going over the ground for the second time. He then goes to the Doungane, and shows him documents, with Chinese seals affixed to them, which confer upon him the police powers he exercises. Then, thinking to touch our camel-driver in a weak point, he adds :

“You say that you are Chinese, but every respectable Chinaman travels with his papers in order, and cannot leave the camels without the permission of his mandarins. There is no saying what your antecedents are.”

This is too much for the Doungane, who pounces upon the bag in which his papers are put away, unfolds them, and puts them under the nose of the old Thibetan.

“There ! Have you any such papers as these ? Now do you believe that I am an honest man ? Compare your papers with mine. Your papers are those of a nobody—mine are very different. My seals are double the size of yours, and my passports were delivered by great mandarins, but your diploma does not signify anything. By what right do you meddle with my affairs, or dare to speak in such a way to a man who has in his possession passports with seals of this size ?”

The argument of the seals is too much for the Thibetan, who goes off dumfounded. It is evident that these people do not know who we are, and that they will not come to any decision until they do. It is to our advantage not to enlighten them, as we can do without their assistance.

So we march on through the bare steppe and climb a range of hills, near the summit of which we encamp, beside a pass and not far from an abundant spring which descends in the form of ice toward the eastern part of the valley. On the other side of the ice we see a black tent ; and as it is the first we have come within reach of, we go to have a look at it, being greeted by the barking of four black dogs, which show their teeth, and would attack us but for being called off by two men who come out of the tent. One of the men is very old, and is led by the other, who is very diminutive. The elder, bent by years, has a head which,



THIBETAN HORSEMEN.

with its close-cropped gray hair, reminds me of the Diogenes of Velasquez. He has small weak eyes, out of which he can scarcely see, and he takes Father Dedeken for a Chinaman, and greets him with the word "Loié." His companion is a girl of about eight, who would perhaps be pretty if she were cleaner; but it is evident that she has never been washed, her round face, with its imperceptible nose, being a mixture of black and yellow. Her dress is a sheepskin, with a piece of wool to tie it in at the waist; and she carries a small knife in her belt. Bareheaded like the old man, she wears her hair loose down her back, with a plait twisted over the forehead.

We reconduct the aged lama—for such we recognize him to be by his close-cropped hair—back to his dwelling, and, after we have given him some dried fruits, we begin to converse. He assures us that the salt-pit near which we encamped yesterday was the Bourbentso, and he tells us that the chain of mountains is called the Bourbentso, and that the Namtso is at four days' march by a very easy route. This poor old man is very amiable, and we ask him for some milk, as we see that he has numerous yaks feeding lower down, but he says the grass is so bare that they are now nearly dry.

Their tent is made of a sort of black wool, and it is rectangular, covering about four square yards, and kept up at the corners by pegs that are attached to other pegs by means of long ropes which can either be pulled taut or loosened as required. The black mass from which all these ropes are stretched has the aspect of a vast spider with an eye in the back, this being the opening for the smoke at the back. The door of the tent is to the east, owing to the prevalence of westerly winds, protection against which is afforded by a high wall of argol, which is much used for constructions of various kinds.

While looking over this domain we observe what appear to be round ovens, or towers coming about up to one's waist. These are silos, constructed of argol on the level of the soil, probably because it would be difficult to dig into it, and they contain bits of stuff, tufts of wool, and even headdresses high in shape and

with broad brims, while yak-skins are spread out near the tent, close to small round pots of red earth. Slabs of schist, with prayers engraved on them, are deposited behind the tent; that is to say, in the direction of the west wind, which prays to them as it goes by.

Some distance off is the site of an abandoned tent, which enables us to form an idea of what a Thibetan interior is like. The stones are put together in squares at the bottom, and form a sort of substructure for the tent. In the center is an oven made of clay and flat stones, while in the corner is a box for holding argol, where we in France should have one for wood. The saddle and mill are of the most primitive kind, and among other objects are a basket made of withes and the skull of a yak converted into a vase. A few round stones have been used as a pestle or a hammer, while the objects the owners have wished to keep and use again on their return have been put away in one of the silos. Another of the silos contains a great many droppings of lambs, and it is doubtless in these silos that the lambs are placed under shelter, while their parents sleep in the open.

February 6.—The light being bad yesterday, it was not till this morning that Prince Henry could photograph this dwelling, and the operation was a more complicated one than might be imagined, for it was necessary to keep clear of the dogs and, if possible, get a portrait of the inhabitants.* We have great difficulty in beating off the angry dogs, when a man with a long nose and a very high forehead comes out and calls them off by throwing them bits of dried yak; and while we are getting the apparatus ready, a woman's head peers out from behind the curtain of the tent. She is quite a caricature of a human being, her profile being that of a monkey, just touched up so as to make it slightly resemble a woman. By dint of giving her plenty of raisins, peaches, and apricots, we got her to put out the rest of her body, and, urged on by the old man whose acquaintance we made yesterday, she stands at the door holding her daughter by

* M. Bonvalot does not say the occupants of the tent had returned during the night, but this is to be inferred.—TRANSLATOR.

the hand. She is very diminutive in stature, and clad of course in sheepskin. Her eyes are horizontal, and the globe is a mere speck of brown merged in a very dark-stained sclerótica almost as brown; the cheek bones are prominent, the chin broad and protruding, She keeps her mouth open, her thick lips being puckered up, so that she has a good-humored but unintelligent smile. Her hair, separated on the forehead, falls down over her cheeks and back in small tresses ornamented with stones and shells, and tied together at the extremities with a bit of ribbon. She cannot be called good-looking, but we have succeeded in winning her good will and that of the men of her family, for when we give her another bit of sugar, she and the man stretch out their thumbs and clasp their hands, this being their way of saying a friendly good-by.



A PETTY CHIEF.

After going eastward along the chain of Bourbentsoré, we made a bend to the southeast, where we came upon the route which we had momentarily lost sight of, and encamped in a valley near some tents, where we met with a rather unfriendly reception from both men and dogs. We succeeded, however, in getting a little argoî; but as to milk, it was impossible to obtain a drop, the yaks not yielding any.

It is high time, nevertheless, that the Thibetans should show us a little good-will, for old Imatch is quite done up. He can-

not stand, and can only creep along on his knees. He has to be helped on to his horse, and yesterday he begged us to abandon him on the route, saying that he was doomed and could be of no further use to us. We do the best we can, but are powerless to relieve him. Parpa has fallen down several times during the day's march, and we have had to go and fetch him with a camel at a hundred yards from the bivouac, which he could not reach. Little Abdallah is not much better; he can only get along by holding on to the girth of a camel, and is incapable of carrying his gun. We absolutely must have horses, and shall seize them at the first opportunity.

February 8.—Last night a southwesterly wind blew with great violence, and this morning our men complained of headache and ringing in the ears, while Imatch and the others who are ill groan lamentably. So we start in poor spirits for the pass, the summit of which is indicated by an obo.

Orders have no doubt been sent to the Thibetans, for the flocks have been dispersed since daybreak, and we cannot get within reach of the horses; while in the tents we pass there are only old people, women, and children, the men, with their arms, having made off. It is evident that a void is being made around us, and while so far we have been very gentle in our dealings, we must now resort to other methods.

At the foot of the pass, near the ice of a stream, we saw three men eating zamba, which they were cooking at an argol fire. We went up to them and asked for a horse for a sick man. They feigned not to understand, and would not even look at the money we offered them; but as their horses were close by, we took one for Parpa, and kept them at a distance with our revolvers.

February 9.—During the night the sheep purchased from the first lot of Thibetans were stolen. We are determined that whenever we require fresh meat we will take it.

The pass is 17,300 feet, and the descent an easy one, leading to a valley in which we see, for the first time, white tents, occupied by armed men. As soon as they notice us they run off to

collect their horses, which are roaming about. At the foot of the pass we see—also for the first time—a large number of prayers engraved upon the stones, as described by Father Huc, on the highroad of the pilgrims. So it is clear we are drawing near to the holy city.

I should have mentioned that on the 8th about forty armed horsemen hovered about our camp, and the old man with the bulbous nose, who speaks Mongolian, came with another chief better dressed than himself, and almost clean. He begged us to halt, "for our lives were at stake." We asked him to cease joking at a time when two of our men were very ill.

Climbing another pass, we can see from the top, despite the mist and the dust, a corner of the great lake below us; and to the south, much further up, some white peaks, which seem to emerge from a formidable chain, not impossibly the Ningling Tanla. We are approaching a group of mountains, the passes are more numerous, and the route follows valleys a mile or two wide, the country having the aspect of the Pamir.

The west wind tries us very much, but, nevertheless, it seems to us as if winter were about to end, for we have seen a flight of pigeons and another of sparrows. There is abundance of koulanes and antelopes, and we notice a number of small lakes which are gradually drying up, their shores being white with salt.

February 10.—We are now in a steppe covered in many places with stones, and with grass here and there; while scaling yet another pass, we again come upon very distinct footmarks of camels dating from last year.

February 11.—We traverse a valley which is a marsh during the rainy season, and in the course of the march receive a visit from a Thibetan chief who seems to us to be tipsy. He wears a red cloak and boots of the same color, carrying in his hand a prayer-mill with plates of silver on it, which he turns incessantly. He has come all the way to say to us in Mongolian, "Tengri moe sen, ta moe sen, char moe sen;" which means, "Sky not good, horse not good, town not good." Thereupon he turned

his horse round and galloped off, having told us nothing we did not know before, except that Mongolian pilgrims must have been accustomed to remain in this country, inasmuch as he had picked up a few words of their language.

February 12.—A violent west wind seals the fate of poor old Imatch. He sobs when the time comes for starting, and sending for Parpa says: "You remember that I am in your debt. At Tcharkalik I bought some boots of you, and did not pay for them. If Allah pleases to let me get better, I will pay you for them. If I die, you will pay yourself with what I have left, and keep the rest; for you gave me to drink during the night."

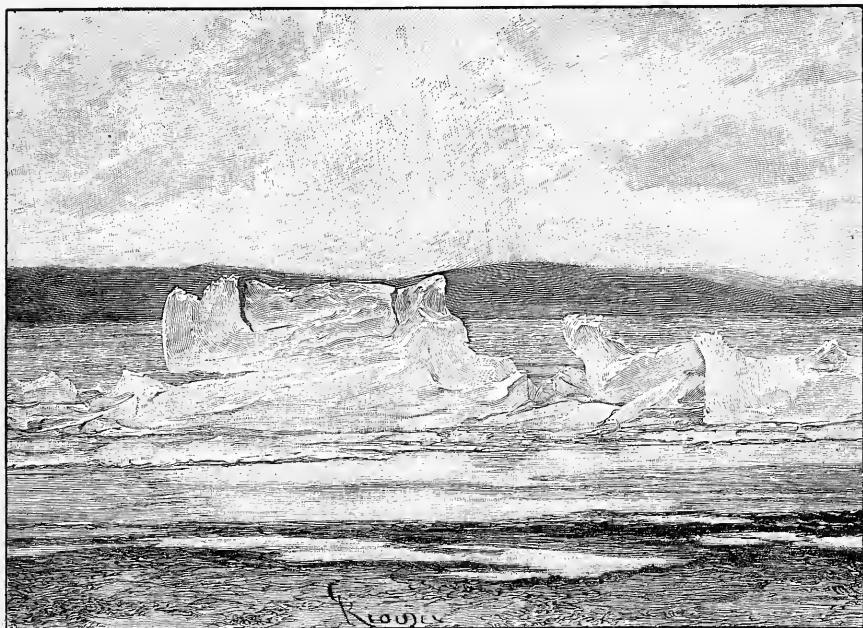
I try to cheer him up by saying that we shall soon reach a town, and that we are all fond of him, and anxious to nurse him. But it is no use, and he says: "Thank you, and forgive me if I do not attend to my work. But I cannot. Death is at hand, and has already taken possession of my legs. Forgive me. I will not sob any more. I will not give way to despair. It is all over."

We load the poor fellow as best we can, and start very down-hearted, winding round mountain spurs, and then resuming our course to the southeast. For the first time we see upon the heads of three very ugly women a tall headdress, not unlike a pope's bonnet. Our stage, though rather longer than that of yesterday, in order that we may encamp near a lake, is only ten miles, so exhausted are we.

A number of sheep are feeding close by, and as, whenever we try to speak to the natives, they make off, we take advantage to kill some for our personal use. The old woman who is in charge of them makes off, uttering piercing shrieks. Rachmed has had the good sense to pick out some fine fat lambs. In the rough ground near the lake we see some men encamped, with five or six horses close at hand, and Prince Henry and myself determine to try and seize them. The Thibetans see what we are at, and make a dash to be off, but not in time to prevent our securing one of their horses, their leader, and one of his men. Their weapons had been laid down in a heap, and they did not make

any effort to prevent us seizing them, but were up on their horses and off. We fired a few shots from a revolver after them, which only accelerated their flight.

The old man whom we had made prisoner sits dazed, and puts out his tongue in a most beseeching way. He has a lot of small



LAKE NAMTISO.

bags containing provisions, and he offers us in turn, by way of mollifying us, handfuls of powdered cheese, zamba, and dried meat. These we refuse, and he sits there muttering prayers and looking at us with evident anxiety and fear. After letting him be alarmed for the moment, we proceed, when the rest of our men have come up, to explain that if we want horses it is because several of our men cannot walk, and that we are prepared to pay a good price, while he raises his thumb by way of satisfaction when we call him "appa," "popeunne" ("father," "brother").

Our dogs alarm him very much, and he begs us to call them

away; but we reassure him by saying that they do not bite those whom we call "brothers." Then we give him a supply of sugar, and when he has tasted it he cannot hide his satisfaction, while after he has had some raisins and apricots, he in turn calls us "brothers." Then we show him silver bars, and bargain with him for his horse, while, to prove that our intentions are good, we set his companion at liberty and allow him to carry off his pelisse. The latter jumps at the offer, and skelters off without any concern for his master.

At this juncture a horseman arrives with a red pendant fastened to the barrel of his gun. He says that he is the owner of the sheep killed by Rachmed, and we at once offer him some tea, which he drinks out of a cup done up in his pelisse, as his religion forbids men of his race to let their lips touch anything which impure lips have approached. This may appear singular to Europeans, and it is perhaps only a preventive against certain contagious diseases, very necessary in a country where the crockery is never washed.

In the meanwhile a silver bar has been taken out of a bag and shown to him. He asks to be allowed to test it; and when we tell him that a stamp on it he has remarked is Pekiū, he seems reassured, and repeats "Pétsin, Pétsin." Nevertheless, when we weigh him out the price of his lambs, he again examines the money before putting it into a small bag hanging round his neck. When we give him a small handglass, he does not at first understand its use; but when the chief whom we hold prisoner sees himself in it, he laughs almost like an idiot, and explains the secret to his friend, the latter going off in high glee. As to the prisoner himself, he is quite at ease, and asks to be allowed to sleep where he is, only begging us to keep off the dogs and let him have a mirror. This we promise, and in the meanwhile pay him for his horse, which we fasten up close to our tents, whither we carry a whole heap of guns and swords belonging to the fugitives.

February 13.—Our dogs barked all night, and were answered by others in the distance, while, in the semi-darkness that pre-

cedes day, the wolves were howling dolefully. At this moment, as I go out of the tent, Rachmed comes to say that Imatch has just died. Yesterday, when I asked him how he was, he replied "Better," and, though his breath was short and his face swollen, he had drunk his tea with pleasure. He took an interest, too, in what was going on in the tent, and I had noticed him putting argols on the fire, from sheer force of habit, like the true man of the steppe he was. Placing him near the entrance to the tent, which was his favorite place, we had rolled him well up in his pelisse and rugs, and he had stretched himself out to sleep. When asked if there was anything he would like, he said "No," and we did not think his end was so near. Rachmed's account of his last moments was as follows :

"When the wolves howled, Imatch called out, 'Parpa, give me some water ; I am thirsty.' To which Parpa replied, 'The water is frozen, but I will go and light a fire and melt some ice for you to drink.' Then, when the ice was ready, Imatch drank it without help, but with some difficulty, and said how glad he was to quench his last thirst. Then he stretched himself out and began to groan a little. All at once he jumped up, went out of the tent on his knees, and returned to his couch. We got the tea ready, and offered him a cup as soon as it was made. But he could not keep down the first mouthful, and putting back the cup he called us all—'Timour, Isa, Abdallah, Parpa, Rachmed!' We all gathered round him, and raising himself on his elbow he uttered the following words, broken by sighs : 'I shall not arrive. Allah will not take me any further. Good-by. I am very pleased with you all. You have taken great care of me. Good-by. I am gone!' He fell back, and in a moment his spirit had fled."

Such is the narrative to which we listen by the glimmer of our lantern, for day has not yet dawned, and as soon as it is light we will bury him in a hollow spot down in the quagmire. Imatch had followed us all the way from Djarkent, from the frontier of Siberia. We all liked him ; for, if he was rough of speech, he was good-hearted, plucky, and a hard worker. He took great care of his camels, which had formerly belonged to him in part ;

but having fallen into the clutches of a usurer, he had to sell them and become the servant of his creditor, who had sold them to us for at least double what he had paid Imatch for them. As we paid him high wages, he reckoned upon being able to purchase back his camels and "become Imatch himself again," as he put it.

But Allah had decided otherwise, and the poor Kirghiz will not see his native steppe again. We lay him in the earth wrapped in the felt which served him for a bed. We turn his face to the southeast, and our men bring stones and earth to cover his body, while prayers are recited with the accompaniment of sobs and tears.

Then we prepare to start for the Namtso, which, according to our prisoner, is on the other side of a chain of hills over which our road leads. We set him at liberty, giving him presents, and letting him have the arms we captured yesterday; and we are scarcely gone before the fugitives of yesterday, who had evidently been watching us from the top of the mountain, come trotting toward him.

The certainty that the Tengri Nor—the Namtso, as the Tibetans say—is there gives us fresh vigor, and we only regret our horses cannot follow us, except by our dragging them by the bridle; they are barely capable of carrying our saddles, our bags, and our cloaks. Father Dedeken and Prince Henry have to abandon theirs, and only two were destined to see the holy lake.

When we reach the summit of the pass, we perceive the Ningling Tanla and the eastern extremity of the lake, and, as quickly as possible, we scale the neighboring heights, so as to take in a wider horizon.

At our feet, between cliffs to the west, from which descend promontories, forming gulfs and bays, glitters a beautiful silver mirror, round in shape, but oval like an egg. To the southwest the lake skirts a hill, and extends much further; but whether this hill forms part of an island or a peninsula we cannot tell. The Ningling Tanla arrests our attention much longer, as this chain unfolds before us its summits and peaks capped with snow, quite shutting out the horizon. We are struck by the

nearly equal altitude of this long row of peaks, surmounting spurs which descend toward the lake in regular rows like the tents of an encamped army; and just in the center we can see, towering over all the rest, four large icy peaks which the Thibetans revere, for behind them is Lhassa, the "city of the spirits."

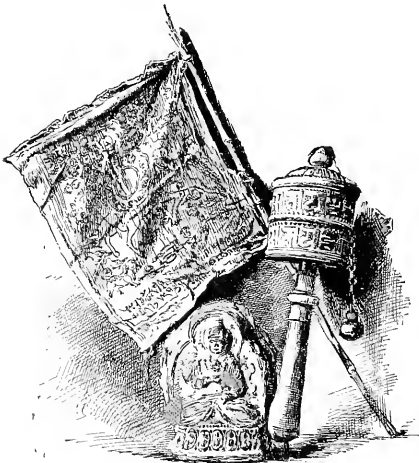
Descending the stony and sandy slope, we reached the shores of the lake, passing over last year's grass, which bears the marks of previous encampments and of the overflow of the waters when stirred by the tempest. Looking at the lake from the northern side, we did not see any snow upon the ridge which skirts it, whereas the Ningling Taula is quite white, thus illustrating the Thibetan saying, "The water of the Namtso is made of the snow of the Ningling Taula."

As we go southward the lake seems to open out in a south-westerly direction; and as long as the mist prevents us from seeing the end of it, we might take it be a boundless sea. The evening sun, striking the ice, makes it sparkle like jewels; and we can well appreciate the origin of its name, "the lake of heaven." Then, as the sun goes down, it becomes, as it touches the summit of the hills, like a block of ice; and finally, as it sinks behind them, there is a suffused glory of rose and gold, the contrast between the soft lines in our rear and the bristling line of mountains before us in the direction of Lhassa being very great. We may well ask if we shall ever be able to cross this seemingly insurmountable barrier, and our spirits do not rise when night sets in, and the wolves commence their sinister chorus.

CHAPTER X.

AWAITING ORDERS FROM LHASSA.

At Namtso—Encamping Near Ningling Tanla Pass—An Embassy—The Thibetans Undecided—The Caravan in Battle Array—A Mandarin—A Mongolian Interpreter—Arrival of the Amban from Lhassa—Giving Him Audience—His Suite and Their Costumes—A Long Interview—The Thibetans' New Year's Day—In the Amban's Tent—Hewers of Wood—Another Mongolian Interpreter—The Incuriousness of Thibetans—A Storm—Arrival of the Ta-Lama and the Ta-Amban—Plain Speaking—Refusal to Return—The Ta-Lama and the Ta-Amban Described—Abdullah and the Doungane at their Devotions—Colloquy Between Rachmed and Timour—Thibetans at Work—Their General Characteristics—Carnivorous Horses—The Samda-Kansain Chain and River—A Blade of Grass—How They Do Business at Lhassa.



RELIGIOUS INSIGNIA.

OUR arrival at Namtso is an important event for us. Although we are the first Europeans actually to behold it, it is marked on the maps, thanks to the researches of the pundit Nain-Singh. At last we are safe out of the unknown country in which we have been since leaving the pass of Amban-Achkan Davane, and we know now where we are. This thought would cheer us but for the pitiful condition of our little troop,

for our camels have no strength, and all means of transport will soon fail us.

We purpose staying here a day, not so much to rest our beasts—for they are too far gone to enjoy a rest—as to prolong their lives a little by letting them graze on the grass which surrounds our camp pretty thickly. Up till now we have not seen the envoys of the authorities at Lhassa, a fact which causes us

no little astonishment, for they ought to have been advised some time ago of our arrival, our stages having been very short ones since we first met with the men, and couriers having had plenty of time to convey the information.

It is probable, however, that we shall very soon have an opportunity of demanding an explanation from the natives, for a movement is visible in the little plain formed by the old bed of the lake. Bodies of men on horseback are passing at some distance from our camp, and are going south. Their intention, doubtless, is to gather at the pass by which we shall try to climb the Ningling Tanla. I say advisedly "shall try," for a worn-out band can attempt nothing with any assurance of success. Should we encounter a difficult road, we should have to stop, unless favored by luck which it does not do to count upon. We are not reduced, however, to the last extremity, for we have still provisions, meat, and tea enough for several months, besides sugar, preserved vegetables, and ammunition, while deer, ptarmigan, and koulanes are within shooting range, and make excellent food. But strength is failing, both in man and beast.

We pass the day shooting, and besides the meat of the koulanes, which we procure in this way, we enrich our collection of *gyphaetes* and vultures. On the borders of the lake we notice the steam from hot salt-springs, amid the rocks which rise at the north end of the lake. Here and there some stunted junipers are growing. It is a long time since we have seen any semblance of vegetation, and our men literally shout for joy. Our instruments tell us that we are at an altitude of 15,321 feet, this being very near to the estimate of Nain-Singh, who puts it at 15,400 feet.

February 15.—To-day we do another ten miles to the south, crossing at the head of the lake a river which runs into it. This river divides into several small arms which thaw during a part of the day only, and that merely on the surface, so that the water flows on the top of the ice. Whilst crossing it some of us have an unexpected foot-bath, a thing to which we have for a long time been strangers.

We proceeded to set up our tents not far from the pass which crosses the Ningling Tanla, on the east of which are some superb peaks, the two highest of which we christened Huc and Gabet, in memory of the courageous missionaries who penetrated to Lhasa.

On the other side of the ice we were awaited by some of the horsemen whom we had seen, and among their number was one who spoke Mongolian a little. He was in the midst of a group of men whose costume, which was comparatively clean, showed them to be chiefs. All around us were scattered, at a respectful distance, numerous small bands, making several hundred men in all, so that we closed in our ranks and grasped our rifles. The first use we made of the interpreter, who approached to present to us his superiors, was to ask him to inform his compatriots that we should fire on any horsemen who approached us, and that consequently they would do well to keep their distance until we had seen the "great chiefs," with whom we wished to speak, and from whom we should learn whether we were in a friendly or hostile country. We added that, according to the custom of our own country, it would be becoming to wait until we had pitched our tents before conversing, and at the same time, by the help of our whips, we scattered several who had come too close.

When we had pitched our tents on a slight elevation to the left of the road, the ambassadors came up and were received by Dedeken and Abdullah at the fire of the Doungane. Their first business was to hand us, as presents, some packets of rancid butter, and a stone bottle of European manufacture, containing a spirit made out of barley, and not unpalatable. They then informed us, through Akkan, that they had been sent from Lhasa to ask us who we were. During the conversation we examined their horses, which seemed excellent. Their baggage was transported by mules, which were very strong though of small build. After some time, through one of our men, they asked permission to visit us, but we refused under the plea that we did not speak their language, and that they were not of

sufficiently high rank. It is absolutely necessary to give people a high opinion of yourself when you are traveling in the East and meet with strangers. As they quitted the camp we saw that they were well clothed, in the Chinese fashion, that they were taller and stouter than those of their fellow-countrymen whom we had so far come across, and that, from their polished manners, they evidently belonged to a town.

Dedeken and Abdullah reported their conversation to us. They presented themselves to us as envoys of the Tale Lama and of the Amban of Lhassa, the former being the highest religious authority and the latter one of the greatest civic personages, a sort of Under-Secretary of State. They wished to see our papers, to know who we were, for what purpose we were traveling, etc. By way of answer to these questions we complained of the way in which we had been received *en route*; adding that we could not obtain any help, purchase provisions, or hire beasts of burden; that we failed to understand such treatment, seeing that we had paid generously for what we had bought on the first day, but that, notwithstanding, we had been obliged to seize things by force; and that if they continued to treat us as highwaymen, we should behave as such. Thereupon a lama, clad in yellow silk and decorated with the bright blue button, spoke volubly and expressed his regrets that we had been so treated, begging us to understand that no one looked for proper behavior from savages, from "Si fantse," assuring us at the same time that we should, for the future, have no cause to complain. Finally, he urged us to hand him our papers, and to remain where we were, when our wants would be supplied. Dedeken replied that we had need of rest, and that we wished to stop at a more convenient spot. Abdullah made us laugh by repeating the illustrations he had used when speaking to these savages, as, when he handed them sugar and bade them remark its whiteness, "Such is the whiteness of our intentions," or, when they drank their tea, "You like it, though before you drank it you did not like it. So it will be with us; when you have made our acquaintance you will like us as much as you do the tea."

We comment on the events of the day, seated round our pot, in which the rancid butter they have given us is melting and emitting a somewhat disagreeable odor. We come to the conclusion that the Thibetans do not know what to decide, and that their orders with regard to us are vague. It is probable that we might pursue our journey without their daring to stop us; but, unfortunately, we have no means of advancing, for our beasts are dying. We determine, however, to move on the morrow as far as possible, convinced that the stage will be an exceedingly short one.

February 16.—The envoys return to the charge, and try to convince us that we could not do better than stay where we are. They again ask for our papers, and this time learn our nationality. We send them back without any answer, merely urging them to find a better interpreter of Mongolian, for we cannot understand one another.

We set out on our journey in our best battle-array, with rifles on shoulders, for the plain swarms with horsemen. It seems as though they had mustered all their warriors—doubtless to frighten us. We enter the pass, which rises gently over the ridges, at the bottom of which twists a frozen river. Nothing happens as we cross it, and on the other side we find waiting the envoys whom we had seen the night before. They beg us to remain so as to talk amicably with the Amban, who is on his way from Lhassa, for they have already made preparations to receive him at the bottom of the pass. On the left bank of the frozen river which we are descending, we see numerous black tents, yaks with pack-saddles, and some roomy white canvas tents. We refuse to halt, protesting that we do not understand what they say, as none of them speaks Chinese. Thereupon one of them, the lama, clad in yellow, whose features had already already revealed to us his Chinese origin, proceeds immediately to address us in that language. "Stop, I beg of you," he urges; "beyond the pass you will find bitter water, no grass; it is a regular desert. You may believe me; if, however, you doubt my word, I will lend you my horse, and you can assure yourself that I am speaking the truth."

My first thought was to accept this offer, and ask for two horses; to rejoin our camels, which had gone on a little ahead during these negotiations; to order Rachmed to put up tea, sugar, bread, and meat for a week, and then to make with him for Lhassa. But this would have meant leaving our companions in a difficult position, and I quickly abandoned the idea, for this was no time for quitting the helm. At the very moment when these thoughts occurred to me one of our camels fell, never to rise again, and our last horse also fell, so we ordered the vanguard to draw back.

At the same time, escorted by horsemen, and very closely muffled, a mandarin with the blue button comes up, dismounts, and, raising the formidable glasses which shade his eyes, discloses to us a smooth face, intelligent and affable. Our interpreter presents him to us as the Amban himself, who wishes to greet us immediately on his arrival, and asks an audience for the morrow.

He then retires, leaving us to discuss matters with the lama (who speaks Chinese) and his interpreter. The latter is a Mongol, with a fat, jovial, smiling face, with thick lips, beyond which protrudes a very long tooth, giving him when he gapes—and he is always gaping—a good-natured appearance. He assures us that the Amban is a very good fellow, and that we shall be well satisfied when we have once discussed our affairs the next day with him. We try to drag some information out of him, but he shows a remarkable discretion, and our questions only make him leave us quicker than he would otherwise have done. He is evidently restrained by the presence of the Chinese lama, or perhaps he is discreet in obedience to strict orders.

February 17.—Things have not turned out badly, and we still hope to reach Ba-Tang. It is a question of committing no blunder, of winning over the natives, of inspiring them with confidence. It is exactly three months since our departure from Tcharkalik, during which time we have lived in a desert, climbed many mountain chains, drunk frozen water, lit fires with dead wood, and shivered under the west wind. And to-day we awake at a

height of 17,560 feet. A strong west wind is blowing, and we are just going to drink our tea round our miserable little fire. The only change in our existence is that our advance is checked through want of strength, and also because the object which we have in view is still so very far off that we can never hope to reach it with our own resources; and, therefore, we must get all the help we can from these Thibetans.

Our circumstances certainly leave much to be desired. In the first place the food is such that the least susceptible appetite wearies of it. Our bill of fare is always the same: meat boiled in mutton fat, tea that never really boils on account of our altitude, and made with water that is sometimes brackish and always dirty, which we get by melting ice that is full of impurities. The frozen meat, too, which we have to chop with an ax, is always tough, and never cooked through, while, when we try vegetables or rice, we find it impossible to soften them, and they crackle between our teeth. The dust, mud, and sand that we have swallowed, and the numerous hairs from our furs and beasts which we find in our food, are things to which we have long ceased to pay any attention, for here we have no longer any pretensions to cleanliness, and we have come to consider even a washing of the hands as a thing of the past. Our cheeks puffed out with the cold, our swollen eyes, our chapped lips, do not differ much in appearance from those of the natives; and with such an aspect we cannot make a very good impression upon people who see us for the first time. We must trust to our actions to rectify the erroneous impression which, at first sight, we cannot fail to convey.

But here is someone to announce the Amban. We stretch a clean skin in our men's tent, which is of considerable size, and firmly await the arrival of the plenipotentiary from Lhasa. He arrives on foot, accompanied by from fifteen to twenty inferior chiefs of various sizes. Having saluted us politely and with ease, he presents us with the *cata*, the scarf which is the native visiting card, and lays presents at our feet—bands of a cotton stuff called *poulou*, red and yellow and worked with

small crosses; then butter in sewn skins, and sacks of zamba, *i. e.*, fried barleymeal. We beg him to take a seat in our tent, whereupon one of his men lays down a small carpet on which he takes his place. On his right is an old lama, whose head reminds us of a wrinkled apple—beardless, with shaven head, fat and insignificant, with a rosary in his hand. On his left is the Chinese mandarin, wearing a rich Chinese costume. He has regular features, smooth chin, thick lips, white teeth, swollen eyelids, dark, contracted eyes with a sly look, and altogether a face that is cunning and sarcastic. Next are drawn up, on the side of the tent which is not reserved for us, various lamas, who crowd together near the entrance, whilst a crowd of servants stand and watch the proceedings. These lamas are of an inferior rank, and have the tanned faces of men who live much in the open. Their features are large, and many of them have a Mongolian cast, with their snub noses, prominent cheek bones, and small eyes; at all events, they seem to us by no means of pure Thibetan blood.



THE PETTY AMBAN.

Their headdresses are many and various, ranging from the Chinese hat to the crusader's cap, the half-turban of the date of Charles VII., and monk's hood; we can recognize them all. The cut and color of their clothes, too, vary, and they wear red, green, yellow, and black. Our tent reminds us of a stage on which the actors are preparing to play *La Tour de Nesle*, with the characters clad in the garments of the Middle Ages. These lamas in their variegated and picturesque costumes do not look ill-disposed, and as is becoming to "supers," do not breathe a single word, but squat there on their heels, with an air of disregard for what is going on. The leading character is evidently the Amban, a man of moderate size, and quick action. His face is broad and round, his eyes, which are black and of a European cast, have a look of sincerity in them; his lips are thick, his nose straight and broad at the end; his forehead prominent, his hair plaited, and done up in bands like that of European women. Altogether he looks a man of considerable intelligence. He speaks in a hoarse voice, telling his beads with long, tapering fingers, and keeping his head bent toward the ground. He pours forth a long tirade in a single breath and a monotonous voice: "We have orders to stop you wherever we meet you, and to force you to retrace your steps," he first remarks. We reply with a smile that they must not think of making us draw back one single step, for we are sick of those table-lands. As to stopping us, that would be useless, since we have halted here for a conference. But, though tired, we do not want to rest too long, for we are anxious to reach a milder climate.

"Will you go back?"

"No, no," we reply; "we would rather die. Ask any one of our men whether he would not prefer to die straight off than to go through that fearful journey again."

"We will supply you with all you want for the return."

"It is no good talking of that, for our mind is fully made up. Please do not reopen the question, for you will only waste your time. Besides, even if we were willing, we could not do so, for

without camels we could not manage it, and you have none to give us."

"Where then do you want to go?"

"Merely to rest in some convenient spot, for we are sick and worn-out. We have no more horses, our camels are dying, two of our servants are dead, and to force us to stop here would mean death to us."

"After you have rested, where will you go?"

"We will make for Ba-Tang, and then, striking the Yang-Tse-Kiang, follow it to the sea."

"What is the object of your journey?"

"Simply to look about, to shoot, and to improve our minds."

"Have you seen the Khan of the Torgutes?"

"No, we have not."

"By what road did you come?"

"By one that we discovered for ourselves."

"Did you leave your own country long ago?"

"It was summer when we left it last year."

"Are you Russians?"

"No, we are not."

What we say does not seem to convince them. The Amban pronounces a few words, and someone brings in a packet enveloped in a packing cloth. From it he produces a box which he opens, and draws out a paper folded like a cravat. This he reads and then asks for the details of our journey. How many there were at starting, how many horses and camels we had had, what arms, our names, and those of our men, etc.

We reply to each question, and the Chinese mandarin writes down the names of each of us in a fashion. The three envoys then interchange a few words, after which the Amban, taking the sheet again, says, "Here is an order which I received two months ago from Peking. It is an order to stop the Russians, Pètsou* of Petsokon, arriving with Lobolou and thirty men." (Then followed a list of camels, guns, etc.) "You are neither Pètsou nor Lobolou, for the names which you have given us do not in the least resemble these. Written information has reached

* Petzoff, of St. Petersburg, and Roborovsky.

us that Niklaï (Nicholas Prjevalsky) is dead, and that Pètsou has taken command of the men whom he had got together so as to reach Lhassa. We have also been told that other Russians,* less numerous, are traveling in the district of the Koukou-Nor, and that they are possibly making for Lhassa by the Tsaïdame road. Are you these Russians?"

"We are not Russians at all."

"Then you are Pélin (*i. e.*, English)?"

"No."

"You must know that the English are the enemies of our people, many of whom they have killed with their far-carrying guns, and our people do not want the English to penetrate into Thibet at any price."

"No, we are not English, we are French."

As, however, our Mongolian interpreter renders "French" by "Tarang" and then translates "Tarang" into Thibetan by "Pélin," the Amban believes us to acknowledge that we are English, a contradiction that he cannot understand. The only means by which we can explain our nationality is to use the Chinese expression while addressing the lama who speaks this language, consequently we say to him, "We are ta fa kié" *i. e.*, Frenchmen.

The lama who acts as secretary thereupon makes a short explanation in Thibetan to his chief, who finishes by understanding that we are a distinct people from the English, and excuses himself for his mistake in these words, "Never having seen any Frenchmen before, we cannot, of course, recognize them. However, allow me to withdraw now, so that I may consult with my chiefs; to-morrow you shall have an answer."

Such, in brief, was our first conversation, which had lasted several hours, through the necessity of having two interpreters. Besides, these men would not trust us, and laid traps for us, repeating questions that we had already answered, and returning suddenly to a point that seemed settled, so to assure themselves that our story did not vary. The conversation was interspersed with continual cups of tea, drunk out of the most beautiful Chinese ware, while the Amban's cup was of green jade. Hav-

* The brothers Grum Grmail.

ing caught cold on the journey here, they were forever coughing, and using their handkerchiefs, which consist of a cotton stuff ("poulou") sewn in the shape of the cover of a book, which they open and shut just if it were an actual book, and place in their bosoms. They repeatedly, too, took snuff, which is a white powder. Sometimes it is in a flat bottle with a scoop attached to the cork, in other cases it is shaken out of a cylindrical metal box, which has a cover closing by means of a pin. Depositing the snuff on the thumb-nail, they sniff it up with great satisfaction, and then pass the box on to their neighbors.

At last, however, the list of our little troop was completed, but the rustic lama, who had ticked us off on his rosary, made us out to be eleven instead of twelve, because Parpa had been forgotten, with the result that the whole process of enumerating and reading out our names had to be gone through again, while he again ticked them off. All these operations were performed very leisurely and steadily, as befits men of high rank who have plenty of time to lose, so that this first conference lasted about five hours.

The Amban will now write and tell his superiors what he has learnt from our mouths, and they will then inform him what line of conduct he is to pursue. Meanwhile, he will supply us with provisions, for we do not want to use up the small supply we have in stock. To do that would place us entirely in their hands, and we are quite in the dark as to what the future has in store for us. We mean, therefore, to live on the sheep and meal with which they will supply us.

February 20.—We employ the time we have to remain in the pass of Dam, by studying the Thibetans of high degree and the lamas. We begin with a festival, for this is their New Year's Day, and they keep up the feast for five days more. Early in the morning the interpreter had come to invite us to the Amban's tent to celebrate the day with him. This fine old Mongolian had put on a sort of red hood for the occasion, and had evidently been drinking; for his eyes were more brilliant than they generally are, and besides, he emits an odor of arrack,

which at once proclaims the reason of his good-humor and beaming smile. "Come," said he, "come at once. It is the first day of the new year, and the Amban is impatient to see you. He has prepared a feast, too, for you, so come directly."

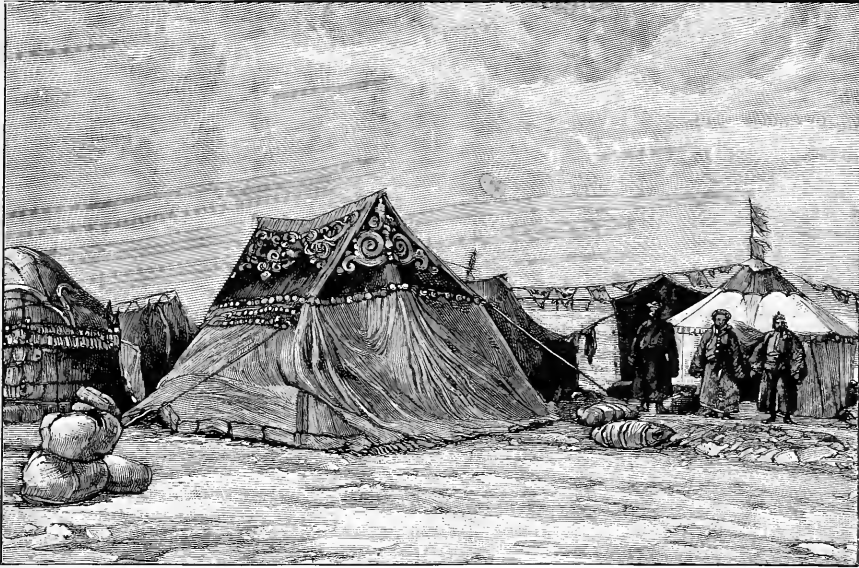
We at once make our way down toward their camp, which lies below ours on the other side of the ice; numerous black tents surrounding the white ones which the Amban and the chiefs occupy. There is a perpetual coming and going of servants, who are being assisted by the savage inhabitants of the table-land, whose right arms, in spite of the severity of the weather, are outside their tunics, while half of their body appears completely bare. It is they who gather the dead wood, search for ice, cut up the animals they kill, look after the saddle-horses, mules, and yaks, and keep the fire burning by means of a skin in which they very cleverly imprison the air, which is then forced out through an iron tube plunged in the heap of dead wood. The tents form a pretty picture, reminding one of a bedecked fleet, as the garlands of prayers, running from top to top, wave in the breeze. The camp itself is all alive with men, while the mountain sides swarm with yaks, which have transported the provisions for the hundred or two hundred souls who are honoring us with their presence. In front of the Amban's tent is an open one which does duty as kitchen, and near it we perceive a man who looks as though he were making butter in a jar, but he is really mixing it in the tea.

The Amban himself, who is awaiting us in front of his tent, sends some servants to help us over the ice, which they do by holding us up by the arms, for we are guests of no small consequence. We mount the bank, along the bottom of which great care is necessary in walking, and the Amban advances to meet us with a smile that stretches right across his smooth round face.

At his request we precede him into his tent, which is a four-sided one with a square sloping roof. As the Amban is a layman, a servant with long hair, hanging in a plait, lifts the curtain as we enter. The Amban invites us to take our seats on a sort of dais to the right of the entrance, a second one, a little higher

than ours, being reserved for him at the other end. He sits on it, cross-legged, on a tiger-skin, with cushions at his back, covered, some of them with Chinese silk, and others, if I mistake not, with India muslin.

We wish him a Happy New Year and good health, not forgetting to add, as is our way in Champagne, "and Paradise after-



TENT OF THE ENVOYS FROM LHASSA.

ward," a formula, which, to satisfy a believer in the transmigration of souls, is rendered, "We wish you a still better place after death." He thanks us profusely, and expresses his pleasure that we should have met for their greatest *fête*, adding, "This is a good omen, for those who pass New Year's Day together become good friends."

"We have no doubt on this point, for, as a matter of fact, we have no ill-feeling toward you. We look upon you as an honorable man, with whom we would gladly be good friends." And so on for about twenty minutes, as is the custom in the East—a ceremony which we may compare with the salute before an assault.

Then, we ask him when his superiors' reply will come.

"Very soon," he said.

"We should take it as a great favor if you would let us know what you mean by this word 'very soon,' for in some countries it means 'in an hour,' in others 'in a day,' or 'in a year.' What does it mean with you?"

The Mongolian interpreter seemed more than ever under the influence of arrack, so loud was his laugh, and when the words were translated to him, the Amban laughed too. "It is quite true," he replied, "that there ought not to be any misunderstanding about the meaning of words, and I may tell you that 'very soon' means in this case 'in about six days,' for our chiefs will doubtless want to consult the Chinese mandarin. He is not in Lhasa, but lives at two days' journey west of that town. I am very sorry for this delay, but it cannot be helped."

Meanwhile the chief of the lamas who are here enters the tent, and takes his seat on the left-hand side of the Amban on the same dais. Before them stands a small table bearing their teacups with silver lids, into which some young men are constantly pouring from earthenware teapots the mixture of tea and butter. One of them has evidently snatched the teapot out of the hands of a comrade who wishes to prevent him from coming into the tent, and is holding him back by the skirt of his robe. In order to free himself, he is violently kicking backward, whilst lifting the curtain with a beaming smile on his face.

We remained a long time with the Amban, drinking his tea and butter, which he was incessantly offering us, together with sweetmeats, consisting of pastry and queer-looking objects, not particularly attractive to the eye, which we all liked. I must, however, mention some nuts preserved in sugar.

The conversation flagged but little, turning all the time on our situation. We complained of our forced stay here, and of our not being allowed to enjoy a much-needed rest, and said we failed to understand this fashion of receiving strangers. To this the Amban replied that he was merely obeying orders, that no one wished us ill, that their customs were different from ours,

and that in a very few days, after the *fête* was over, everything would be arranged in accordance with our wishes.

The first thing that strikes us in examining the tent is the quantity of sacred objects in every corner. Around the center pole, which supports the roof, twines, like ivy, a cluster of little niches, like those in which the orthodox place their images. To the left of the Amban an altar has been reared upon some chests, on the top of which is an image of Buddha, inclosed in a gilded case; in front is a line of seven little copper cups containing saffron and oil; a light is glimmering, and perfumes are burning in a box, whilst odoriferous sticks, placed in teapots, are smoldering away; on the two steps of the altar stand some little figures, cut in butter, amongst which I can distinguish a sheep's head without horns, having on the forehead protuberances of white sugar, some small columns of the same material, and, in saucers, pieces of confectionery offered as a holocaust to the divinity.

After having drunk a great many cups of tea, we express a wish to retire, whereupon the Amban, supported by the chief lama, reiterates once more what he had already repeated a score of times: "Let us try and arrange the business we have in hand," he urges, "don't let us disagree," and, so saying, he presses together the inside of his thumbs, and, insisting on our friendship, makes use of this comparison: "Two beautiful porcelain cups placed together on a table look very well. But knock them together and they break to pieces. Don't let us clash, don't let us clash," he repeats, as he rises to show us the way out. As we go out everyone salutes us with a smile, and it is easy to see that their orders are not to give us needless offense. Just as we start, a flourish of trumpets is heard above us, and, lifting our eyes, we perceive huge garlands fluttering on the summit of the perpendicular granite rocks which overhang the left of the camp. These garlands consist of yaks' tails interspersed between pieces of colored stuffs imprinted with prayers. Near them are seated some lamas holding trumpets, from which proceed excruciating sounds that rend the air and are:

reëchoed on the mountains. When they are not blowing these instruments, they are chanting prayers in a rhythmic cadence, forming a chorus in which deep bass voices support shrill trebles.

Under pretext of taking a walk, we direct our steps toward a black tent which has quite recently been pitched in the roadway of the pass above our camp. We see squatted round a wood fire eight long-haired men under the command of a shorn lama. They are conversing quietly, and smoking a little pipe formed of an earthenware bowl and a bone stem, which they hand round to each other in turn. These are the poor wretches whose work it is to gather the dead wood, and who have no part in the New Year's celebrations. What we took for a tent in the distance is really only half a tent, a mere shelter of black sackcloth, open on the side from which there is no wind. They sleep there on a little straw and chips; in a corner stand their bows and lances, and in the middle three stones form a fireplace for use on windy days. Their simple dress is cut out of sheepskins, frayed at the lower extremities, full of holes, and extraordinarily dirty. Their faces, blackened with grease and smoke, suggest the purest type of savage that one can imagine. On looking at their narrow heads we ask ourselves what brains they can possibly inclose, and are by no means astonished at the unusual authority which the lamas exercise over beings so very unintelligent, so little capable of any self-will, whose sensations cannot differ much from those of their yaks and dogs. Let us hope that all the Thibetans do not resemble this band of animals with the face of man.

We leave them to regale ourselves on a sheep's head that has been cooked under the wood on the fire, just as we roast potatoes in the ashes, and excellent it is. Travelers on the steppes often cook their meat in this way, because there is no flame or smoke to betray them.

So draws to its close the first day of the Thibetan year, and as we wrap ourselves in our blankets the lamas recommence their prayers, and are still chanting as we fall asleep.

February 21.—In continuation of the festival, the trumpets resound on the heights of the cliffs, there is singing in the camp,

and the garlands of prayers are waving in the west wind. The first event of the day is a visit from another interpreter, a Mongolian lama, a native of Ourga, a town lying in Chinese Mongolia, not far from the frontiers of Siberia. He is of a moderate height, very alert, very vigorous, and a big liar, as he soon proves, when he explains that he comes from Lhassa, and that, having lost his way, he "chanced" to find himself at the spot where we had buried Imatch. He had probably been sent to make sure of Imatch's nationality, for we had returned him as a Kalmuck, and, if he has examined him at close quarters, he will certainly have taken him for such, for poor Imatch had the very small nose and the ugliness of that race. The new interpreter examines our men, and declares them to be natives of North Turkestan. Then, without losing a moment, he proceeds to insinuate that he would be very thankful for the gift of a revolver.

February 22.—To-day the Mongolian interpreter makes a confidant of poor silly Abdullah, telling him that if he (the interpreter) remains here it will only be because he has no money wherewith to return home. He makes out that he arrived here some time before with a caravan of pilgrims, that he then fell ill and was obliged to stop here, but that he is ever thinking of his home at Ourga; throwing himself on our generosity to help him. Although we do not place too much faith in his story, it seems to us at least probable, for accidents of this sort must often happen in Thibet, just as they were formerly of not unfrequent occurrence in the Holy Land. In vain do we "pump" him for information with respect to ourselves; he either knows nothing, or will say nothing.

March 1.—Since the 21st of February we have received visits from the smaller chiefs, who sometimes brought us little presents, and also accepted with pleasure gifts of sugar, and especially of raisins, which they are very fond of. They have passed a good deal of time in our men's tents, examining our arms, and listening gladly to the rather unmelodious notes of an accordion. Every now and then they would suddenly put a question to us, evidently trying to catch us contradicting ourselves, and then,

with unheard-of patience, would sit waiting for an opportunity to beg, in the most natural manner possible, for an explanation which we had already given. All the time they observed us narrowly, though they were very polite, as is their way. We might find considerable amusement in watching the manner in which they transact their business, were it not that many of our men are ill; some are suffering from sickness, others from diarrhea, the latter, we think, being caused by the water we drink, which is drawn from under the ice, at the source of the river which flows down to Lake Namtso. The cold is certainly less keen, the minimum varying from between 4° and 9° below zero, but we suffer exceedingly from the northwest winds. All our camels, too, are dying one after the other, without any apparent malady; they are simply used up. Their dead bodies attract numerous gypætes, some of which we bring down. One of them emits a strong odor of musk, and Parpa hastens to remove its fat. The lama from Ourga begs us to give him the bodies, so that he may cut out certain portions of them, the liver amongst others, in order to make medicines of them. But being a lama, he does this work by night, for fear of being seen by the savages, as it is, it seems, *infra dig.* for him to do such things.

Laden yaks arrive almost daily, sometimes by night, from the south; so we conclude that more people are coming to Dam, which is the name of the spot where we are. On the 28th ult. the interpreters advised us that the answer would soon be here, and begged us not to lose patience. The same day the Amban, accompanied by the principal lamas, went on an excursion—scaling the heights which border the pass, so as to catch a glimpse of Lake Namtso, which he had never seen. This fact proves that the inhabitants of Lhasa do not often travel out of their own district, or that they do not care for exercise of this kind, however conducive to health it may be. At all events, the Namtso is supposed to be the largest piece of water in Thibet, and is regarded as sacred, under the name of “Heavenly Lake,” and yet here are civil and religious personages who have never taken the trouble to come and see it.

March 2.—Yesterday morning early the sky was overcast, and when the storm burst, the valley disappeared in the dust. All night it blew a gale, and several tents belonging to the Thibetans were carried away in a squall, but we were all right in ours, which is a fourfold one, for the Amban had given us a beautiful double tent, which we had thrown over ours, so that besides the extra thickness, there is room between them in which to store various articles, and also for an entrance hall. The whole is strengthened by huge stones, with the result that it defies the wind. The minimum temperature last night was 10° below zero, and several of us complained, on waking, of headache—the usual effect of mountain storms, even if they occur during sleep. Toward midday a snow cloud passed over us, and a strong north-west wind was blowing, a very different thing from the west wind which comes up across the Namtso, rushing through the pass. In the afternoon our long-toothed friend brought us a little milk, which we had been asking for to give our invalids, and at the same time he informed us that the great chiefs would soon be here. We had suspected this from the early morning, for numerous yaks with loads had arrived during the night, and we had seen men, with great difficulty, pitching a large tent, and had been amused to see a strong gust of wind carrying off the canvas. The perpetual coming and going of men, the general commotion, and the fact of the lesser chiefs superintending the work, had aroused our suspicions, which the indiscretion of the interpreter had only served to confirm. So, when he had left us, we took up our position at a suitable spot with our glasses, and fixed our eyes on the descent of the pass.

First come into sight pack horses well harnessed, and having on their necks tinkling bells or tufts of red (the color denoting authority), then horsemen, well attired, who lose their way amidst the bogs, not seeming to know the path made below the ridges, which is reached by a detour. Some long-haired savages shout to them, others hasten to meet them, take their bridles and help their beasts over the ice, while on their arrival in camp, the occupants of all the tents rush out and surround them. They

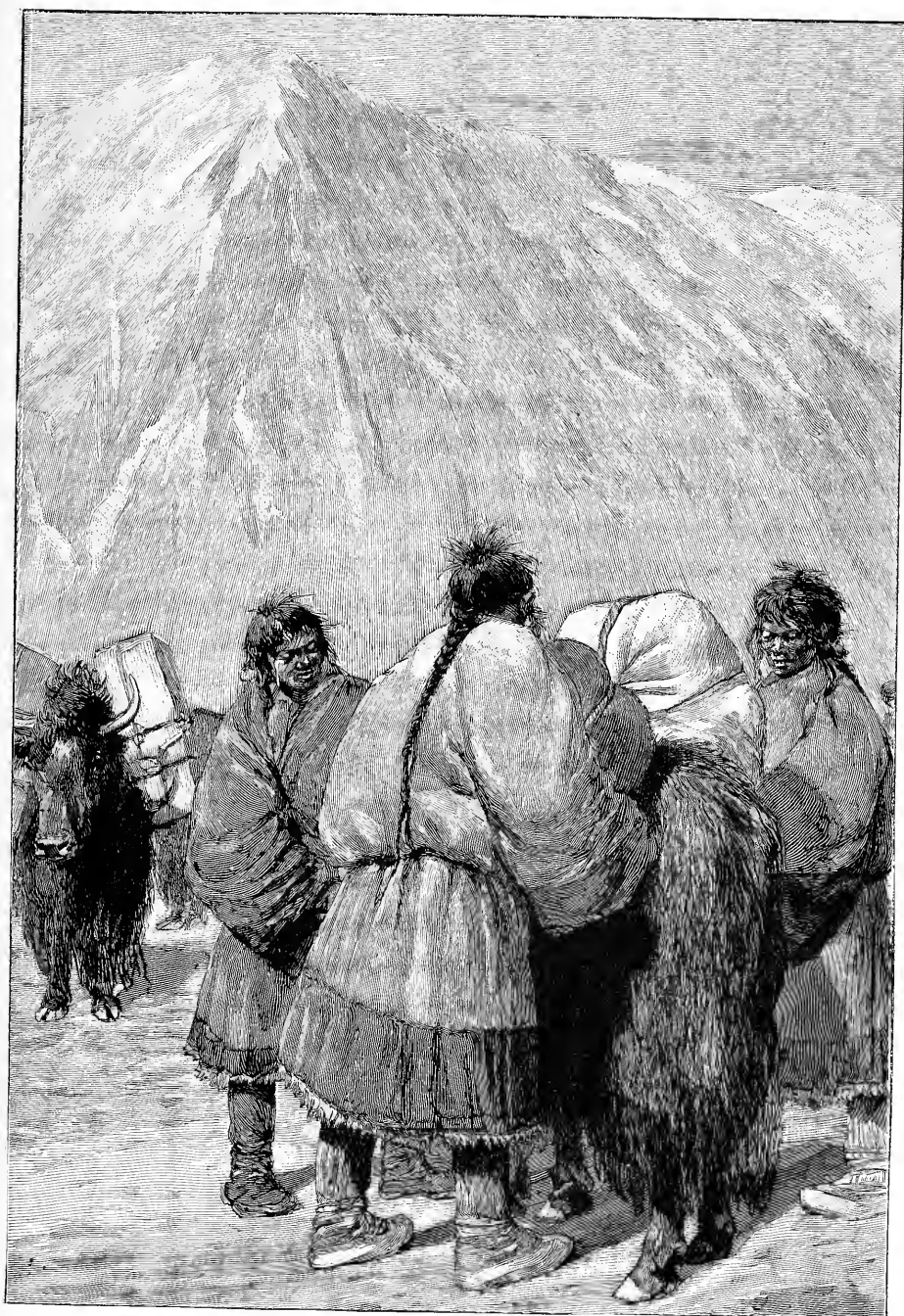
form, however, but the vanguard, for the camp is now filled with excitement, and servants set out in the direction of the pass.

It is not long before we catch sight of the great chiefs mounted on quick, surefooted horses, which drag along the men who are holding on to their bridles by way of leading them. We make out three important personages amongst them. Covered with furs lined with yellow silk, they look so fat and enormous that we wonder they do not crush their agile little horses. On their heads they wear the feathered hats of the Chinese mandarins, but over them a hood which covers their neck and face, of which absolutely nothing is visible, for their eyes are protected by prominent glasses, which again, as an additional precaution, are overhung by a visor. Behind them, with a great noise of bells, trots a large escort in varied costumes. Though this spectacle presents a certain amount of pomp, it yet seems ridiculous.

In the camp all the civic and religious chiefs stand awaiting the mandarins in a row, and when the latter arrive, they each make a deep bow, remaining where they stood. The Amban alone approaches them, and congratulates two of them with whom he shakes hands. Then, without dismounting, they go to their appointed tents, the crowd disperses, and everybody returns to his work. When we reflect that all these people are gathered here because of us, we realize that they are paying us a high compliment.

Meanwhile, however, a little drama is being enacted in our camp. The Doungane's camel had been for two days uttering plaintive groans, being evidently unwell, and now to-day, just two months before her time of sixteen months has expired, she gives birth to a dead calf. The poor mother licks and smells it, hanging over it and crying plaintively. Timour is very sorry at its death, for, he said, "The little thing had humps enough to become a perfect camel."

Then the interpreters arrive, and ask us to grant an audience to the great men who had just arrived. We reply that we shall be very happy to receive them at once. When our answer has been transmitted, quite a large band makes its way to our tent,



THIBETANS LOADING A YAK.



preceded by two individuals who are sumptuously attired in the Chinese style. These two approach arm in arm, and one of them, small, short, round, and bent in the back, leans heavily on his companion's arm. With a venerable air these two approach slowly, stopping to take breath every fifteen steps. Perhaps this mode of procession is meant to be in good form, to impress us, and give us plenty of time to go politely and meet them. But we are rude enough to remain in our tent, and only go out of it when they have got on to our ground. We then exchange salutations with the two chiefs, who are introduced to us as the Ta-Lama and the Ta-Amban, after which some porters deposit at our feet five sacks—one of rice, one of zamba, one of meal, one of Chinese peas, and one of butter. Then we invite the two ambassadors to enter our tent, where skins are spread ready for them. The simplicity of our furniture is evidently a surprise to them, for they appear to hesitate, and make difficulties before entering. Then, when once they have entered, they ask permission to sit on their own little rugs, and their servants lay down for one of them a wildcat's-skin, and for the other a small mattress lined with silk. They apologize for these precautions on the score of their age and fatigue.

The three who had been the first to enter into negotiations with us take their seats near them, in front of us, and the conversation commences. At first it consists only of small civilities.

"How are you?" said Ta-Lama.

"Not at all well, for this is a wretched place."

This answer rather disconcerts them; they had evidently expected greater amiability from us, and our old acquaintance, the Amban, hangs his head, for he had represented us as well-mannered people. We ask them, in our turn, whether they have had a pleasant journey.

"Yes, although the road is a bad one. We had to travel by easy stages on account of our age. The festival of the New Year, too, has delayed us, for otherwise you would have seen us much sooner. This festival we are obliged to keep in compliance with our religion."

Then come questions about ourselves and the object of our travels, to which we make the same reply as we have already made at least twenty times to their subordinate, the Amban, while they repeat his proposals.

“You will now retrace your steps.”

“No, that is impossible.”

“If you will, we will supply you with all that you want. This is the best course for you to pursue, and we shall part good friends. Think over my suggestion, which I advise you to accept. I venture to hope that we shall not fall out, for we have come without any soldiers, though we might have brought some from Lhasa. That proves our good intentions.”

“It is quite useless your proposing that we should return, and advising us to reflect, for we do not speak without having already reflected. We have come from the West, urged on by fate, by a force which has carried us across deserts by a road which you yourselves do not know. Our aim is to go to Ba-Tang and then to Tonquin, there to rejoin our fellow-countrymen, who are living on land which we have taken from the Emperor of China. You are powerless against our resolution, and you may rely upon it that we will not take one single step northward. You do not frighten us in the least, for we have come from the end of the world without being stopped, and we shall now pursue our way onward, and you will help us. It is for you rather than for us to reflect, and you will see that Buddha himself wills it thus. We would rather die than return. That is our last word.”

As the sun is now setting they rise to leave us, evidently put out at our having so expressed ourselves before their escort. They bid us farewell, and before they have gone very far, wishing to have the last word, the Ta-Lama repeats “Reflect, reflect.”

To which I reply in French, very disrespectfully, “All right, old fellow.” (*Oui, mon vieux!*)

“What does he say?”

“He is merely saying ‘Good-night’ in his own language,” replies Abdullah.

The two great chiefs then departed, while we remained to fight

the question out with the Amban and the two others with whom we had already been dealing. The Amban who, as we begin to believe, has taken a fancy to us, was very vexed.

“Whatever made you speak like that to my chiefs? Remember that they are the two first men at Lhassa, and have as much power as the Ministers. Do be more amiable to-morrow. Tell me what you want, and I will talk to them accordingly. Only do not change your minds meanwhile, for if you contradict me, they will accuse me of having sold myself to you, and of having espoused your interests, and even tried to get for you more than you ask for.”

“Our wish is to go to Ba-Tang. You will furnish us with the means of transport and provisions, and we will pay for them. That is what we want to-day, and what we shall not cease to want until we obtain it.”

“I will mention it to my chiefs, but can insist on nothing, for if I did they would only distrust us, and lay an information against us, with the result that we should be cruelly punished.”

With these words they leave, and we go to warm ourselves at the fire, and confide to one another the impressions which the two ambassadors have made on us. They are so unlike that they seem as though they had been created to present a striking antithesis. The Ta-Lama is thin and nervous, with the small dark eyes of a European, very bright and very straight; his nose is pointed, and a prominent chin is made to appear still longer, owing to a plaited tuft of hair that is twisted in the shape of a rat's tail. His face has a wary look, and a smile which might be either benevolent or ironical, but seems rather Mephistophelian. When he smiles he shows his white teeth, and when he speaks, it is at a rapid pace and in a monotonous voice, as though he were repeating a litany. His indifferent attitude shows that he attaches no importance whatever to his own words; but his eyes are forever busy in examining us. He affects utter indifference, but all the time betrays his pre-occupation of mind by the nervous way in which, with dry, thin hands, and long nails, like a falcon's claws, he tells his beads.

The Ta-Amban, on the contrary, is a fat man, with a broad, long face, and enormous head, while the general appearance of his body, which looks like a big jar, might be indicated by four ovals, the smallest of which would stand for his head, the largest for his body, and the two others for his legs. His arms are short, and look more like fins, his hands are plump, with small fingers, his chin is round and double, his cheeks are pendulous, and his eyes are contracted and shapeless. You would think him good-natured were it not for his suspicious look. He speaks with animation in a full round voice, smiting his knee with his hand, and evidently has Chinese blood in his veins.

Concerning the Ta-Lama, we all agree that he is clever, cunning, and intelligent; as to the Ta-Amban, he seems less intelligent, but more stubborn.

We sit up till late, talking in the moonlight, and can hear Abdullah and the Doungane reciting their prayers within the latter's tent, a sign that the outlook seems dark to them, for it is only when things appear bad that they address themselves to Heaven. The sleep of the rest of our band, too, has been somewhat curtailed by the events of the day. Something new has happened, and that is enough to excite them and keep them awake.

Isa, Rachmed, Parpa, and Timour are seated cross-legged in the entrance of their tent, near their fire, which flickers like a will-o'-the-wisp, and the moon is shedding her pale light on the mountain, making it look smaller and flatter, and the vault of heaven all the deeper. Timour is gazing quietly and thoughtfully up to the sky.

"What are you looking at, Timour? Is it the moon?" I ask.

"No, the Bear."

"What are you watching it for?"

"I am glad to see it there, for there will be plenty of grass for the herds when the Bear is low in the sky after sunset."

Rachmed, who is out of sorts and in a bad humor, interrupts:

"Show me the Bear?"

"There it is," said Timour, stretching his hand in the direction of sparkling Orion.

"That is not the Bear," says Rachmed, "that is the Balance. You don't know what you are talking about. You had better keep your mouth shut than talk such nonsense. How can the Balance have any effect upon the grass? If it is a rainy season, or if we have had plenty of snow in winter, then there are lots of grass, but the stars have nothing to do with it. You talk for the pleasure of talking. You are a real latter-day Mussulman, a regular donkey," etc. He then rails at Islam in general, reproaching it with being stupid and irrational, and, his wrath increasing with his words, exclaims, "You donkey! you donkey!"

And poor Timour, abashed by this eloquence, can only repeat plaintively and suppliantly: "Rachmed *aga!* Rachmed *aga!*" ("Rachmed, my elder brother, my elder brother.")

Rachmed ceases his reproaches, but on hearing the Doungane's and Abdullah's prayers his wrath bursts out again. "Listen, too, to those donkeys, who have faith only when they are afraid. Ah! there are no more real Mussulmans, none."

Then the wind rises, and so draws upon itself the maledictions which were going to fall again on poor Timour, who was still appealing to him as "Rachmed, my elder brother, my elder brother," which is a Turk's most affectionate term. Timour is very fond of Rachmed, who likes him in return.

Such little scenes as this are our one and only distraction.

March 3.—We confer with the two great chiefs, and, after many quarrels and reconciliations, at last convince them that we are neither English nor Russian, but French, and to our great joy extract from them the promise of a move on.

March 7.—This morning the sun is shining brightly, and the snow that has fallen on the preceding days stands out on the mountain resplendent, dazzling. It is grand weather for our departure, though it is not a final move, for we are only moving to install ourselves in a better place, there to wait again.

The camp is all astir; on all sides are men running after their beasts, collecting them, driving them on with shrill whistles, and

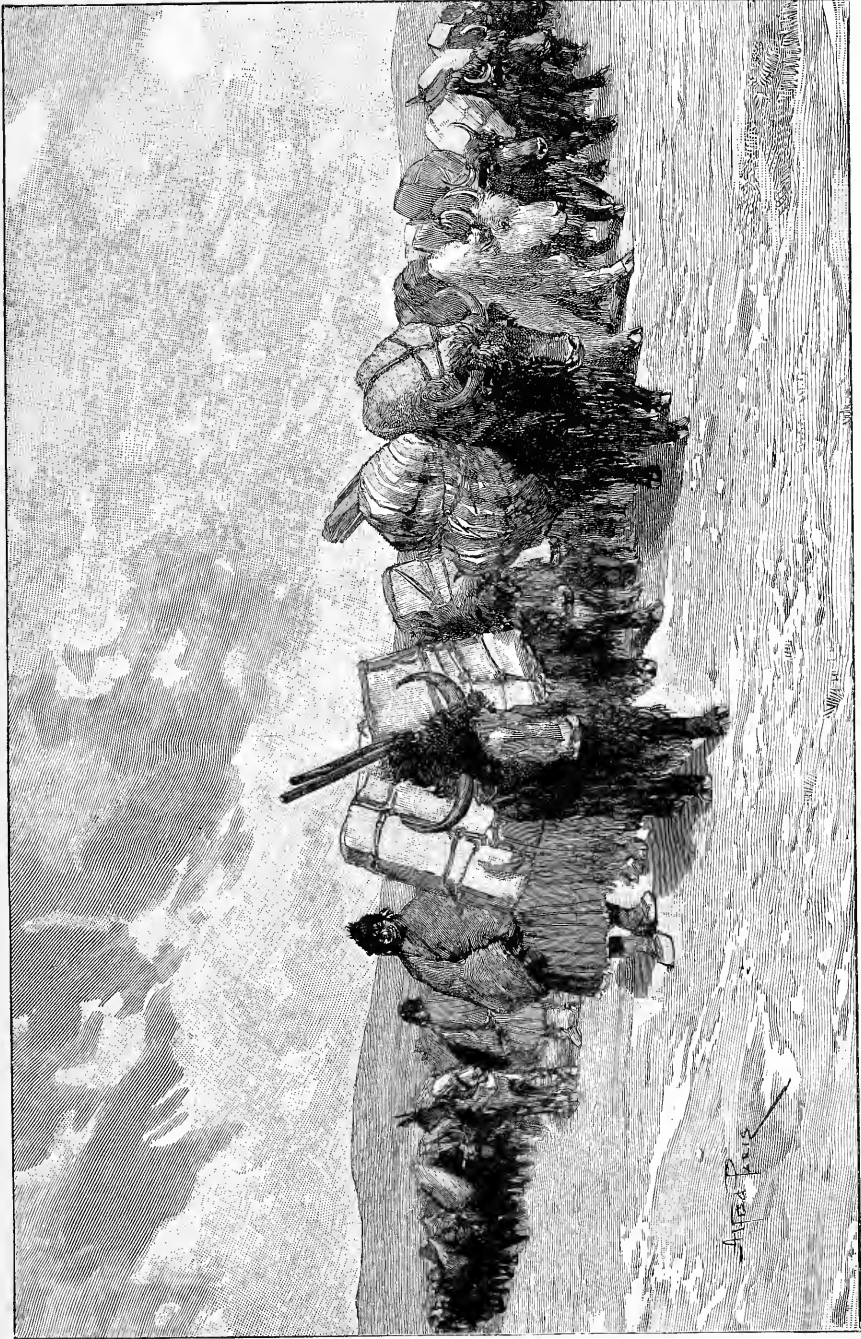
swinging their slings. As their long plaits would be in the way when they stoop, they twist them round their heads.

They have great difficulty in catching their beasts, especially to-day, when the yaks are frightened by our camels. It is only after more than one fruitless attempt that they will allow themselves to be caught by the horn, to which is tied the cord that is attached to the ring in the muzzle. Their masters have to approach them very carefully, and can only seize them by surprise. Loading them is a still more difficult business; and it takes a tremendous time to fasten our chests on to their backs. But the patience of these men is endless, and they always finish by mastering the animal; for as soon as they have got hold of it, they fetter it and load it, in spite of heels and horns, but never beat it.

These Thibetans are very quick over their work. Each time they raise a heavy load they force out the air from their lungs by a vigorous hiss. They handle great weights with considerable ease, for their arms, though not very muscular, are tough, and set in solid shoulders, which are supported by deep necks, the length of their forearm being remarkable. Lamas, stick in hand, give their orders, and reprimand them; but these savages do their work cheerfully, and are very obedient and respectful to the lamas, to whom they listen in the most humble posture, with backs bent and hanging tongue.

We have had some small Thibetan horses given us which are full of go, and which feed on raw flesh, as we have seen with our own eyes. These carnivorous beasts have marvelous legs, and are as clever as acrobats; they balance themselves with the greatest care on the ice or amid dirty bogs, and then, gaining the path with a bound, carry us along at a rapid trot, to which we have long been unaccustomed. Anyone would imagine that they find us to be as light as feathers, and we certainly look far more like lean hermits than fat monks.

We soon rejoined a caravan that started before we did. The loaded yaks go along in utter disorder, their drivers letting them stop at will to eat a root, to sniff pieces of wood, perhaps to reflect. In three and a half hours we rode nearly fourteen miles,



THE CARAVAN IN MOTION.

Alfred Russel Wallace



up hill and down dale, but more often the latter, for we were to encamp near a frozen river which empties its waters into the Namtso.

Our old friend the Amban welcomed us to his tent, where a delicious repast awaited us, consisting of a yak's tongue smoked, and, by way of vegetables, preserved salted carrots, and red and green pepper; then some cakes of unleavened bread, and as much tea and butter as we could drink. Our excellent host admired our appetite, and kept urging us to satisfy it to the full.

Between our camp and that of the chiefs from Lhasa are pitched the tents of some nomads who are driving their herds this way. They are, it seems, inscribed among the subjects of China, and pay taxes as such, "but in all other respects," says the Amban, "they obey us; their tribe is that of the Djachas. In summer they disperse over the table-land of the north."

When we passed by their tents, they came out to salute us, and we recognize their chief, a big toothless fellow, whom we had come across before reaching the Namtso. He strikes us as a half-bred Chinaman. To-day he wears a sort of uniform, consisting of a jacket with a red collar and adorned with copper buttons bearing the numbers of English regiments in India. These buttons are of no earthly use to him, for they have no corresponding buttonholes, but they are the sign of wealth, the proof of a high situation, just because they are not actually wanted. The superfluous is reserved for the powerful of the earth.

The Amban begged us to remain in his tent until ours was ready; but when we told him that we should like a walk because we were cold, he led us back to our camp, saying, "Our customs forbid me to leave my guests before a shelter is ready for them. I will therefore accompany you." We took advantage of this custom to ask him one or two questions: first, the name of the splendid chain from which rise Huc and Gabet, each this evening having its summit in a turban of clouds, reminding one of Persia and the well-known turban of the Demavend. This chain, he tells us, is called Samda-Kansain; and the river, which flows close by, Samda-Tchou, borrowing its name from the mountain which feeds it.

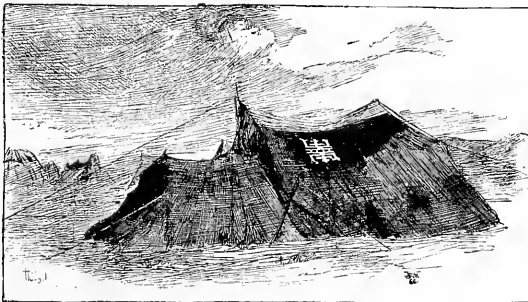
Then we talked to him about the "serou" (unicorn), of whose existence Father Huc had been assured, and he told us that this animal lives in the Ghoorkas' country, in India, and that it has one horn, not on the top of the head, but on the nose, so that he was evidently describing the rhinoceros.

Before sunset we perceived at an enormous height a large flock of birds making north, which we took to be geese. Very welcome was the sight of them, for they seemed to be harbingers of the spring. Timour, too, was persuaded that the warm weather was really coming, for he had seen a fresh blade of grass; and, to prove his words, he got up, examined the bottom of the mountain, and soon returned with a blade, which he held solemnly in his hand, and contemplated with glad eyes—for Timour is a poet, a true lover of Nature. Then to bed, to dream of home, for the gentle west wind produces on this bare plain the same murmurs, the same plaintive sounds, as in our native woods.

March 8.—The west wind is still blowing, and snow falls at intervals. The sun appears and disappears. Then the wind increases, the heavens are darkened, and the cold, after the warmth of the afternoon, is simply insupportable. In spite of the weather, however, the Amban pays us a visit, and again exhorts us to be patient, for it will take time to get all the things ready at Lhassa which we require. Before quitting Dam they had drawn up, at our dictation, a long list of our requirements—clothes of all sorts, shoes, hats, skins, large and small cymbals, and even prayers and objects of worship. They had promised, too, to procure us some horses, and to send them on here quickly. But the Amban is afraid that we may lose patience, for he cannot help noticing the hurry we are all in to start, not a single one of us having the least wish to stop here. The Amban insists on the purity of his intentions. "We look upon you as brothers, and our wish is to be as agreeable as possible to you; and if we keep you here, it is only because we must await letters from our superiors at Lhassa, who are satisfied of your honesty. But then our ways are not like yours. We never hurry in business matters. There is a council which de-

cides all important matters, and you know that the members of a numerous council do not immediately agree. If it depended only on me, you should at once have all that you want; but you see that, even here, we are three great chiefs and about twenty smaller ones. The one mistrusts the other, and it needs great prudence not to lay one's self open to accusation." This fear of an accusation—which the Amban has mentioned on previous occasions—proves that Lhassa is a hotbed of intrigue, power being divided and much sought after, and that those who possess it guard it very jealously.

Our guest next asks for information regarding our customs and manners, the position of women in our country and their looks; and then he speaks of the books of the English, and of the astonishing inventions which they have brought to India, though he himself had never seen them. He expresses his astonishment that we should take the trouble to travel, "for," said he, "what is the good of visiting distant lands when you can spend your life in reading about them without leaving home? I, at all events, have not the slightest wish ever to travel outside Thibet, for my curiosity is quite satisfied by our religious books."



THE COOKING TENT.

CHAPTER XI.

SLOW PROGRESS.

Breakfasting with the Ta-Amban and Ta-Lama—Diplomatic Indignation—Two Barbarian Petty Chiefs—An Effectual Call to Order—A Sunset Scene—Feasting on a Sheep's Head—A "Dainty Dish"—At Soubrou—Resting at Di-Ti—Water-Carriers—An *Entente Cordiale*—Characteristics and Habits of the Natives of the Di-Ti Country—A Specimen of Primeval Man—Nigan: Another Stoppage—The Tale Lama's Presents: Sacred Objects—Return Presents—A Lama Guide—The Ta-Amban's Advice—A Pet Ram—Timour, Parpa, and Isa Go Back.



CHIEF OF DJACHAS.

March 14.—We are invited to meet the Ta-Amban and the Amban at breakfast in the tent of the Ta-Lama, who has a most sumptuous repast ready for us. It lasts four hours, during which time we plunge our chopsticks into some thirty very rich dishes that must have cost a great deal, for it is by no means easy in Thibet to procure young palm-shoots, dates from India, peaches from Leh (lada), jujubes from Ba-Tang, berries

from Landjou, edible seaweed, and shell-fish from the coast, etc. Out of all these different productions of the Asiatic *cuisine* a few are decidedly eatable, and we confine ourselves to them; but what we prefer to everything else is the plentiful supply of hot milk, in which we dip our dates so as to thaw them. Their idea, perhaps, was to win us over by such a splendid feast, but we remain as firm as ever when, after the tables have been removed and negotiations reopened, they beg us to wait yet a little longer. Our indignation bursts out anew, and we rise at once without listening to any more circumlocution. They are astonished at our departure; but when they see us thrashing our

interpreter, who has been making signs to them behind our backs, they understand that our patience is exhausted. The result of this interrupted feast is the extraction of a promise that we shall make our way forward.

March 16.—We discuss the route that we shall follow. The chiefs undertake to show us the road to Ba-Tang; only the stages are to be short, in order that the couriers expected from Lhassa may join us the sooner. Amidst falling snow, after a minimum temperature of 13° below zero, we begin our preparations for departure.

The place where we are to await the couriers is called Di-Ti, which the Amban represents as a sort of Paradise in comparison with our present location, which is rendered uninhabitable by the incessant west wind. It seems that “down there” we shall find grass, brushwood, juniper trees, corn, and moderate heat; for we shall be on lower ground than here, where we are at an altitude of 16,170 feet. We beg the Amban to be good enough to tell us where Di-Ti is; but he answers that he does not know exactly, and sends for two small barbarian chieftains, whom he questions in our presence. They enter, bent double, out of deference to their superior, and with tongues hanging out of their mouths, like greyhounds in summer after chasing a hare.

“Do you know Di-Ti?”

“Yes; we are driving our herds there.”

“Is it a nice place?”

“Yes.”

“In what direction is it?”

“In that.” (They point northeast.)

“Is it far?”

“No.”

“How many ‘lavère’ off is it?” (“Lavère” corresponds in Thibet to “li” in China, being about a quarter of a mile.)

“Lavère, lavère, lavère,” murmur the two savages, looking at each other, and scratching their ears; “we do not know their country,” taking it for the name of a camp—a mistake that is, after all, intelligible on the part of savages, who have no need of

precision, though we laugh at it none the less. The Amban therefore dismisses them, and they withdraw with deep reverence, thumbs raised, and tongue still hanging out.

The lamas then set about obtaining from the Djachas yaks and horses enough for the whole caravan. So many are required that the Dtachas—or Djachougs, Tatchougs, Ttachougs, according to the different ways in which we hear it pronounced—refuse to supply us, and, getting angry, shout and threaten. Then the Ta-Lama summons their chiefs, who immediately on receiving the order appear calm, but crestfallen. The Ta-Lama bids his servants throw open the front of his tent, and from his dais—where he remains sitting cross-legged, his hands in his sleeves—talks quietly to them. He has scarcely opened his mouth when the savages bend, and, in the posture of a child awaiting the cane, lower their heads, scarcely daring to raise their eyes, and cry humbly:

“Lalesse, lalesse!” (We are ready.)

And when the Ta-Lama, in conclusion, says to them, still in his quiet tones:

“Is it possible that you would displease the Djongoro Boutch” (the living Buddha) “and the Ta-Lama” (Great Lama)?

“No,” they reply, groaning and falling on their knees.

“Very well; then obey.”

“Lalesse, lalesse! It is all right.”

A servant thereupon bids them retire, which they do backward, in the respectful attitude of the country. The tent is again closed, and the chiefs draw themselves up, and quite good-humoredly return to their own tents.

Convinced that we are now really about to start, I spend a few moments in admiring the scene, and am straightway lost in ecstasy before a scene which Messrs. Cook can promise to their clients when, in years to come, they have organized trips to Thibet. To describe it, however, would take another pen than mine. I can but gaze thoughtfully, as do the shepherds on the tablelands, at the splendid chain of the Ningling Tanla, as its snow-capped peaks are lost in the gold of the sunset. The light va-

porous atmosphere, is, so to speak, impregnated with this golden light; while behind us the Samda-Kansain lies bathed in violet tints, and above it are clustered thick snow-clouds, through which, rent by the wind, are seen here and there patches of blue sky.

March 18.—We start in a northeasterly direction. The weather is splendid, but the reflection of the sun on the snow literally scorches our faces and eyes. We learn on the road that between here and Tatsien-lou there are eighty more or less difficult passes. It is the interpreter with the long tooth who tells me that he once counted them when going to Lhasa by this route; he also informs us that there are very few spots in Thibet where it is possible to grow a little wheat, though they have good crops of barley. As to the other cereals, including rice, they import them from India. At night we encamp in a valley at Taché-Rovo, which means, in the language of the steppes, “the gathering of tents at Taché,” though we had seen only three or four tents on the whole stage, in the mouths of gorges, near the ice.

Besides lending us some yak-drivers, our friends have also provided us with two men whose business it is to collect fuel for our fires. This evening they arrive with their gleanings in a sack, which they empty at the entrance of our servants' tent; and after being greeted with reproaches—uttered, however, in a very amiable tone of voice, and in Turkish—they venture to sit down by the fire, and our men make them a present of the head of a sheep which they have just killed, in the Mussulman style, by severing the carotid arteries. They accept it with effusion when Timour hands it to them, though they had turned their eyes away during the bloody sacrifice of a living creature. The observant Timour is astonished at their conduct, and remarks, “Just now, when Isa took his knife, they rushed upon him, and, holding his arm, begged him to let them kill the animal, by strangling it with a cord round its nose. How could men eat a beast that has not been bled to death? When Isa killed it, they set to praying, and now they will gladly eat it. Singular people!”

The two men, being very hungry after their walk, hastily prepare their meal. They put a little water on the fire in some small earthenware pots, and when it is tepid, fill a wooden cup. They then take some meal out of long bags, sprinkle it with water, stir it round with their thumbs, and drink it; licking up the meal which sticks to the sides of the cup with their enormous tongues, which serve alike to show respect and admiration, and to act as spoons. Whilst they are drinking this "soup" to allay the pangs of hunger, the water begins to boil. They now pour it into their cups, put in some butter, likewise taken from a bag, and add a pinch of salt and a handful of meal. This mixture they then make into balls, which they go on eating until they have had enough; afterward they take a little walk. When they return they proceed to occupy themselves with the sheep's head. From a leathern sheath each draws a small knife with pointed blade, such as even the women all wear at their waists, and cut the already frozen head to pieces. Then they draw near the fire and thaw it, burning off the wool in the flames. The skin being removed, they cut out and eat the gums; then, in order to get at the tongue, they draw a long saber, with which they split the jaw open at the joints, removing both the tongue and the gullet, which they put in their wallets. One takes the lower jaw, and gets what he can off it, just like a dog would, while the other cleans the skull. The first gouges out the eyes, which he swallows with great relish; then when they have got off everything in the way of meat, and have satisfied their hunger, they throw the lower part of the head to the dogs, who certainly will not get much off it, and put aside for to-morrow the skull, which still contains the brains. The culinary art is certainly in its infancy in Thibet, and we shall still, for a long time, be the only persons who have ever partaken of cabbage soup there. Moreover, even the highest personages do not seem to have developed a delicate palate; the Amban himself, when in a hurry, eating balls of zamba. This afternoon, too, we happened to see at dinner the two interpreters—one of whom is, it seems, a lama endowed with a rich "stall." They

had been served with a cup containing, at the bottom, a morsel of rancid butter and some meal. These they kneaded together, then adding some slices of frozen cheese, which was also worked in; they next minced into it a slice of frozen mutton, and then, to complete the dainty dish, they moistened it with tea and



THIBETAN SAVAGES ROUND A FIRE.

butter, finally making the whole mixture into balls, some of which they offered to us, as they saw that we were watching their preparations with great curiosity.

This powdered mixture is, with the addition of a little salt, eatable, and must be satisfying; while the making of it is an amusing pastime when you have nothing else to do, as was evidently the case with our lamas.

March 19.—We advance as far as Soubroun, to reach which we have to make numerous detours. The weather is abominable, for it is snowing, and the wind is blowing from the west with extreme violence. At Soubroun there are some twenty tents in a grassy valley, which is reached by a steep pass.

March 21.—After crossing a table-land we reach Di-Ti, where we drop down into an amphitheater, formed by gently undulat-

ing hills. In the direction of Lhassa there are some heights white with snow, but we see very little to the east and north.

Di-Ti is on the main road from Napтчou to Lhassa, that of the Tsaïdame and of the Koukou-Nor rising southward. We remain three days at Di-Ti, which is inhabited by a considerable number of nomads, who own large flocks of yaks and sheep that are swarming in every direction. They seem also to occupy themselves with the breeding of horses, some forty of which come to drink in the spring near our tent, and are larger than any we have come across so far, and with good legs and feet. No one is looking after them. Some distance away from our little fountain there is another, to which the people of the encampment go to draw their water, which they carry away in wooden jars. Attached to their loins they have a small cushion, and on this they place the jar with loose straps, which pass over their shoulders. The difficulty is to keep the jar so well balanced that no water is spilt on the way. To do this they walk with a forward stoop, the body forming nearly a right angle with the legs. A Thibetan couple came in quest of water whilst I was there. The wife filled the jar by means of a wooden cup, whilst the husband chatted with an acquaintance; she then helped him to fix the jar, which done, he went off, leaving his "better half" to get hers up as best she could. This she did by kneeling down and then carefully rising, like a beast of burden, as she really was.

March 24.—The maximum temperature in the sun reaches 89° Fahrenheit. But the west wind still troubles us at times, though, it is true, it also provides us with something to talk about, driving before it on the plain clouds of dust, which assume very singular shapes. At one time you might fancy that an immense dragon with bent back was advancing, at another that a scorpion was crawling along with head and tongue raised, or again you might think you were looking at rows of trees with bushy foliage and leafy arches. All this time, however, we never forget the object we have in view, which is to reach Ba-Tang; and at last, after a warlike display, we extract a promise that we

shall be directed there. But the stages must be short, for the couriers from Lhasa have not yet arrived; and so the Ta-Lama and the Ta-Amban, who have decided not to keep us waiting here any longer, send a special courier to Lhasa to hasten the dispatch of the various articles we require, and of the other horses and presents from the authorities. Then we start. Every risk of a misunderstanding has now disappeared. Thibetans and Frenchmen are in thorough accord, and they, as well as we, are of opinion that the authorities at Lhasa are abusing our patience, and that bureaucracy has its disadvantages, though it may sometimes have its advantages.

Before I proceed with the account of our journey I would say a word or two about the inhabitants of this country, who are well-to-do and prosperous, especially when compared with the first shepherds whom we met. More favorable conditions have on the men the same effect as on the yaks and horses; all of them are more vigorous here, and they are even slightly taller. The types, as I have said before, are very varied. Some have a long nose and a broad face, others a snub nose and a long face; others, again, a long nose and a long face. They have, however, some points in common. Their chins are often prominent because they are frequently toothless, and their lips are very thick because the cold makes them swell, and because they continually use them, their shortness of breath making them wheeze. Again, when they stop they stand erect, very straight on their legs, which are a little apart; their gait is jerky, their glance shifting and rapid, though sometimes fixed; their gestures are abrupt; and they walk with short irregular steps, as though their thoughts were intermittent, and their brains suggested actions by fits and starts in intervals of wakefulness. In fact, all their gestures suggest a lack of mental cohesion and a poverty of ideas.

They are careless and cheerful in disposition, and after a long day's march they go to look for the yaks, singing and laughing, some bringing in the droppings for fuel, while others carry sheets of ice in the skirts of their cloaks. They tie up their yaks in a half-circle, chattering all the time; at night prepare

the cords for the morning, and, having eaten their zamba, put their wallets round the fire; and then, loosening the girdle of their cloaks, throw themselves down on the ground side by side, the one who is most exposed to the wind protecting himself with a coarse mantle. Lying there, huddled together like sheep, they exchange a few words, and then fall asleep under the stars, with the temperature below zero.

March 27.—As we advance we find the country more thickly populated, and it seems as though the desert is coming to an end.

March 28.—This is a day never to be forgotten. The road we are following is that of Sininfou; it is dotted with numerous trees, under which are massed together numberless prayers engraved on slabs of schist, with attempts at ornamentation—roses, for example, each petal of which contains a syllable of the “Om mané padmé houm,” images of Buddha, of Tsong Kaba the reformer, and of the Tale Lama, sketched in outline on plates, or molded in clay—each of these holy personages having his head enveloped in a hood and surrounded with a halo. The road winds across the broad plains, interspersed with valleys and ravines, and topped toward the southwest by white ridges which intercept the horizon. We are at a height of barely 16,000 feet, and it is less painful to breathe. The wind has fallen, and before us slowly gather large white clouds, above which the sky is a spotless blue, while below larks are singing, and small rats are running about on the ground.

It is hot, really hot, and the warm breeze, as it caresses our cheeks, produces quite a novel sensation, for we had lost all recollection of so pleasant a feeling. We advance in the best of spirits, urged on by our horses, which keep their noses in our backs. Then we mount them, and for the first time since last autumn our feet are really warm in the stirrup, even “on the shady side,” although it does not thaw there as yet.

The Amban, followed by his escort, joins us and salutes us—with a very good pronunciation—in the few French words that we have taught him.



THE TA-LAMA, THE TA-AMBAN, AND OTHER CHIEFS FROM LIASSA.



“*Bonjour,*” he says, “*comment vous portez-vous ?*”

“*Very well,*” we answer.

“*Bien, bien,*” he repeats with a smile.

He raises his whip, and his horse starts off at a trot, for he is anxious to arrive first, so as to prepare the encampment.

But here is a Thibetan horseman, who arrives at a gallop, with his rifle slung over his shoulders, and a little red flag floating from the sight. From his girdle hangs a saber with glittering incrustations; his right arm is freed from his cloak, and his shoulder is bare, and he excites his horse by swinging his sling. He is a good specimen of a wild horseman, and the picture is heightened by his fox-skin cap, with long ear-flaps hanging down, from under which appear a few loose hairs and a long plait, which keeps hitting his shoulders.

Next comes a lama, wearing a hood and closely wrapped up, accompanying some yaks that are loaded with precious objects. He joins our party, reciting his prayers aloud, and salutes us with an amiable smile, though without interrupting a single letter of his litany. Then we pass three men on foot who are pursuing their yaks, whistling and waving their right arms about. The body of one is quite bare, and displays a rounded chest; he is stout and broad-shouldered. With his muscular right arm he balances a long javelin with a bamboo handle, attached to his wrist by a copper bracelet. To show his skill he throws it in the air and catches it again, then shifts it from one hand to the other and round his body, brandishing it as though about to strike, with all the grace of a skilled matador. He walks with a supple swing, he is young, his jaws and square chin are prominent, and his upper lip is arched with the insolent curl of a beast that knows its own strength. His nose is short, with broad nostrils; his bushy hair hangs long, like a mane, covering his small eyes and foreshortening his face, causing his head, with its thick neck, to look still broader and less human. You would think you had before you a roughhewn specimen of primeval man, who was proud in the possession of his first firearm.

But it is time to return to the Amban's tent to partake of tea

and butter, boiled mutton, smoked tongues, and even Indian curry—for they quite spoil us. Everyone is most polite—so much so, in fact, that we no longer dare even look at them, for fear of seeing those monstrous tongues hanging out.

We have reached Nigan, at a height of 15,900 feet, and it is here that we shall have to wait for the last time before setting out for Ba-Tang, whence we shall be conveyed by the aid of the Ta-Lama, for the oracles have been favorable to us.

We employ this last stoppage in doing up our baggage again, looking over and arranging the skins which we have dressed on the road. We get rid of everything that is not absolutely necessary, and organize the caravan of those who will leave us to return to the Lob Nor. The Ta-Lama undertakes to put them in charge of some pilgrims who are returning to Mongolia by the Tsaidame, and once there they will continue their journey alone by the Kalmucks' road. We now feel quite close to Tonquin, for, though thousands of miles lie between it and us, at Ba-Tang we shall again tread known ground. Then doubt, which is the defect or perhaps it should rather be said, the good point of old travelers, reappears. The horizon darkens, and in the far distance obstacles arise. However, things are turning out remarkably well.

March 31.—After a calm night and a minimum of 4° below zero, a hurricane bursts over us, and a fearful squall carries off the square tents of the Thibetans. Ours resist the force of the storm, and are merely invaded by clouds of dust.

April 2.—At last the Amban comes beaming to tell us that the Tale Lama's presents have arrived, as well as all the things which we asked for, and to invite us to come to his tent, where the Ta-Lama and the Ta-Amban await us. We are very well received by these great chiefs, and have a long talk with them. Then the presents are spread out before our eyes—costumes of women, men, lamas, and other great personages; every imaginable headgear, objects of veneration, skins, prayer-mills, perfumed wood, and even packets of prayers. They explain to us the use of each object, and tell us its name, its material, and its origin.

On examining the costumes we are surprised to find many European fashions among them—crinolines, pinafores, earrings, a coiffure in form of a diadem, and every form of bonnet, including caps with flaps for the ears, hoods, and a minister's (*kaloun*).



A THIBETAN SALUTING.

hat, which is astonishingly like that of a cardinal, with its cords and tassels. Among the sacred objects are bells, chaplets, and lights to remind us of the Catholic ritual. Our first idea is that these objects are relics of a time when the Thibetans doubtless professed the same faith as we do, and though they have now

long lost it, they have retained some of its externals. But with regard to these questions I must refer my readers to the admirable narrative of Father Huc, and to the works of our missionaries in Thibet, Biet, Desgodins, etc., who have studied them still more closely than Father Huc, and with an ability to which I cannot pretend. During the interview they cram us with butter, tea, and dainties; aromatics are burning all the time, and often a servant enters with a perfume box, which he sprinkles over the hot coals; the first cloud is addressed to Buddha, and the second is offered to us, and passed under, and even up, our noses. They treat us as though we were gods. But the certainty that we are at last really going toward Ba-Tang contributes even more than these attentions to put us one and all in good-humor. The Am-ban manifests his great pleasure at things having come to so nice a conclusion, for, in his character of intermediary between his chiefs and us, he has been exposed to the rebuffs and maledictions of both parties whenever he had to tell them that he had failed in the mission intrusted to him.

The horses destined for us arrived this evening, and excellent ones they are too, but not shod, and our endeavors to fix shoes on them are all in vain, for their hoofs are so hard, dry, and friable that the nails either bend, fail to hold, or break the hoofs.

April 4.—We have offered our presents in return to the Thibetans, regarding it as a point of honor to surpass their generosity, so that we almost emptied our packets in making them happy. Revolvers, watches, mirrors, as well as knives and scissors, were in great request, while gold coin and silver rubles were highly appreciated. Small change, too, was accepted with pleasure, for they will serve as buttons in the Chinese fashion. As it is, two or three lamas of high rank have buttons formed of quarter rupees.

They all seemed to be very pleased with our offerings, but whether or not we actually succeeded in satisfying the wants of the forty or fifty chief servants with whom we had had to do, I cannot say. At all events, when we parted, our farewell had



THE LAMA GUIDE.

every appearance of cordiality, and they left nothing undone to facilitate our journey as far as Ba-Tang, supplying us with provisions, such as rice, meal, barley, beans, and small peas, and

giving us advice as to what we should be able to purchase on the road, and what we must save up.

They gave us a lama to act as our guide, and present us to the chiefs of the numberless tribes we shall encounter. He is a great, strong fellow of about twenty-five, looks very good-natured, and later on proved himself a man with a good head, very cool, and very astute. His superiors urge him to serve us faithfully, and obey us promptly, and to insure his doing so, make him presents before we start, and promise him still better ones if he brings back proofs of our satisfaction. This young lama, who has already been this journey once, will be accompanied by a long-haired chief, whose business it is to maintain order amongst the score of savages who are to transport our baggage and supplies by means of some sixty yaks. In a fortnight this chief will make way for another, to whom he will hand over the Ta-Lama's orders, and so on, as long as we are on ground that is subject to them, while the lamas of independent tribes will help us at the request of our lama.

The Ta-Amban, who has been to Ba-Tang, and knows the tribes that we shall meet, gave us some very fatherly advice with regard to them. "You will, on the road, meet with some wild tribes, whose ways are very rough, for they are totally uncivilized; but only have patience with them, and all will be well. The worst you will find near Ba-Tang, and when you reach that district be on your guard, for a European was once killed there, and a Chinese mandarin stoned. Do not, therefore, neglect measures of precaution. As for us, we shall pray for you, and we can only hope that you will have a prosperous journey."

The Ta-Lama approved of this advice, and promised us his prayers, which he thinks will be efficacious. We then shook hands with them, and mounted our horses; and amidst the farewell salutations of the whole body, chiefs and all, a start was made.

A few miles further on we encamped for the night, and the Amban caught us up to assure himself of the perfect organiza-

tion of our caravan, and to watch over the safe return to their own country of those of our servants who are leaving us.

Great are the rejoicings of our whole band, including the three dogs who gambol around us. Even our ram executes a fantasia—for we have with us, as a companion of our travels, a



AN ATTENDANT OF THE AMBAN.

big ram from Kourla. He is quite tame, and we have not sacrificed him to our hunger. Now he is everybody's friend, is permitted to sleep in a tent, takes bread from our hands, and even scents it out, and abstracts it from our bags for himself. Though a sheep, he is very courageous, charging dogs and horses, and when we purchase other sheep, butts them out of jealousy. At the beginning of our travels, before we got into the Lob Nor district, he used to mix with the others and lead them, but now he will neither follow his fellows nor walk with the baggage. Nothing

less than the society of his masters will satisfy him, and he runs bleating behind us as though to complain that we are going too fast. Macha, for that is his name, has often cheered our drooping spirits, and still more often aroused the astonishment of the Thibetans by his size, and especially by his enormous fat tail.

April 5.—The return of Timour, Parpa, Isa, and the three Dounganes was settled yesterday, and they have received all that they require, provisions, horses, money, and some presents. But our three Mussulmans asked permission to spend the night with their comrades, and to help them in starting for the east to-day. They assist them in packing the tent, superintend the loading, and exchange a few small objects which will remind them of each other.

Whilst they are loading our yaks, we go to the Amban's tent to eat at his table for the last time. He gives a glass of spirits to all who ask for it, not knowing that men should never drink when traveling; and when the meal is over, there is soon a slight uproar which prevents the Amban and I from conversing. And Abdullah, our interpreter, does not miss this chance of getting intoxicated, so he cannot translate our remarks. The meeting is, therefore, brought to a close, and the Amban and his men accompany us on foot to our camp, where we find our three servants and Rachmed. The last yak is now loaded, part of our heavy baggage is already far ahead, and we must part. We commend once more, and for the last time, our three servants to the Amban's care, and then cordially shake hands with these honest fellows, whom we shall, doubtless, never see again. When we wish them good health and a safe return home, and beg them not to forget us, they burst into tears, fall on their knees, and kiss our hands, sobbing bitterly.

They then press Rachmed, Abdullah, and Akkan to their breasts, and those who are bound for the coast weep as well as those who are returning home. All these men have been connected with us in circumstances amidst which men cannot conceal their real character, or be independent of their neighbors. They have suffered together, have had to help each other, and have

learnt to esteem and really like each other. And now their hearts are very sad at parting. Their evident affection for us cannot but touch us, for it is spontaneous, and proceeds from men of energy, from adventurers, perhaps, who are capable of doing one a bad turn, but whom we have made better men. They, too, are convinced that we like them, for we have taken as much care of them as of ourselves, and never have we exacted from them an effort which was not needful, or reproached them without cause.

Again we shake hands with the Amban and his companions, who have been greatly moved by this scene, and he promises us that he will pray for us. And so we set out accompanied for several yards by Parpa and his companions, who hold our horses' bridles as a mark of their respect.

We must, however, separate, and they raise their hands to their beards with a "Great is Allah!" and we there leave them desolate and in tears.



THIBETAN HORSEMAN.

CHAPTER XII.

SO AND ITS MONASTERY.

At Gatine—The River Ourtchou—A Hermit Lama—"Steeped in Luxury"—At Djacounnene—Meeting a Caravan—Resemblance Between Thibetans and Other Peoples—Thumb Language—A Droll Native—The Thibetans Not Fanatics—On the Banks of the Ourtchou—At Tandj—The Thibetan Sling—A Superb Mountain Scene—A Sight of Plowed Land—First View of the Monastery of So—The "Delicious Odor" of Wood—A *Concierge* in Thibet—Native Money—A Commission of 150 per cent.—Plowing at So—Crossing the Satchon—A Bearded Thibetan—Why Dishonest Chiefs are Popular.



MONUMENT NEAR THE MONASTERY OF SO.

OUR first stage to Ba-Tang lies through a valley that varies in breadth from one to four miles, with encampments in the gorges, and herds on the ridges. The Ourtchou, which flows down it, is, it seems, one of the three great tributaries of the Naptchou, which has several smaller ones as well. After four hours on horseback we encamp on a slight elevation, at a place called, as our guide tells us, Gatine.

Our tent is pitched on the edge of a rapid stream, from which all the ice and snow have disappeared, except in its creeks. We have descended some hundred yards whilst following first the bottom of the valley, and then the low hills that skirt it on the right. On the eastern slopes, a little vegetation is visible, consisting of brushwood half a foot high, which bears in Central Asia the generic

name of "camel's tail," and this suffices to "furnish" the landscape a little. The path is at times very stony, and at the lower end of the valley grows that stalky, strong grass, which is the despair of thinly shod people. Our direction is at present north-east, soon to change to east; in order to strike a road which, though far from being the straighter of the two, is, we are assured, the better for beasts of burden. We must needs follow our guide, for the simple reason that we cannot argue with him, from want of information, books having taught us nothing about this district, which is blank on the map. However, we think we recognize on the Russian maps the spot which we ought to reach in ten days, if our yak-drivers are right. Its name is So (written Sok), and we shall find there, they tell us, a large monastery. Our stay at Gatine is most enjoyable; at 3 p. m. the thermometer marks 41° in the shade. Taking my gun, I go for a walk on the table-land, and feel a real pleasure in being quite alone, without any of the Thibetans with whom we have to talk for hours.

The shadows gradually darken on the mountain side, which does not look steep. It seems, by insensible degrees, to form stages up to the very top, so as not to put the climber out of breath. Northward the horizon is still bathed in light, whilst over the valley float trails of bluish smoke betraying the presence of tents. The quiet is delicious, broken only by the larks, lustily trilling their love songs. Presently the night begins to fall. The sun is lost to sight, after seeming to rest a moment on the bend of the table-land to the west. No sooner, however, has he run his daily course, than the moon rises in the east, like an immense ball of gold, in the direction of Ba-Tang. Then, suddenly, two wolves appear on the top of a snow-hill, but, seeing me, stop, and after a moment's reflection, turn tail. As they were out of range at first, and are now far away, it is useless to think of following them, so I return to the camp to warn our men that they must protect our flock of sheep. They accordingly tie the older ones together, nose to nose, by their horns, and the others, of their own accord, creep in between them. Over sixty yaks are also attached, in a ring, to a cord

fixed close to the ground, so as to form, with their hairy bodies, a wall round our tents and sheep, a small gap being left in the circle so that we may have an open path to draw water from the stream. The horses are left to wander at will around the camp, as we know that they are accustomed and able to protect themselves against the wolves, and in case of danger our dogs will give the alarm.

Our drivers having asked us to start early the following morning, so that the yaks may have time to graze during the day, we soon get supper ready, consisting of boiled mutton, which we attack with a good appetite. Above us shine the stars, though very feebly, in the dazzling moonshine; a gentle breeze comes from the south, not a single cloud is to be seen, and the heavens display all their grandeur, the mountains being reduced, under so magnificent a vault, to the size of mere molehills.

The road is no longer dull as it was in winter; the landscape is more varied, game is abundant and furnishes plenty of distraction. Our collection becomes by degrees our chief pre-occupation, for the nomads we come across are as affable as possible. They live in black tents, drinking the milk of their cows, which they cross with yaks. They have sheep with very fine wool, and also small goats about the size of our kids. The goats are generally black, with long drooping hair like the yaks, small horns, and legs that look short but are undoubtedly strong, as is proved by their bounds and speed; they weigh from eleven to thirteen pounds. The wives of the Thibetan shepherds have to do nearly all the work, but they enjoy full liberty, and are not unsociable, freely approaching our camp, sitting down by the side of our Thibetans, and soon getting to be on good terms with them.

April 6.—We have been lost in admiration of the dwelling of a hermit lama perched on the mountain, on the left bank of the river Ourtchou, between Gatine and Tsatang, for it is so long since we have seen anything like a house. This looked a very large one, but our lama told us that it was very small, just large enough for one person. With the help of our glasses we

could make out a rectangle of chalk walls, a veranda, and the frames of one window and one door, so that it must really be quite small. But it was bathed in sunshine, and looked so white and cheerful that we could not pity the monk who has retired there, away from the distractions of the world. We asked our lama how this recluse could live, and he pointed to the tents that are pitched lower down in the valley: "They give him all he needs; whenever he wants anything, he goes down to those tents and prays, then they fill his wallet, and he returns home."

Considerable difficulty is experienced in getting our yaks to cross the river. For the breaking up of the frost is now near at hand, and the edges are already clear of ice; and we have to enter the water, then mount on ice, repeating this performance several times before gaining the opposite bank. The laden yaks break through and fall into the water, only extricating themselves with great difficulty, and after wetting our baggage, though it is protected by felt wrappings.

The width of the river varies from 160 to 350 feet, and in flood may be 470 feet near Tsatang, where it spreads out. Then it penetrates the mountain, which contracts it, and causes it to wind gently. Near Gatine it broadens out and forms eyots, on which we see and kill casarkas—the same, I think, that are found in Turkestan and called in Turkish, if I remember aright, "dourna." Along this same river, too, we kill some geese with heads striped with black, ducks exactly like those of the Lob Nor, white gulls, and a crane, such as Prjevalsky first described.

All our wants are supplied at encampments which we come across; very good mutton, plenty of milk, fuel, water in skins, when we are no longer on the banks of the river, and fodder for our beasts. We are short of nothing, so well does our lama, seconded by a young chief who has a long plait of hair, look after us; in fact they take as much care of us as if they were our sons. Compared to the life we were leading only a short time ago, and especially before we reached Dam, we feel ourselves positively steeped in luxury.

Now and again we meet with hunters carrying matchlocks,

forks, and lances, with powerful dogs in leash, long-haired, like our shepherds' dogs, and with broad heads shaped like that of a bear. Many of these dogs are black, with reddish-brown spots, this latter being generally the color of their chests and paws, as is the case with the hares to the south of the higher table-lands. We collect quantities of small birds, and come across black divers, black monkeys, and dark brown bears.

In proportion as we advance the natives improve in face and form, and we are much struck by their gayety and light-heartedness. The women smear their faces with butter, and, as they never wash, the butter catches the smoke and dust and becomes a regular mask of soot. We can only suppose that they do this in order to protect their faces against the biting winds.

April 8.—At Djaucounnene, after turning in an easterly direction on quitting a pass, we for the first time meet a caravan. Bags are piled up to form a wall behind which the travelers take shelter, whilst their yaks graze close by. They are transporting barley and meal from So to Lhasa. As they approach we are struck by the breadth of their faces, and the slant of their eyes, which turn upward at the corners; they are dressed just like our drivers, but are much taller.

At first sight, a new people presents a well-defined general type; but, on looking more closely, and examining it well, this apparent uniformity is found to be qualified by considerable variety. We are even astonished to find a resemblance in our Thibetans to certain other nations, and even to friends and acquaintances of ours. Here, for instance, is one with a perfect Greek profile, as shown on the best cameos. His neighbor, on the other hand, is of the redskin type, with receding brow and arched nose, like an eagle's beak, whilst he walks with head slightly thrown back. By his side is a young lad, singing as he prepares some meat for sausages, cutting it on the pommel of his saddle; with his dark eyes and regular features, and hair falling over his forehead, he might be an Italian. What we can affirm as a fact is that we are in the presence of a white people, that has nothing in common with those of a yellow complexion but

the absence of beard, which is, however, amply compensated by the quantity of hair they have on their heads; in fact, it is not unusual to see even old men with plaits as thick as a cable.

Our yak drivers are always busy, content with little sleep, and ever cheerful; all the time they are getting their beasts ready



THIBETAN OF THE REDSKIN TYPE.

they hum an air, and finish the loading in a twinkle. They are indefatigable walkers, and some of them climb the steepest hillsides singing and without losing breath; in fact, they breathe with greater ease than do their yaks, though we should bear in mind that these latter are loaded. Deep-chested, these men have well-set necks, of average length. To-day Rachmed made them a present of half a sheep, as a proof of our being well satisfied with them. Using their knives with the greatest dexterity, they put the best pieces aside, ate the head raw, as we had seen them do before, and proceeded to cook the rest by throwing the inferior pieces into hot water, the feet with the wool still on them, and the intestines scarcely cleansed.

They are excellent mimics, and speak very well, with gestures, and play of features. I have already explained that they express disagreement by joining the thumb nails, and agreement by putting them just the opposite way. Putting the thumb up means approval and satisfaction; raising the little finger denotes hostility, while to keep it in this position and at the same time to shake the head signifies dislike. The two thumbs placed perpendicularly one above the other, with the tongue hanging out, denote superlative approval.

The old man who was photographed, prayer mill in hand, is very droll and fond of jokes. Our interpreter Abdullah amuses himself by saluting him in Thibetan. When the old man replies, with astounding seriousness, Abdullah asks him how he salutes a chief like the Amban, and the old man lolls out his tongue and bows low; and when anyone speaks to him of the Ta-Amban (Great Amban), he expresses the deepest degree of humility by scratching himself behind the ear. We laugh, and the Thibetans themselves are amused by this little comedy.

It often happens that our lama prays out loud, as well as the young chief, his companion. Then Abdullah begins to imitate their different intonations of voice, so that we could not tell which was which; far from being angry, they all, "clerics" as well as laymen, begin to laugh. This does not suggest religious fanaticism; they seem, indeed, to content themselves with the forms and externals of religion, as the sole manifestation of their faith. Our old chief occupies his leisure moments in turning his prayer mill from right to left, even when walking, and often mumbles a litany. Men who believe in the transmigration of souls, and to whom intellectual exercise is a thing unknown, can only occupy themselves usefully, when neither legs nor arms are working, in reciting formulæ under the impression that they will thus secure for themselves a better existence.

April 9.—The day before yesterday we left the river Ourtchou to ascend one of its tributaries, called the Botchou; on the 8th we traversed a table-land and a pass into a valley where the Ourtchou flows in a southeasterly direction. We therefore had

again to leave it, and to-day we ascended a small river toward the east, encamping at the upper end of a valley, at the foot of a pass which we shall ascend to-morrow. We are at present at an altitude of from 15,000 to 16 000 feet. In the valleys, where



YAK DRIVER WITH PRAYER MILL.

grass is to be found, we saw some tents and flocks. Three men whom we met were as much alike as three brothers could be. They were all short, and had the round heads, and straight noses with narrow bridges, of Romans. All three were toothless, and

with their lower lips drooping on to their round chins, they recalled the busts of Nero.

We are now on the banks of the Omtchou, but shall have to leave it, for it, too, flows southeast, as far as we can tell, as is the case with most of the rivers in this region.

April 10.—A pass leads us to a small river, then another limestone pass, with obos, on which our Thibetans do not fail to deposit stones with a prayer; then another valley, and a river to cross, and finally a steppe from three to four miles broad, which seems a vast plain. Through it flows the Satchou, which is from 100 to 200 feet broad. According to what our lama and the old chief say, we have now crossed the four principal tributaries of the Kitchou, which flows by Lhassa, viz., the Ourtchou, the Poptchou, the Omdjanichou, and the Satchou.

April 12.—We have a sharp white frost during the night, but the morning is superb. Antelopes stare at us, great eagles are describing circles in the air, and in the gorge our hunters see some bears. These animals swarm about here, and, unfortunately for us, they have better legs than their pursuers. Wolves often howl of a night, but are never visible by day. We traverse a pass, at about 16,500 feet, and encamp at the bottom, at Tandî, on the banks of a river.

Our stages, it will be seen, are very similar to one another. We do not feel them to be severe, for we are now much better and stronger, but they average twelve miles each, which means a good deal more in a mountainous country than elsewhere. In order that our yaks may not lose strength, their loads are changed every day, so that the same beast never carries our wild yak skins, which are very heavy, nor our cartridge boxes, on two successive days. As soon as one is tired, it is unloaded and another takes its place out of a reserve stock of ten, which only carry their saddles.

April 13.—We begin to mount higher from the moment of starting, and for three hours follow the windings of a path which winds along the side of the ridges, now to the southeast, now to the northeast. To the north are steep heights and bare

rocks, while to the south valleys descend toward a smaller chain, also bare, beyond and overlooking which is a higher chain, white with ice glittering from under the snow. The road is difficult, and we admire the agility of our yaks, their surefootedness, and the strength of their legs, thanks to which they can take a drop of six feet without falling, and that, too, with a load on their backs. And our horses are quite as clever.

A caravan meets us on its way to Lhasa, consisting, of course, of "no" (as yaks are here called), for everything here is transported by these cattle with horses' tails. They are laden with long boxes covered with skins, and containing sugar, as we are told. At the head marches a lama with a pointed yellow cap, and carrying over his shoulder his cup in a leather bag, and several sacred images in little frames of hammered copper. He walks quickly, and his leanness, his hollow cheeks, and light step, remind Rachmed and me of old Puir, a good mulla who was our guide on the Pamir. The descent is along a river with high banks, and intercepted with ravines. Then the valley contracts to a mere gorge between the rocks, which we descend on ice, and the gorge in turn becomes a valley. We camp at Tjéma-Loung, which means "mouth of the gorge." Some tents are pitched not far off, and when we pass in front of them, the dogs rush out at us, but their masters call them back and drive them away with stones, then saluting us. They have come here to prostrate themselves before their chief (*bembo*), whose face is pitted with smallpox. He is, however, very energetic, and accompanies us as long as we are on the grounds of his tribe. His insignia consist of a collar and bells, which he hangs round his horse's neck. We repeatedly ask for milk, and the chief never fails to demand some at the tents which we pass, though he coolly pockets all the small change which we hand to those who provide us with it.

Around our tents gypaetes are fighting over the remains of a sheep, which they watched us kill. Wishing to see for ourselves the skill of the Thibetans with the sling, we asked a man to try his aim at one about seventy-five yards off. Picking out an oval

stone, a young man, who passes for the best slinger amongst them, places it in the sling, then swings it round once; the end cracks, and the stone falls within nine inches of the bird, which flies off at once. We examine this redoubtable arm, which is about seven feet in length and very simple, consisting of strands of wool plaited loosely together, so as to leave it supple. In the middle is a small pocket to hold the stone. At one end is a ring in which the thumb is placed; the other end, having no ring, is pressed between the thumb and the finger, care being taken that the stone hangs evenly in the middle.

To-night our men keep on the alert. Some of them sleep at a certain distance from the tents, watching the yaks. From time to time those near the tents give forth shrill cries, and the distant sentinels reply with a similar cry, which is again given back like an echo by the men on the mountains. It is a sort of greeting to each other, as well as a defiance to the enemy, for we are told that caravans are often robbed hereabouts.

April 14.—We set out early for So, which is on the other side of some difficult passes. After crossing the river and then one of its affluents, we mounted to the top of the first pass, which is about 13,000 feet high. Then, by a path which is stony, difficult, and such that a horse cannot always get up with his rider, in four hours we reached the Ia-La, at an altitude of about 16,500 feet. These excellent people here rightly thought that we should be glad of a draught of milk, which is as welcome as manna in this stony desert, where our only drink is snow that has been sheltered from the sun at the bottom of the crevasses.

After satisfying our hunger and thirst, we continue our journey by a path along a ridge as far as the obo that marks the spot where the desert commences. A perfect panorama here stretches out before our eyes. The horizon is clear at the four cardinal points, and a regular ocean of mountains is visible; quite as many to the north as to the south, only the summits are whiter southward. This is undoubtedly a superb mountain scene, though these "grand views" are, after all, very much alike, and a little stretch of plain would be most acceptable.

After such a climb, it is only right that we should have a scramble down. At one time we go faster than we care for on a stony path with innumerable twists, at another we slide along



A LOADED YAK.

rocks on the ice left by a torrent, falling and then getting up again. We do not lose a single one of our loaded yaks, but, among those which are not laden, three fall over a precipice, and are killed at once. We then cross, recross, and again cross the

river, to find ourselves on such level ground that our horses, of their own accord, break into a trot. To our left, at the lower end of the plateau, is a river flowing from the north to the south, into which the one we have just crossed empties itself. But what is it that we see in the valley? Cultivated fields! Plowed land! Yes, and farther away to the north, at the junction of the rivers, a sort of pyramid, looking like a sugar-loaf on a cubic base of masonry. Insensibly the ground rises, and soon, straight in front of us, upon an isolated cone which the river skirts to the east, rise high gray walls, built on the very edge of the cliffs and forming a most imposing mass. Above these walls extends a rectangle, having at one end a square tower and at the other a cloistered gallery. From the flat roof rise long poles looking like masts, from the ends of which float colored flags and pennants.

The chief who is our guide tells us that this is So Goumba, the monastery of So. As he pronounced these words, the poor savage's face expressed his pride, and he repeated "So Goumba! So Goumba!" as though he would give us to understand that it is not every day that one has the luck to see so fine an edifice. As for us, although we did not feel his admiration for this specimen of human work, yet the sight of a habitation was a real satisfaction to us. For five months we had not seen so extensive, so monumental a building; indeed, I might say for six, for the huts and cottages at Tcharkalik scarcely count.

Our curiosity was now aroused, for we had heard before from our men that there are many houses at So, and we were therefore anxious to arrive there. But as we proceeded we saw nothing beyond what I have described. At last I asked, "Where is So?"

"There it is," answered the Thibetan, pointing with his finger to what we were unwilling to take for a town. We congratulated him on the beauty of his capital, and one man, taking our remarks quite seriously, expressed his acquiescence. On reaching the Goumba, we discovered that it looks like a fortress only on the north and west sides, and that the winds are the enemy against which these solid walls have been reared as a defense.

The south front presents to view row upon row of small, limestone houses, exposed to the sun's rays, which they admit by doors, windows, and countless galleries. This side is as open as the others are shut in. All the dwellings, clinging to the sides of the slopes and the irregularities in the rock, are so completely one above the other, that the roofs of one row serve as terrace or courtyard to those in the row above. The one wide opening is the gate, flanked by pillars in the Persian style, and by this enter and leave the bearers of sacks, fagots, and other necessaries destined for the use of the monastery.

The good lamas were to be seen with bare heads and shorn, draped, like Roman senators, in dark, coarse woolen robes; some walking up and down the terraces, others sitting cross-legged or stretched on rugs, with their legs tucked under them, and watching us as they basked in the sunshine.

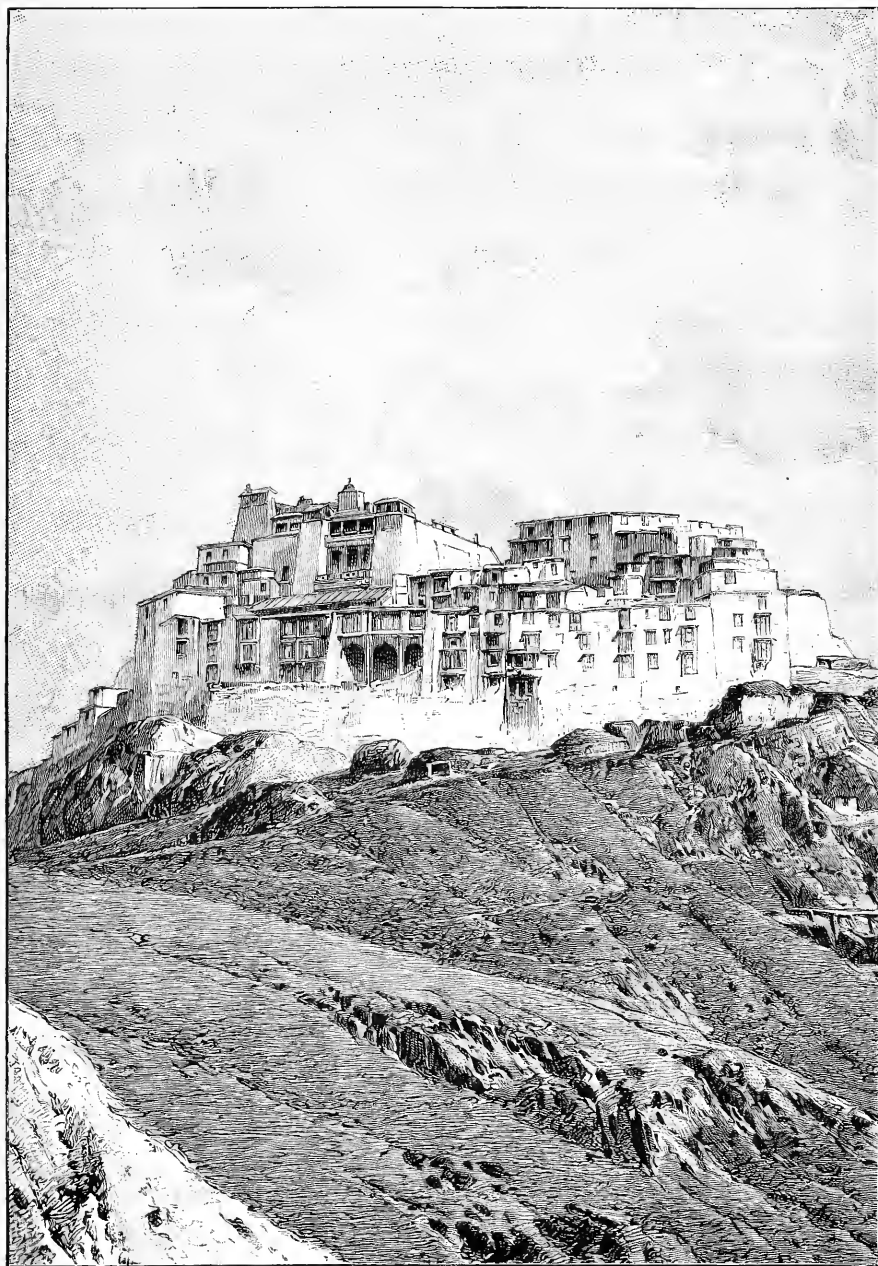
Wending our way to the palace we were to occupy, we came to a gate with folding doors, to which are affixed two manuscript notices in Thibetan, which, with the aid of the imagination, enabled us to fancy that they were lodging us in the townhall of the district. Through a porch we entered a square court, in the northwest corner of which some small chambers are built against the walls, with a gallery, constructed of wooden pillars, in front of them. The other two sides of the court contain only a granary, and a place where the horses are tethered.

This house is, it seems, reserved for the reception of great men on their way to or from Lhasa, and belongs to the Tale Lama, that is, the oligarchy which rules Thibet. A pole—dressed at the top with stuffs of every color, and especially yellow—rising from the courtyard, marks the fact that it is under the government flag. A simple glance at the interior of these so-called "rooms" sufficed to make us decide to keep to our tents, so full were they of filth and vermin.

While they were erecting our tent, after leveling the ground a little, we made for a heap of split wood against the wall. Wood! imagine our happiness as we feel it, and sniff the delicious odor of the still green juniper, which penetrates even to our

hearts, Frenchmen as we are, who love the forests so keenly, and whose fathers used to cry, "To the mistletoe!" on New Year's Day. Then we were lost in ecstasy before their walls, built, as is the fashion out here, with rough stones and soil, and sanctified by the insertion of prayers and carved images of Buddha. Our attention was next attracted by the roof, with its astonishing, unheard-of chimney-top, consisting of a huge earthenware pot that had lost its bottom, probably by being knocked against an iron one; by garlands of prayers, attached to staples and decorating our house; by the stairs, made of earth and turf, leading up to the roof; and by the fireside, a little square altar, on which were odoriferous branches in honor of the divinity. Finally, to complete the house, was a *concierger*, living in a little lodge, with a bitch and her two puppies. He was an ugly-looking individual, greasy, tall, and lean, with a pointed and dirty face black with filth, squint-eyed, forehead narrow and high; he had the short hair of a lama, and seemed to be a sort of lay-brother. We were scarcely settled when we received a visit from the civil and the religious chief, who were both very polite to us, bringing us rice, milk, two sheep, and chopped straw for our horses. They made a note of what we wanted, and gave us their word that we should be able to start in two days without fail, in accordance with our wishes. We made them some presents in turn. In the evening they cooked us some excellent slices of mutton, thanks to a good wood fire, and we had good milk, well-made bread, and well-cooked rice. We could sit near the fire without being poisoned by the smell of the dried dung which they burn in the desert; and, in truth, we fancied ourselves in another world. We were now at a height of less than 10,000 feet, and the air seemed so heavy and so stifling that we had to open the door of our tent. At nightfall the lamas, posted on the terrace of the monastery, gave us a serenade with their long trumpets, the dogs supplementing this discordant music with their barking; but the awful noise gradually diminished, and so we fell asleep.

April 15.—When we awoke this morning we complained of



THE MONASTERY AT SO.



the heat. The minimum during the night was only 21° Fahr., so that winter is over for us, and not too soon. Having spent the day mending various articles, we distributed presents amongst the senior chiefs and drivers who have accompanied us, as they wished to start on their way back before sunset, so that they might spend the night at the foot of Ta-La, and commence its difficult ascent to-morrow.

We paid them generously in *iamibas*, though they prefer Indian rupees to this species of money in bulk; because the Chinese merchants constantly cheat them by having two different scales which always tell in their own favor, and also by preparing a very bad alloy; not unnaturally, therefore, the savages prefer actual coins, the weight and value of which they understand. The only Thibetan coin that we have seen used is one about as thick as a sixpence and as large as a halfpenny, weighing the sixth of an ounce. It ought always to be of silver, but sometimes, to the disgrace of the authorities of the "mint," it is of a bad alloy, so that the savages do not readily accept it. On one side it is stamped with inscriptions on eight medallions, forming a circle round a rose in the center; and on the other, with curious ornamentations, among which we fancy we can recognize the crescent touching the sun, and the trident.

This distribution of money and presents gave rise to a little incident, and revealed to us the presence of a Chinaman at So, an old man who makes opium and gains a livelihood as a usurer and money changer. He is a native of Kensi, and was obliged, long ago, to flee his country for reasons not of his own making. We availed ourselves of his knowledge of Thibetan to explain to the men whom we had been rewarding the amount of the money which we had given them, for, with the exception of the oldest amongst them, they had no idea of the meaning of scales and weights. And the chiefs who accompanied us having offered to exchange these ingots for "cash," had given them only three or four apiece of these Thibetan coins, realizing thus a profit of one hundred and fifty per cent. When the opium smoker explained our generosity to them, they were very much put out at

the rapacity of their chiefs, though the majority of them dared neither protest nor ask for their ingots back. Two, however, did not conceal their displeasure, and we intervened and made the chiefs hand back to the poor fellows what was meant for them, whereupon they manifested their joy by jumping about in a most comical fashion. Then, bowing down and taking our hands, they placed them on their heads, and finally withdrew backward, raising their thumbs and hanging out their tongues. Their yaks were quickly assembled and loaded with their slender baggage, and they started off singing.

The news of our arrival having got abroad, with the addition, no doubt, that we were open-handed, our house was positively assailed by a crowd of beggars of both sexes. We offered them a sheep, which we handed to the captain of this horde, bidding him distribute it equally. This largess rid us of them and their vermin, but not of the dogs. The number of these latter is perfectly astounding; in fact, we could not say whether beggars or dogs were the more numerous at So.

From our house we can see the men plowing in the valley below. They scratch the mountain side with a plow drawn by two yaks, which are led by a man who holds the cords attached to the rings in their noses. From behind the plowman whips them up, though they do not go any quicker, but merely straighten their tufted tails and growl. The furrows are very small, and as far as possible perpendicular to the lie of the slope, with the view, no doubt, of stopping the waters which run down from the plateau. When the field has been plowed they come our way, and so give us the opportunity of examining their team. It consists of a pole fixed to a yoke which the beasts keep up. The tail is simply a roughly hewn thick bough, which is bent a little to form a handle; the share is of wood with two side pieces also of wood, bound by means of leathern thongs and with an iron tip in front. The men seem to till the land with great care, breaking the clods with a wooden mallet, and picking up the stones, which they place in a heap at the corner of the field. We see several others plowing in the same way; the

driver is sometimes a woman, but it is always a man, with body bared, who holds the tail and steers it lightly through the soil.

Turning to the monastery we see much more movement within it than there was yesterday. The dilapidations in the roof and walls are being repaired. Women carry the mortar and stones



A HOUSE AT SO.

in baskets, while the men arrange the materials, and we see several of them treading the soil down on the roof and singing as they work. The lamas, richly clad, stand out boldly against the sky on the highest point of the roof, as they interest themselves in the work, and in various striking attitudes watch the men. These hurried repairs suggest that the rainy season is at hand.

April 16.—We quit So after having said our adieus to our

companions, the minor chiefs who are returning home. One of them is going to Lhassa, and we commission him to carry our kind remembrances to our old friends who live in the holy city.

Crossing the Satchou, which here is from 180 to 660 feet broad, we have to take a slight bath. We then ascend a valley from which one of the tributaries of the Satchou comes down. Following the banks of the river along an easy road, with the sun shining brightly, our eyes are gladdened by the juniper and brushwood which cover the slopes on the higher ground; herds are browsing the green grass; yaks, sheep, and horses vie with each other in perching themselves on the most inaccessible spots. Every now and again black tents are to be seen in a gorge, and near them blocks of ice, reminding us that the winter is only now over. In fact we are perspiring, and have already forgotten the awful cold of the table-lands. At the end of the valley tents are pitched ready for us, with piles of fagots, and scarcely have we sat down when an old fellow presents himself with pendent tongue and a pot of creamy milk. Here we shoot some partridges that are quite new to us, and have been for a long time puzzling us by a cry which they utter without showing themselves. While searching for them I catch sight of three natives at our feet behind a rock, amusing themselves with the contemplation of their own features in a pocket mirror, which they are evidently using for the first time. They stop here for some time, chatting and laughing boisterously at their own grimaces. The mildness of the temperature seems to us extraordinary; we no longer require our cloaks except after sunset. We again notice a curious phenomenon, though it is less striking here than on the table-lands; our woolen cloaks and clothes, whenever they are touched in the dark, become luminous with electricity, and give forth a slight crackle.

April 17.—Our road becomes more and more picturesque. We traverse regular woods of juniper trees, above which appear the green hills. Herds become more numerous, and trees rarer. The method of building is no longer the same, for other materials are here available. We see huts, made of branches, leaning

against the mountains, and the tents are surrounded with hedges as among the Kirghiz on the mountains of Central Asia, while the animals are shut in of a night, because of the cultivated lands. Fires are made of wood, with which dung is mixed. The men are also laying by supplies of grass for the winter, and everywhere we see erections that look like gallows or gibbets, formed of upright poles, on the tops of which are fixed others crosswise; on these they dry the grass, which is, at the same time, out of reach of the cattle. In proportion as the land is more generous, the inhabitants take more care of themselves, and have stronger frames. For the first time we notice amongst these shepherds the use of a covering other than the cloak, for some are wearing cotton shirts with broad sleeves, and others sleeveless waistcoats. Almost all of them smoke pipes of tin or beaten iron, with tubes so long that by slightly stooping the smoker can light his very bad tobacco at the fire. On the road they carry, attached to their tobacco pouch, a little wooden vessel in which they empty the residue of each pipe, and quickly filling the small bowl, light the fresh tobacco from the burning remains.

At Souti, in the valley of Soudjou, we were as astonished to see a man with a little black beard as we are at home to see a woman with hair on her chin. This individual, adorned also with a rudimentary mustache, is in other respects very like his fellows. He seems to be in the service of the local chief, who attracts our attention at once, for he seems an exact picture of what a barbarian chief should be. No longer young, for his hair is turning, he is still active and vigorous; his style of salutation is dignified, though simple; he has regular features, thin lips, small eyes with a proud look in them, and in all his gestures there is a certain amount of distinction combined with simplicity and ease. Whether he is walking, lighting his pipe—which is as long as his arm—or resting, he looks well. Ask him a question and he replies seriously; he issues brief orders that are quickly executed. He commands in a natural way, like a man born to be obeyed.

Since leaving So, we have often noticed that the soil on the

banks of the river has been disturbed. To-day the mystery is solved, for on the fire near the tent we see a pot filled with what seems to be, from its taste, a species of turnip. It is called *niouma*, and is found on the ground, just like truffles, growing generally with a long root, in which case it has the flat top of a mushroom, but sometimes with a short root.

From Souti we reach Ritchimbo by a pass, and are scarcely in the valley before we meet with an easterly wind, for the first time these many weeks, and a storm of sleet. The juniper trees have almost entirely disappeared, and here we are on a steppe again.

We have to change our yaks to-day, and for the last time we pay our workmen and drivers directly for their services. They always hand their money at once to their chiefs, who appropriate two-thirds of it, under the idea, doubtless, that we are "ruining trade." For the future, we shall simply hand a lump sum to the chief of the band, taking care to be less generous. We have often asked each other why savages submit so readily to the extortions of their chiefs. An Oriental gave us an explanation of this which may be worth mentioning. "We greatly prefer dishonest chiefs," said he, "because they punish us less severely when we deserve punishment, and we can obtain from them favors which it would be useless to ask from honest chiefs, who refuse bribes. The latter only do and permit what is just and right."

At Ritchimbo we see, for the first time, a goiter, on the neck of a small chief.

April 20.—The whole mountain is covered to a considerable depth with fine snow, which began to fall last night. Climbing a pass presenting great difficulties, called Kela, which is also the name of the neighboring chain, and reaching, with great trouble and in intolerable heat, a height of 15,200 feet, the descent began. The snow was positively dazzling in the sunshine, and our faces were scorched, for we could not protect ourselves against the reflection of the sun's rays, after the manner of the natives, who let their long hair hang down over their

faces. They however suffer from headache, to relieve which they put handfuls of snow on their heads. It took us three hours to cross the pass, and we then followed the course of a river, sometimes on the ice, and sometimes on the bank. On the adjacent lands were houses with flat tops, and surrounded with hedges; dogs greeted us with their barking, and we fancy we could even hear cats mewling, though it might, perhaps, have been little lambs crying. Juniper trees were again very scarce, but the hillsides bristled with brushwood; and every time that we raised our eyes we saw yaks where one would think only birds could perch. Then, leaving the valley, we climbed a ridge which forced us to go out of our way, with the result that we stumbled along toward a chief's house near Bata-Soundo. This place, we are told, is on Chinese territory; it is near a training school for lamas situated on the west side of the valley, which looks from here like a *cul-de-sac*, stretching from north to south, and shut in on the north by a superb mass of bristling broken rocks, with their slim and snowy points rising one above the other. The whole looks like an immense bundle of tapering Gothic spires; on this side are more houses built on and round the slopes, while above and below cattle are grazing.

Our approach causes considerable curiosity, and several women come out of the house, freshly besmeared. One of them is young, and as she does not wear a mask of dirt, displays fine features and a prepossessing face set in a natural head of hair, curly beyond all description. This head of hair is evidently "inhabited," but from the calm fashion in which she disposes of those of her little six-footed friends that she can catch, it does not seem to enter her mind that she is at all singular in this respect. The chief, who is a fearful old rascal and very ugly, makes a difficulty about supplying us with yaks and horses, though we offer to pay him for their use. He pretends that he has none at his disposal, though we can see plenty of them on the mountain. We call his attention to this manifest contradiction, and, being thus cornered, he avows that he can do nothing on his own authority. "I must," he says, "have an order from the Chinese

chief at Lhassa or Tsamdo. Have you one?" Thereupon our lama and the representative of the chief at So take him in hand, and the affair is soon settled. We express our astonishment at this difficulty, and our lama explains to us that the people in this valley are brigands, thieves, blackguards, in short, Chinese subjects, and that they are dependent on the Chinese mandarins at Tsamdo.

Our afternoon is devoted to a reception of crowds of idlers whom we allow to inspect our various utensils. Some enameled dishes call forth expressions of great admiration, while they raise their thumbs at the sight of our firearms, and greet our big-tailed ram with shouts of joy.

By dint of small presents, we induce some of the yak drivers from Ritchimbo to transport our baggage during the four days that we have still to pass on the territory of Tsamdo. The most ardent advocate in our behalf is a species of madman, about fifty years old, whom his comrades obey in spite of his evident lack of intelligence. We secured his allegiance by giving him a pocket mirror, which he had asked for scores of times during the stage. Although so simple-minded, he has wonderful legs, and is never tired of using them. On the slightest excuse he would come up to us, and hold the horse's bridle, under the pretense of being of some assistance; and, hanging out his tongue, would pretend to look at himself in the hollow of his hand, as if he were holding a looking-glass in it, and with the gestures and mimicry of a Neapolitan would beg us to give him one. Since our arrival at Bata-Soundo he has never ceased hanging about Rachmed, whom he knows to be the cashier, the dispenser of our goods, and when Dedeken hands him the longed-for mirror, he receives it with an amusing explosion of joy that we have never seen equaled. Raising his arms, he looks at himself, protrudes his tongue, and gives a bound in the air, kicking up his heels against his seat. He then runs to the women, and allows them to contemplate their own features in his glass, but snaps at them when they try to take it into their own hands. Some men then approach, whereupon he runs away, with a bound like a goat that

has just been let loose, pursued by some of his companions, who cannot catch him up. He then stops, and allows them just a glance at themselves in his glass, but that is all, and at last he conceals this precious object, and each time that anyone asks him for the loan of it, replies, in a serious tone, that they have had enough amusement for the present. This strange man marks his friendship for a certain little girl by handing her a little bit of glass off a box of cigarettes; and she immediately holds this glass in the palms of her hands, and contemplates her reflected image, all the women following her example.

April 21.—We start, though rather late, to-day, for we have been obliged to adopt persuasive measures to induce a very recalcitrant chief to furnish us with his quota of men and beasts. Our lama and Rachmed at last bring him to understand that we distribute with no sparing hands blows as well as more agreeable things.



WOMEN AT BATA-SOUMDO.

CHAPTER XIII.

NATIVE CUSTOMS AND CHARACTER.

A Thibetan Vitellius—"Tchang"—Commercial Chinamen—Native Women—Polyandry and Polygamy—Beggars—Contentment—The Chief of the District at Home—A Theological Question—Departure from Sere Soundo—Mendicant Lamas and their Music—News from Lhassa—The Honeymoon in Thibet—Novel Method of Crossing a Stream—Tumblers—Chief in his Cups—A Scene of Home Life—Force Majeure—Fickleness of the Natives: The Probable Cause—At Kari Meta—Primitive Husbandry—A Lamaess—Praying Windmills—Tchoungo—The Dâla and Djala Passes—A Splendid Prospect—A Pagoda—Houmda-Lagoun: A Manufacturing Town.



WOMAN AND CHILD OF SERE
SOUND.

April 21.—We make a short stage as far as Poioundo, half-way through a pass. The slopes are covered with brushwood, and in a thicket of rhododendrons we can see musk-deer bounding about. Some natives are very anxious to sell us some musk-bags from these animals, and, to prove their generosity, offer us, at the same time, some of their long teeth. But these cunning salesmen, who ask at least twenty-five rupees apiece for them, are regular cheats, for they have emptied most of the bags and crammed them with paper.

April 22.—We traverse several short passes marked by obos from which protrude branches tied up in bundles. We mount to a height of 16,500 feet, then re-descend, to mount again to a height of 15,500 feet; then there come passes of only 13,900 feet and 14,900 feet. Now and again we see houses and tents on the plateau; around us is the fresh grass, and our temperature at night varies from 7° to 25° below zero.

April 23.—A pretty steep pass takes us up 15,000 feet, and then comes a descent into a narrow gorge rendered very picturesque by rocks, gradually broadening into a valley, whilst on the terraces above its perpendicular banks are numerous flat-



HOUSE AT SERE SOUNDO.

roofed habitations with gray walls varying in height. A large square building, which frowns down upon them in the distance, gives these houses the appearance of forts surmounted by a tower, such as are found in Tuscany.

Just as we were about to leave the valley, our old friend, the idiot with the looking-glass, rushed forward, and explained to us, with great volubility and gesticulations, that we were to halt on the plateau: "A grand chief, a very good fellow, is expecting you. I have told him that you are honest, kind men, and that you must make each other's acquaintance, and drink a glass of 'tchang' together; you will find it excellent." We had no sooner reached the plateau, which borders a river of considerable width, than we saw a number of natives who seemed to be expecting us. Several of them came forward, and, politely taking our horses by their bridles, conducted us to this great

chief, who was one of the stoutest, if not the very stoutest of Thibetans that we had ever seen; quite a Vitellius. In spite, or perhaps because of his rotundity, he was very amiable, shaking our hands most cordially, and begging us to honor him by taking a seat on his rug. On each side of him was a lama, one with a head like an actor, the other with that of a faun. He himself carried on his bull-neck a splendid, well-shaped head—the head of a savage monarch, with hair hanging down his back. This specimen of a thick-set Goliath insisted on our tasting the contents of three iron bottles, cased in tin, of Chinese make, judged by their shape, on the top of which were lumps of butter, out of compliment to us. From its flavor, this “tehang” must be made from fermented barley, and at first we did not think much of it, but after a while we rather took to it, and gave it the high-sounding name of hydromel. It seems very mild, but if you drink too much of it you run the risk of becoming “dead drunk.” Our host requested permission to look at our firearms and glasses, and his stupefaction was extreme when he saw the dust fly, a thousand paces off, where a ball had struck an eboulis on a rock, his companions sharing his astonishment, and expressing their admiration in most emphatic terms. When we rose to leave, the fat chief and all his followers insisted on conducting us, so they brought him a splendid mule which, in spite of his weight, he mounted unaided; and so we started. Having crossed the river, our crowd of followers on foot tucking up their clothes and displaying the sturdy though somewhat long legs of mountaineers, we climbed a narrow path on the edge of the chasm, pitching our tent near a clump of houses built on the mountain side. A crowd of idlers of both sexes soon surrounded us; the women being very ugly, while a few of the young men had rather nice faces.

To our yak drivers and all these spectators who are shouting and moving about, two Chinamen with their solemn mien present a great contrast. One of them wears a pair of spectacles with such large-rimmed glasses that they cover part of his forehead too. He is smoking a cigar out of a long mouthpiece, with

a very dignified air, one hand in his girdle. The other, whose nose is not quite so insolently *retroussé*, has a less dignified attitude and a humorous smile. They enter at once into conversation with our man Akkan, who turns out to come from Kensi, their native province. Chinamen who belong to the same district always support each other, and when far from home meet compatriots with the greatest pleasure, their provincialism doing duty for patriotism.

These two are here to trade, and are the scouts of an army of invading merchants. They buy musk chiefly, or rather take it in exchange for tea, which they bring from China, a tea of a very inferior quality, furnishing, indeed, an execrable drink, yet the natives here prefer it to anything else, even to Indian rupees. According to these Chinamen, musk is very dear, a good bag costing at least twenty rupees. The natives also exchange it for tobacco, but only on rare occasions, as the tobacco leaves, which they roll into cigars for themselves, come from Setchoun, and are very expensive.

According to what the elder and graver of the Chinamen tells us, they are both representatives of a large house, whose headquarters are at Shanghai. "My companion," he says, "was a soldier, and has traveled in the direction of Yunnan. I am going away from here in three hours, but he will remain, as he has come to take my place. My residence here has lasted eighteen months, and it will procure me, on my return home, the post of manager of one of the shops belonging to our house. Oh! you might be kind enough to let me have one of your horses. I noticed that one of them is lame; let me have it, and I will soon set it to rights. I should be very glad of it, for I want it badly."

"What do you want it for?"

"Because, you see, I have a little daughter that I wish to take away with me, and I could put her on your horse."

"Are you not taking the child's mother, too?"

"No, for I am not married."

Thereupon, his companion, the old soldier, also unbosoms himself to us. "I only reached here three moons ago, and it already

seems a very long time to me. I don't like being here at all, and I shall never be able to take to these savages or learn their language." He calls our attention to their dirt, though that does not prevent him from leering at some fearful-looking women. He is evidently a "lady's man," but, as he himself remarks, they are not by any means coy; they are indeed devoid of all sense of modesty or even of decency.

The poorer women adorn themselves with copper bracelets and earrings, the rich have silver ones. Many of them wear glass necklaces which they buy from the Chinamen, and stones in which agates predominate. They also insert these stones and glass trinkets in their abundant locks, which fall like a fan down their backs. Most of the women whom we see here have small dark eyes, black hair, broad faces, and prominent cheek bones; they are stout and short, but very strong and muscular. We are in a land where the system not only of "wives many," but also of "husbands many" prevails. This is how the latter mode works. A couple have a marriageable daughter; a man is anxious to enter into this family, live under the same roof, and become the husband of the girl. He, therefore, visits her parents, states the terms he is prepared to offer, and when this dowry, or, rather, this charge for admission is settled, becomes her husband and a member of the family. Other young men, desirous of sharing his happiness, present themselves, knock at the door, and, if terms can be arranged, take their place, too, round the family hearth, thus becoming members of the household and co-husbands. Sometimes, but very rarely, it happens that one of the husbands, through love or jealousy, or from some other motive, wishes to become the sole proprietor, the sole lord of the wife. In this case terms are arranged by which he becomes her one and only master, and his colleagues obligingly retire, when he has repaid them the sum they brought on entering the association, plus an idemnity, the amount of which is only settled after a long wrangle. If there are any children, they remain with the wife.

It must not be imagined that this system prevails by law or

by any religious custom having the force of a law. In Thibet polyandry is not obligatory, as monogamy is with us. If his means admit of such a luxury, a man takes a wife to himself and does not share her with others. And if a powerful, rich



TYPES OF NATIVES AT SERE SOUND.

chief, like the great man who welcomed us this morning, is not content with one wife, he takes as many as he likes. Our Goliath, for instance, has three, so that this country furnishes a proof, as do other countries, that the marital relation is determined by economic considerations.

Let me give another fact in support of this view. A married man gives up his wife, and restores her to her family, when he finds "double harness" too galling. He can, if he chooses, enter a lamas' house, a favor, however, that is granted him only in return for a certain sum paid down into the prior's hands. On becoming a lama, he is assured against want to the end of his days, and in exchange for his capital handed over to the house, a sort of life annuity is granted him. His position, however, in the community is in proportion to his fortune; and should he be comparatively poor, he must not expect the happy and easy lot of the rich lamas, but must work. Even with this obligation to work, however, he is relatively happy, since his future is secure; he will never be without a crust to munch, and many of the natives are quite content when this much is assured them.

Here, however, as elsewhere, some women are left unmarried. When they cannot find a purchaser their only resource is to take to begging; they soon meet with others in the same plight with whom they join their fortunes, and they then wander about among tents and villages with wallets on their backs, and long sticks in their hands, to repel the dogs. Sometimes they join a body of male beggars, when each sex begs for itself by day, and they only meet at night.

If it be asked, "When a woman has, say, four husbands, how can they possibly agree amongst themselves?" I can only assert that they do agree. They all indeed join hands against the wife. They vie with one another in getting as much work out of her as they possibly can. She it is who leads the yaks yoked to the plow, or, bare to the waist, brandishes a mallet as she breaks the clods; before sunset she hastens to the fields to collect fuel for the evening meal, and sometimes has to go, with her basket on her back, to the summit of the mountains, along the slopes, to gather it. If the stones in the walls that protect the cultivated lands fall down, she has to put them back again; it is she, too, who removes the stones raised by the plow in tracing the furrows; she spins and sews, and attends to the needs of young

and old ; goes to the river for water, and, bending double on the steep path, returns laboriously with her jars full ; while finally, when beasts of burden run short, or these "gentlemen" think a load too heavy for their little horses, they quietly put it on a woman's back. The women belonging to the nomads, however, are not so overdone with work as the wives of the husbandmen.

As for the men, they plow, sow, shoot, drive the yaks, and, with the help of their women, load them, but their chief occupation consists in smoking their pipes while waiting for the harvest.

All, however, women as well as men, seem quite contented with their lot, and gayety reigns supreme. Every time they see us performing our ablutions they gape with astonishment. Our matches, too, fill them with astonishment when they see them light from friction. Several of them rush to pick up those we have thrown away after using them, or because they would not strike. Then they rub them, just as they have seen us doing, on a stone or on their sleeves, and are crestfallen because they cannot produce the desired effect.

In the evening I took a walk in the direction of a large obo piled up at the bottom of a terrace where the chief of the district has built his palace. I found him before his door, sitting cross-legged on a mat in a very dignified position, and turning his prayer mill. The suspicion of a beard and of a small black mustache, and his hair, which only falls down to his shoulders, make him the type of a Gallic chief as represented to us in pictures. Chained up in his yard are two splendid black dogs with red paws, enormous beasts with heads like bears, that bark furiously whenever anyone approaches.

The dwelling-house comprises the floor above the stables, and is reached by stairs or rather by a trunk of a tree hewn into the shape of stairs. Between the first floor and the stables is a platform, on the walls of which hang fox, wolf, and panther skins. Women are attending to their household duties, while their lord and master is enjoying the fresh air. While I am examining some engraved stones, I am joined by a young lama, whose hooked nose, energetic features, and quick eye, had already struck

me. He presents me with several stones, saying, "I engraved the prayers on them." I compliment him on his talent, and express a wish to carry away with me some specimens of his



MENDICANT LAMAS.

skill, whereupon he shows himself disposed to fall in with my request, and taking my note-book, which I hand him, copies into it some of the inscriptions.

We were soon surrounded by idlers, and amongst them were some lamas who read aloud over his shoulder the formulæ which he was copying for me. Then one of them, to whom I remarked

that the words were very beautiful, put a question to me, folding his hands in the attitude of prayer, pretending to turn his prayer mill to the right, and pointing to the south and to the lamas' house on the other side of the valley opposite to us. He next pretended to turn a prayer mill to the left, and pointed to the west, namely, the direction of Lhasa. He was doubtless putting to me a question in theology, or perhaps he wanted to know my opinion on Buddhism. Being an old hand at this kind of thing, I pointed to the west and turned my imaginary mill from right to left, and, lifting my thumb, expressed my approbation of this latter kind of exercise. It so happened that I was of the scribe's opinion, for he congratulated me, repeating with manifest satisfaction, "Well, very well."

After that he made some jocose remark to my questioner, who is, doubtless, an innovator or schismatic of some kind. He has, however, a good round head, and a benevolent face, which does not look as though it belonged to a revolutionist. With a firm hand the artist wrote the "Om mane Padmé houm," then "Ome maté me ie sa le Den," and then other syllables the meaning of which I will not undertake to render. It is, however, to be supposed that they have a meaning, and that they are efficacious, since they are everywhere chiseled on stones, chalked on mountain sides, traced on the shingle of the river, printed on the stuffs, or cut on bits of wood and even on the animals' horns when other material fails. As a reward for his kindness I handed the scribe the pencil he had been using. As he had picked up all the bits of old paper that we had thrown away, he drew out of his pocket a bit of an old cardboard box, and had a hard tussle with the point of the pencil, writing in cursive characters, and drawing ornaments; a hand, a bird that looks like an indiscriminate specimen of a domestic fowl, and finally my portrait, consisting of a very short profile, with what was meant for a nose, an eye like that of an Egyptian, and narrow forehead, and a beard such as you see on Assyrian bas-reliefs.

The likeness was not satisfactory, but I, in turn, executed his portrait, reproducing his aquiline nose and advancing chin. It

really was recognizable ; at all events he was so pleased with it that, when he asked to be allowed to retain this masterpiece, I consented, and he took his departure surrounded by his friends, who, on comparing the drawing with its original, raised their thumbs to compliment me on my talent.

April 24.—To-day we left Sere Soundo, although we had been very comfortable there. Before starting the chief offered us several bottles of “tchang,” which we emptied, making a merry start, accompanied by most of the villagers.

The valley that we now ascend is very well cultivated, with numerous hamlets in it, and large farms where all the members of a family are crowded together. The ruins of habitations surmounted by lofty towers are not rare. We could not find out whether these “*despobladas*” were due to war, depopulation, or removals. Built on elevated platforms, bathed in the sunshine, and standing out against the blue sky, these towers have a grand look about them, and give to the ruins the appearance of fortified castles. The buildings correspond in style with those I have seen on the Himalayas, in the Tchatral, and at Gahkouch, for instance. There are resemblances, also, between the natives of these two regions—the same long hair, the same system of one wife to many husbands, the same easy carrying of heavy loads, and finally, the same lightheartedness.

After advancing for an hour and a quarter, we halted at a small village to change porters. From the moment of our arrival the chief from Sere Soundo, who had accompanied us, sat apart to show that he does not exercise any authority here, and that he will not interfere in his neighbor's concerns. These little potentates are, in fact, very jealous of their authority. The chief, who is recognizable by his yellow, pointed hat, marches up and down, and issues his orders, his men forthwith setting out in every direction, shouting, calling, and answering one another till the mountain echoes back the noise. They bring up beasts of burden of every sort, size, and color, male and female. One drags a donkey by its ear, another a yak by a cord or by its horn, others chase horses, an old woman hurries on her cow, and

some young men drive in oxen at a gallop; all these make up a large herd, and they add their lowing, grunting, or neighing to the hubbub, which was bad enough before. When it comes to starting, and dividing the loads, there is a general scramble for the lightest objects, men and women, old men and children, all taking part in it, and all arguing. They weigh the chests and the bundles, and all want to get out of taking them. One pretends that his ass is so miserably small; another, that he cannot saddle his horse because it is too spirited; another, that his yak has only just come in, tired out from plowing; and as for our wild yak skin that we destine for the museum, they are so frightened at its weight that nobody will have anything to do with it. Everybody is crying out, everyone issuing orders, down to boys of twelve, while, amid all the tumult, some sanctimonious old lamas, quite indifferent to it, quietly turn their mills or tell their beads. But this does not prevent them from examining us and stroking our velveteens, which are a puzzle to them, for, as they feel them, they remark to each other, "It is not leather," and they cannot get over their surprise. The shouting and laughing are enough to deafen one. Soon the din is at its height, thanks to the arrival of two mendicant lamas singing, the one in a marvelously hollow voice, the other in a key first sharp and then rough. They accompany their song with a double tambourine, which they beat till the little leather tassels flutter at the end of the thongs fixed on to their instrument. Besides this, they every now and then blow into human thigh bones with leather bags on the end, from which they discharge most disagreeable wheezing noises. Both of them are bareheaded, and clad in yellow; the elder one's face is completely smooth, while the other is bald; his nose is short, his teeth splendid, and he possesses just a large enough fringe of beard to make him the image of a good-natured gorilla.

The scene is a picturesque one, and it would probably be going on still if the chief, tired of arguing with his subjects, had not suggested to them that they should decide by lot which should take such and such a load. Men and women accordingly

hand to an old man one of the garters with which they fasten up above the calf their stuff boots. These form the numbers of the lottery, and the old man proceeds to draw them with the utmost impartiality. He first places himself at one end of the row of packages, and, following it down to the other end, puts upon each of them one of the garters, which he takes at haphazard out of his left hand, kept behind his back. Two sturdy fellows having voluntarily seized the heaviest chests, the crowd straightway lays hold of all that is left, and our baggage is soon carried off.

Everyone wishes to join in this pleasure party, poor as well as rich, the women more especially; and the exodus takes place in great disorder, whilst those who carry small loads, or none at all, run about, jumping round the beasts, laughing, chattering, and shouting; never, in short, did a "removal" take place amidst greater merriment.

In our turn we followed this rabble, after having given a consultation to one of the mendicant lamas, who had an eye covered with a white film. On the way we noticed that our yak skin, which at starting had been put on a young horse's back, had been shifted to that of a woman, so important is it that the back of the noblest conquest that man has ever made should not be made sore. In spite of the impossibility of overlooking our porters, we find in the evening that nothing is missing.

Scarcely was our tent pitched, when our Chinaman was greeted by a Thibetan with an intelligent face, who could speak a few words of Chinese. He represented that he came from Lhasa, and that he was there while we were at Dam, for the rumor of our arrival had spread in the town. He had three other companions, one of them a girl, and they had been traveling for a year. Setting out from Tatsien Lou, whither they were now returning, they passed Tsamdo, and then went straight to Lhasa to pray and receive the blessing of the Tale Lama.

"And did you receive it?"

"Oh, yes! we were blessed, and are now happy. As soon as

we have reached home again, my sister is going to marry the elder of these two young men."

"And who is the other?"

"The brother of my future brother-in-law."

"Your brother-in-law is very young."

"Eighteen."

"And your sister?"

"Fifteen."

"What induced you to undertake this long journey?"

"We had long talked about it between us, and then, when we had made our minds up, we set out with a little money. Now, however, we have none left, and are begging our way back."

"Do you expect to reach Tatsien Lou soon?"

"We hope so, but cannot say when."

In Europe the honeymoon trip is made after marriage; in Thibet they take it at betrothal. I will not presume to decide which of the two plans is the better.

In front of our encampment, on a plateau to the south, stretch the white walls of a lama's house, from which the descent is made by an abrupt path cut in the high bank of the river. The two banks are not connected by any bridge, and those who would cross must do so at a ford, or make use of a cable stretched above the water from side to side.

On going to examine this system of aerial gymnastics, we were lucky enough to see it work several times. The person who crosses encircles his body with short leather thongs attached to a strong horn hook, which is fixed over the stomach. Then with the ends of these thongs he forms two rings which are passed around the thighs, hangs the hook on to the rope, with the head in the direction he is going, and holding on by the strength of his wrist, is soon suspended, face uppermost and back parallel to the river, when he soon twists himself over to the other side. Several natives who crossed to have a look at us returned in this manner; each had his straps and his hook, while those who felt their strength going excited themselves by shouting, and pressed the cord with their feet besides

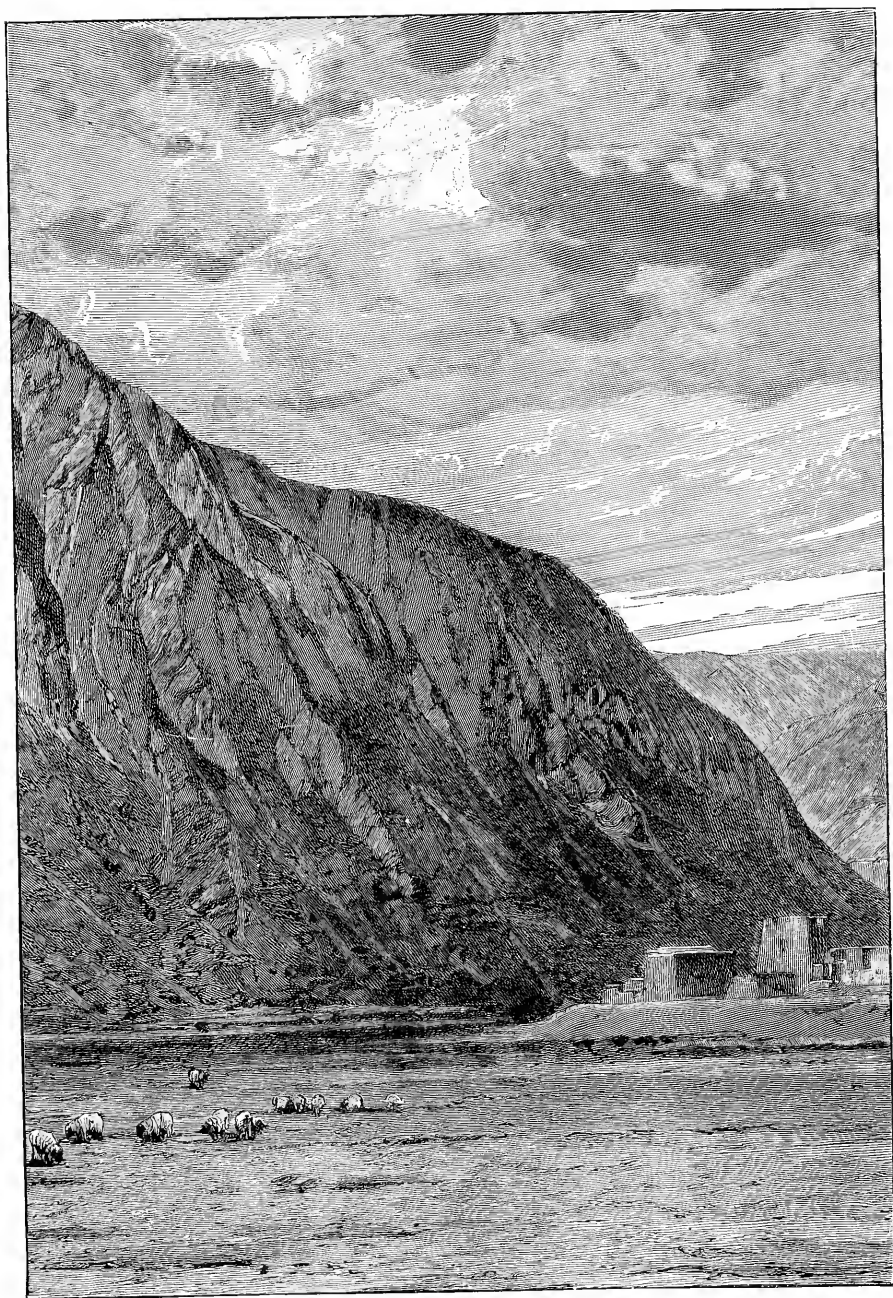
pushing themselves along by stretching their legs. Some of them displayed great strength in this exercise, and when hanging in mid-air over the river which was roaring beneath them, would give vent to shouts of joy or defiance.

In the evening three Thibetans come and take a seat round our fire, one of them twanging a guitar as an accompaniment to a song which, though monotonous, is not disagreeable. The following evening, when the beasts were being loaded, they re-appeared in their smartest costume, having tucked their trousers into their boots, and put on a red dress with tassels hanging down from their girdles.

These men are dancers or tumblers. Winding round in a circle, they mark time with small cymbals and a drum, which they hold like a hand glass, and keep striking with a bent stick, with a leather puff at the end. They make a few grimaces, bend the body, and then turn clean over with great agility. As a climax, one who remained on the scene last added to his disguise a horrible-looking mask, ornamented with white shells, performed a series of leaps and somersaults, which he makes more dangerous by holding close to his eyes the points of very sharp knives.

April 25.—We mounted up as far as Tachiline, crossing to the left bank of the river by a wooden bridge. The piles are square towers, constructed of small beams, and the interiors filled with stones. On the top of these piles are put long oak beams, fixed with ropes to crossbeams, and having stones on the ends to keep them in position, and, perhaps, to maintain the equilibrium.

Here we had to consult the chiefs of the district about obtaining yaks for the next stage, which is a long one, beginning with a pass, and continuing through a desert, so they begged us to start early. The head of the lamas' house helped us, and half our band for the morrow will consist of lamas. There are two hundred of them here, living in a row of huts so out of repair that we can only conclude it is a poor district—and, in fact, the natives cultivate but very little ground, and are smaller and worse off than those who live lower down. In ten hours we reached Tchimbo-Tinzi, a large village with a lama community



GOSSING, NEAR SERE SOUND.



numbering a thousand inhabitants. It is perched on an isolated shelving road, and bordered on the south by the river, which buries itself in a ravine, to the north being a valley which supports the whole population.

The chief is at variance with a neighbor, who wishes to take advantage of his minority to invade his territories. But though the young chief, by the advice of the old men, resists, he will one day succumb, for the Chinese authorities at Tsamdo have been subsidized by the ambitious chief of Tchimbo-Nara, and they will interfere in his favor with a view to weakening the power of our host.

April 27.—We saw the ambitious chief to-day. We had, however, to wait a very long time for him in the valley, his village being perched high up like an eagle's nest, and he himself being quite tipsy. As soon as he had recovered the use of his legs, he descended from his aerie. He proved to be an enormous fellow, with gray eyes, but was pleasant in his cups, giving his orders with great decision, and setting everybody to work. The required number of yaks were soon got together, the great chief spending his leisure moments in drinking astride across a bale, looking like a clumsy Silenus. Every now and then there issued from his ponderous bosom shouts with which the whole valley resounded, and which were the outcome of his great animal spirits. We left him with mutual expressions of good will, after having bought sheep from him for two shillings.

Hamlets and farms abound hereabouts, built of rough stones, the terraces and roofs resting on trunks of trees. We are still in a wild district, but the natives live in houses, with signs of the early stage of civilization. They till their land better, and manure their fields, they wear stuff clothes, and nearly all the women adorn themselves with glass trinkets; their hair is shorter, and they often wear it level with the shoulder; whilst the women cut theirs over their foreheads into a fringe, and do not wear it down their backs in little plaits. Armed men are much rarer, as if there were greater security than in the districts situated to the west.

To-day, after having, by a mistake, left the banks of the river, we followed a path which led us to a farm, where we came across a scene of Thibetan home life. In the yard, a man, bare to the waist, is skinning a sheep on the ground; a child of eight or nine is holding it by the paws, and, as he bends down, his head is completely hidden by his falling hair. The dogs are eagerly awaiting the moment when the uneatable portions will be flung to them. Seated on a stone and leaning against the wall, a handsome young woman, with bare neck and chest, is holding a distaff and spinning, in a calm attitude; at her feet is a little girl, drawing out the wool. A man seated at her side is conversing smilingly with her; another, who is sharpening a blade on a stone, with bare body, has his arms stretched out in the pose of the old knife-grinder to be seen at Florence. A plump little girl is playing with a puppy which has about as little clothing as herself. Lower down, out in the sunshine, an old woman, with her short white hair all in disorder, is lolling over a few cinders, enjoying the short span of life that remains to her. By her side sleeps a very old dog, toothless and mangy, his muzzle resting on his wasted old paws; like his mistress, he awaits death with the blue sky above him.

At Gratou we found ourselves amongst very unsociable people, from whom it seemed utterly impossible to purchase even a goat or a sheep. We now regretted that we had no dogs, for we left one behind us, a second was killed, while the third, a good watch-dog, has not been trained to catch and strangle sheep and goats, as the one that is dead had. As we could not induce these people to listen to reason—though a Mongolian lama, who joined us a few days ago and acts as our interpreter, tried in vain to persuade them to furnish us with meat—we attempted to seize some without permission. This brought upon Dedeken and Rachmed a shower of stones, and there were a few sharpshooters posted on the roofs. A few revolver shots in the air, however, settled the matter.

It has often been, and doubtless often will be, our fate to have difficulties with these Thibetans. They have never seen any

Europeans, and do not know how to treat us ; while, fickle to an extraordinary extent, a mere nothing changes their attitude. They shift from the most abject submission to the most audacious insolence ; one moment with their foreheads on the ground, the next they are standing erect, sword in hand. It would seem as though fear were at the bottom of all their emotions. One alarm sets them in one direction, then another cause of fear sets them off in another, and so their feeble will vacillates, shifting like a needle between two poles. They prefer before everything else relaxation and sleep ; and whether in order to be left quiet, or because they are put out with those who disturb them, they have outbursts of passion, like the man who killed the wolf by day because it frightened him by night.

Their heads must be crammed with superstition, for it would seem as though they regarded strangers as mysterious beings, whom it is imperative to distrust, for to have come from afar they must have used witchcraft. Having noticed that these savages welcome the gift of a colored image, we distributed some among them at different times. A boy of fourteen or fifteen having approached us, I offered him one, with the result that he ran away. So I let it drop on the ground, whereupon he went up to it with great precaution, looking at it from a distance ; but, when the colors caught his eye, he drew nearer to examine it. Then he again retreated, but his curiosity brought him back again, and he beckoned to another lad who is older. The latter, in turn, examined this curious object, bending down and picking it up, and then ran after me, with a view to handing it back. When I told him to keep it, he was delighted, but a lama, about twenty years old, then came up and spoke to him sharply as though to inspire him with disgust for his present. They then consulted together for a moment, after which they proceeded to the stream, and left the image there.

By the evening the inhabitants had calmed down, and eagerly implored our Mongolian lama not to fulfill his threat to go to the lamas' house to complain of having been struck.

April 28.—At early dawn the natives began to get ready for

us all that we wanted, and a mere glance sufficed to put to flight the chief of those who gave us so much trouble yesterday. At Kari Meta we pitch our tents at the doors of an extensive lama house, and witness a curious sight. The lamas have engaged the women of the neighboring villages to come and carry manure to their fields, for this red-soiled valley is carefully cultivated, and most of it belongs to them. They have just finished plowing, and the soil has the pink tinge of flesh from which the outer skin has been peeled off. While the lamas on the first floor of their monastery are chanting their prayers to an accompaniment of tambourines and cymbals, more than fifty women are wending their way in and out from the stables to the fields, with osier baskets on their backs. These they fill with ashes and manure, and then, in single file, like ants carrying their provender, proceed to empty them, at the foot of a hill, in the newly plowed furrows. There is very little method and a good deal of noise over the work, which is superintended by a lame lama, who has frequently to hasten the steps of these ladies, for they are so interested in us that they keep edging out of their paths so as to get nearer to us, when they stop for a good look and chatter. But though he feels the responsibility of his post, the lame lama is not a whit less curious than they, and he, too, even while on the move, must look at us. This strong desire of his to do two things at a time affords us considerable amusement, for as one of his legs is much shorter than the other, he has to look at the ground each time that he puts his foot down, but, in his anxiety to watch us, he then turns his head in our direction. As he goes through his various maneuvers, he looks exactly like a mechanical toy; marching along, telling the beads of a huge rosary, jerking forward his short leg, lowering and then raising his head, twisting it to the right, leaning to the left, crying "Forward" to his workwomen, then hurriedly throwing out his arms to recover his equilibrium, which he has lost by stumbling against a stone, shouting out again, and, in a word, tossing himself about in the most comical manner imaginable.

Among our female coolies is one whose close-shaven head indi-

cates that she has renounced marriage and taken the vow of celibacy; she is a lamaess. Neither handsome nor pretty, very short and thickset, she has a large head and brutish features; and there is not a spark of intelligence in her face. The crowd of basket carriers arrives, chattering in the pleasing tones which come as such a surprise from such ugly throats; for these Thibetans are apes with the voices of nightingales. All of a sudden our lamaess runs toward the file of fuel-gatherers, and goes straight up to a friend of hers, another close-shaven lamaess. They smile and bow to each other until their foreheads touch, in the same manner that two goats butt each other, after which these two schoolfellows go along side by side gossiping.

Examining the house of the lamas, which, like all of its kind, is composed of cottages and small rooms in juxtaposition, with a larger hall set apart for their idol and for worship, we observe their agricultural implements. First, there is a rake, made like our mill rakes of a little board, shaped like a crescent, with a handle; then there is a pickax, consisting of a wooden cube, which is cut down to a point. The point is shod with an iron cone; and as that metal is scarce hereabouts it is used sparingly. Another kind of pickax resembles that which we use for gardening, but the edge only is made of iron, the rest being of wood; and it has a long handle.

A layman is putting a thatch of barley-straw on the roofs of the cottages by means of a kind of double flail consisting of two switches, which are fastened together by a strap fixed to a handle. These switches serve to cut the straw into short bits, for it is not given to the cattle until it has undergone this preparation. Let me add that the people of Thibet are more careful about their cattle than about themselves. The horses, as well as the yaks, which carry our baggage, are well treated and fed in a very peculiar manner, with a kind of pap made with the "niouma" (a species of turnip), this food being put down their throats by means of a funnel made from a horn that has been hollowed out.

On the roof of this habitation of the lamas we notice wind-mills turning prayers, and likewise tridents of metal, which have

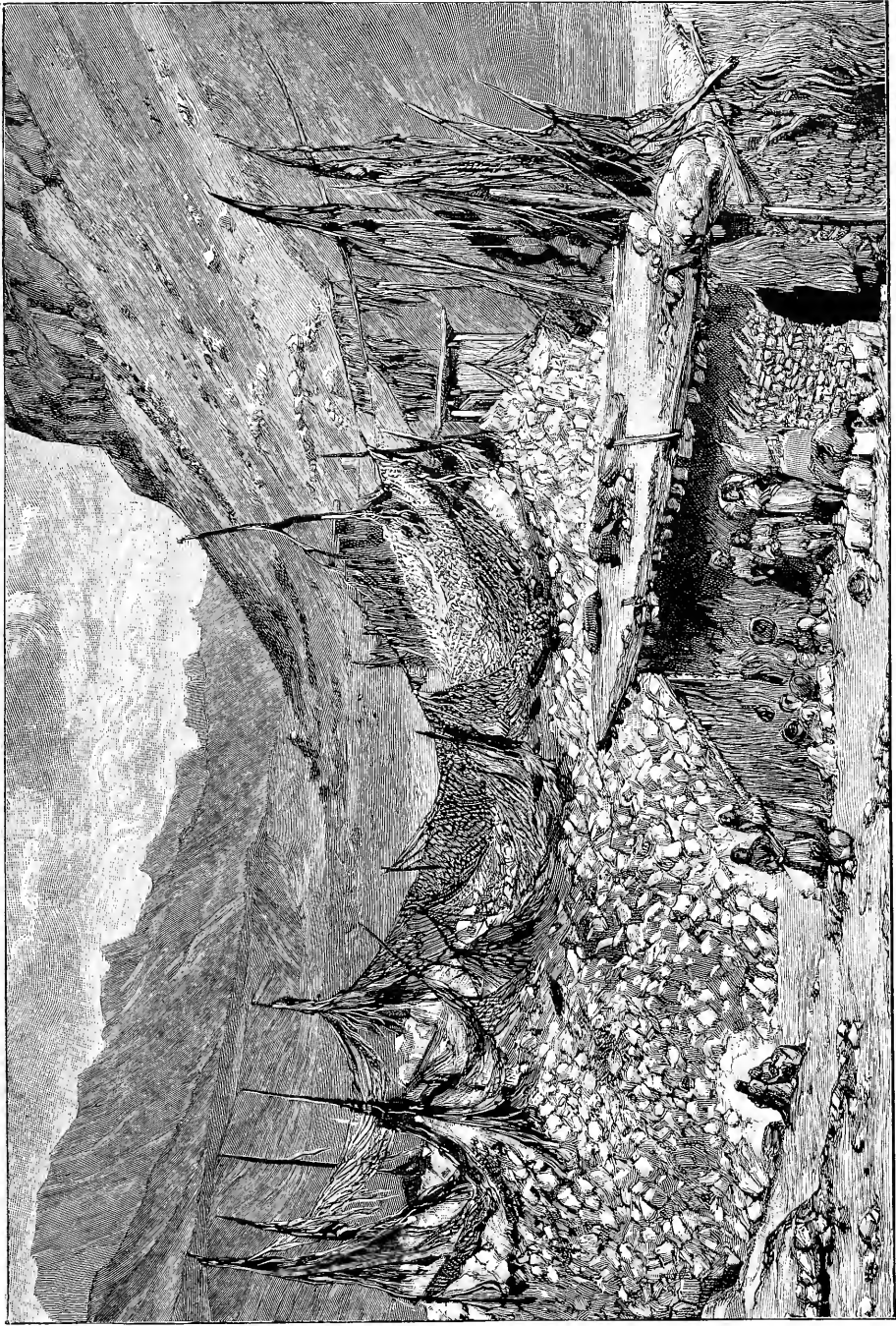
led people to believe that Lamaism was derived from the worship of Neptune, the ruler of the waves. The little column supporting this trident is covered with stripes of black and white stuff. We also see a big T, surmounted by a crescent bearing on the concave side two spheres, placed one above the other. At one extremity of the bar of the T hangs a little bell.

At Kari Meta we arranged, without much trouble, for our baggage to be carried to Tchoungo, which is situated above the river Tatchou. Tchoungo is a village of some importance, owing its reputation to the possession of an enormous obo, to walk round which at an ordinary pace takes three minutes. It surrounds the house of a lama who is, so to speak, its guardian; and natives, who have come from the mountains, are incessantly turning prayers around this pile, which they are careful to keep on their right side. Even very old people drag themselves slowly up to it, leaning on their crutches, in order to accomplish their devotions.

The weather is magnificent, and we have got down to 9000 feet above sea-level, and at last are enjoying a summer temperature. The thermometer shows a maximum of 77° in the daytime, and at night it only goes as low as 26°.

After some difficulties with the authorities, whom we induced by threats to help us, we departed for the great lama settlement of Rouchi. On leaving Tchoungo we ascended rising ground by following a picturesque gorge; in two hours reaching a smooth pass, upward of 13,200 feet above the sea-level. It was a lovely bit of scenery; rocks, juniper trees, briars, rhododendrons, brush, and groves of fir trees. On the steep bank of the river were some grottoes into which the water flows, while gigantic umbelliferous plants with stalks as thick as a man's wrist are numerous, and there were plenty of sparrows, curlews, and snipe.

April 29.—After a good night's rest we resumed our ascent, and in two and a half hours arrived at a height of 17,500 feet, at the summit of the Dála pass; whilst toward the southwest a great mountain chain with snow-covered peaks, from 19,800 to 21,500 feet high, is visible. Toward the north the mountains



OBO AT TCHOUNGO.

rise in terraces, undulating as far as the eye can see; they are of a grayish color and free from snow. The general appearance suggests an ocean with its waves turned into stone, the long swell of a calm sea, as sailors call it.

The descent, or rather the "slide-down" on the snow, brought us once more to the desert, the slopes being bare, with here and there a few stunted junipers. In the valley of Dutchme we found some tents pitched, and had to wait a whole day for a fresh relay of yaks which had to be fetched from some distance. We then followed the course of the rivers Dé-Tchou and Sé-Tchou, and passing along the banks of the latter, traversed forests of fir trees. Piles of split wood were lying about, and we had some good sport with musk deer and crossoptilons, a kind of white or slate-colored pheasant, with which these woods swarm.

Then, when the Sé-Tchou entered a gorge, we made for another pass, viz., the Djala, which is the name also of the whole mountain range. The Djala is 14,850 feet high; a stony path leading to the obo, near which we halted to give our cattle a rest. From this point the eye ranged over the finest bit of country that we had seen so far: the slopes at our feet were covered with fir trees, rhododendrons, and junipers of intense green; while higher up were grassy table-lands, dotted with herds of cattle, and near the crest, in the crannies, the snow was of a dazzling whiteness. It was not, however, nature which especially attracted our attention, but a piece of man's handiwork in the form of a pagoda. No better spot could have been found for this pagoda, built in a large square, rising in terraces, and serving, so to speak, as a pedestal for the column which towers like a golden flame toward the skies. Having lived, as we have done, for several months without seeing anything resembling a monument, we could easily imagine with what feelings the sight of such an edifice must inspire the uncivilized Thibetan, and what a grand notion he must form of the great lama who dwells in it. Now one can comprehend how great an influence architecture must exert upon the minds of men. It is evident that the Pharaohs, by placing their pyramids in the desert where they appear so huge, did not intend

to keep the sands in their place, but to inspire mankind with respect and even reverence for those who had the power to raise up a mountain in the midst of grains of sand. Certain it is that the Thibetans have a profound veneration for this abode of the Tale Lama. Do they see a symbol in the seven double stripes, painted in white upon the black walls of the edifice? Do they think at all, as they contemplate this pyramid which seems to be made of gold and to terminate in a flame mingling with the skies? Do they see in that flame an allusion to the great soul that, according to Buddhism, permeates nature? Perhaps not; yet it cannot be doubted that the sight fills them with a mysterious awe.

By the side of the beautiful pagoda, which is reached by a wooden bridge, may be seen a lama house, nestling against the mountain side, with its many terraces of painted cottages. The village of the laymen is lower down; its low, box-like houses with flat roofs are crowded together in the peninsula of Routchi, which is washed by the river to the south, while breakwaters, formed by dovetailing the trunks of trees together, protect the banks from the river. In the village yaks pass to and fro, dragging the stems of fir trees; for there is a considerable timber trade, from which the wealth of the lama house is chiefly derived. Leaving the village, we pass cows in the green meadows, and yaks wallowing in the ponds; the trees, as they were rolled down into the valley, making a noise like thunder. The path dips into the deep shade of the firs, the wind is gently swaying the slender twigs and sighs through the branches; the torrent-like Sé-Tchou is beating against its steep banks. We have assuredly been transported into Switzerland, if not into the Himalayas.

The country is rich, compared with what we have seen before. The fields are protected by hedges made of interlaced fir branches; pieces of timber, fixed in the ground, inclose the pasture lands where browse the herds which manure the soil, and where the sheep and goats are shut up on account of their destructive tendencies. Precautions are necessary, for barley is showing its green blades, and the people are therefore repairing the hedges, or making new ones with green branches. These

green branches will get dry, and in winter, when the ground is covered with snow instead of crops, will be used for firewood. The houses are nearly always built in one style, with walls made of clods of earth and stones mixed, and flat roofs placed on branches. They are, however, surmounted by latticework for storing the fodder, which makes them look like buildings that have been abandoned when the first story was being begun, and the scaffolding of which has been left standing.

May 7.—We reach Hounda, a village built on a shelving road made out of conglomerate, skirted on the eastern side by a torrent that empties itself into the Sé-Tehou about 450 yards farther on. We found stationed there, on post and police duty, a company of Chinese soldiers, more or less stupefied by the use of opium. They sold us eggs at as high a price as they could extort from us, and were excessively polite. Most of them had been there for many years, and, having married Thibetan wives, had forgotten their own language. To their police duties they pay but very little attention, and the brigands, if there are any, can carry on their operations with perfect security. In their exorbitant demands these Chinamen display an obsequiousness and a persistency that contrast greatly with the churlishness of many of the natives.

From Hounda the road would have taken us eastward by Tsamdo. On reflection we determined to avoid this populous town, which contains many Chinamen under the rule of a mandarin, for it would be difficult to get away if this mandarin of the Celestial Empire should take it into his head to prove his power. Prudence, therefore, bids us make a detour over the mountains toward the north.

May 8.—To-day we visited Lagoun, a large industrial center, reached by a path marked out by the hedges which divide the fields from it. The houses lie very near each other, and, after counting a score of them, we observed an occupied space, a sort of square on which wood is piled up. Then we entered into the chief's yard, where we were stared at by a number of idlers, amongst them several whose faces were blackened by smoke.

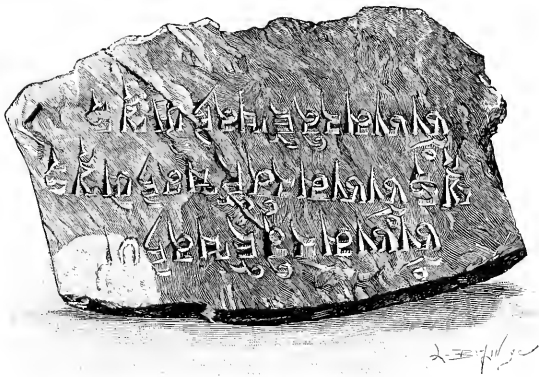
These were "hands" from the works, for Lagoun has a manufactory of all sorts of iron utensils, hatchets, pickaxes, etc.

We visit this establishment, guided to it by the sound of hammers, to which we have long been strangers. By a low door we descend to an underground forge, four posts supporting the sloping roof by which the light enters and the smoke escapes. Someone is kneeling between two goatskin bellows which he works alternately with either arm. This old man is bare to the waist, and looks like a denizen of the lower regions. His body is almost transparent, his skin but parchment, his ribs protruding; whilst his head is like that of a corpse, and one long tooth is visible in his huge mouth. His scanty hairs drop like a mane, while from the shoulders hang, by way of arms, two fiberless feelers. Five or six young men are standing erect, silent, lean, consumptive, blackened, perhaps mummified, for they are motionless and speechless. And yet their dull eyes betray the fact that they are alive. The old man stops blowing, and, getting up, silently goes to a bag, fills a large wooden porringer with zambo, and sits down, the younger ones squatting round him, each producing his mug from the sheepskin hanging on his loins. The meal having been handed round, they pass a huge jug to the old man, who pours some water from it into his cup, the others following suit. Then with hollowed hands, as black and as bony as claws, they slowly knead their quota, quite silent, and fixing on us six pairs of expressionless eyes.

We give the poor wretches a coin, which the old man takes with manifest stupefaction. Who ever gave him a present before? He looks at the rupee, feels it, turns it over, and having satisfied himself that it really is silver, casts two glances at his fellow-workmen as if to assure them that there is no deceit about it, and smiles, and they smile too. Putting down their cups, they thank us by raising their thumbs, and then set to kneading their meal again.

Their tools are decidedly poor. We see some very short one-handed hammers; some with larger handles, two-handed ones; large shears for one or two hands; a trough hewn out of the

trunk of a tree contains the water in which they cool the iron; the forge is an earthenware trough in which burns charcoal that is enkindled by the bellows. By the side of the forge, half buried in the soil, is the trunk of a tree, in the stoutest part of which is a large bar of iron which does duty as an anvil. They also have boring machines, which consist of two bobbins with an interval between them, their one spindle being between two small horizontal planks; the gimlet being beneath, in an iron socket. These bobbins, of wood, are hollow, being filled with sand and filings which are covered with skin; the rotary movement is produced by means of cross handles fitted to the lower part. Such is this den of native industry, the Creusot of Thibet, and its equipment.



CHAPTER XIV.

FROM LAMÉ TO TCHANGKA.

Lamé—Lamda—Bad Food—Religious Malthusianism—Crossing the Satchou—Capture of a New-Born Monkey—Küchoune—Ouochichoune—A Fat Lama—Dzérinc—Hassar—Thibetans and Chinese: A Contrast—Indefinite Dates—Rough and Ready Justice—Dotou—A Dignified Chinese Official—A Series of Prayer Mills—Rachmed in Action—The Chinese Army—Parting with the Lama Guide—Tsonké—A Secret Christian—The Destruction of the Ba-Tang Mission—Burial-place of a French Missionary—Reception by the Mandarin of Tchangka—Four Swords for 150 Men.



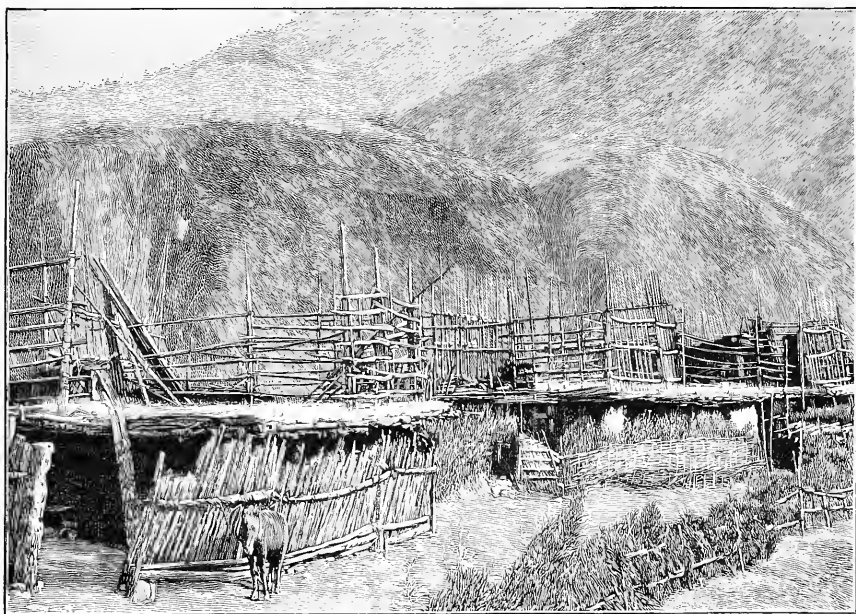
THIBETAN OF TCHOUNG.

May 9.—To-day we reached Lamé, a small village where the Chinese have a post of soldiers, some of whom can scarcely speak their mother tongue. Two Thibetan chiefs came in due course to see us, and one of them, a fine-looking man about forty, exchanged a few words with our lama, and went off again at once.

We saw him again the next day at Lamda, on the banks of the Giometchou, the waters of which form, with the Satchou and the Zetchou, the river of Schamde which, much lower down, goes by the name of the Mekong. The Thibetan chief handed us a “cata” on behalf of his superior at Tsamdo or Tchamdo, and told us we had only to express our wishes for them to be gratified. He added that it was difficult to procure provisions here, but that in two days’ time we should be in a better position, and should receive as much rice, mutton, and flour as we required. It is easy to see by the rapidity with which his orders are executed that his authority in this region is

unquestioned, and it is the first time since leaving So that we have found the natives so obedient to orders.

We reached Lamda over a pass 15,500 feet high, then descending through sunlit gorges where mountain torrents bubbled and surged amidst pleasant greenery. The heights are covered with rhododendrons, but lower down, amidst the thickets formed



A THIBETAN VILLAGE.

of poplar, birch, and cherry trees, one might fancy one's self in Europe. There is plenty of game too, and we kill some splendid "ithagines" with red tails and green plumage, pheasants, etc., our collection being swollen by some new specimen every day.

May 10.—The weather has been magnificent, and last night the thermometer did not descend to freezing point. Ba-Tang is not far off, and the Thibetans are doing their best to redeem the promise they made at Dam to help us.

Nothing is wanting to make our comfort complete but a better supply of food, for although we have abundance so far as quantity goes, the rice is musty, the butter rank, the flesh of the

goats execrable, and the pheasants stringy; only the Hodgson partridge being in the least toothsome. What we so long for is the day when we shall taste some good meat, vegetables, and fruits. Our tent is pitched at a spot which is at less than half the altitude of the point from which we started in the morning, and I amuse myself by watching a man and woman of the village whom we had employed to split some wood and fetch water, as they consume the remains of our supper, given them by Rachmed. They have taken off the pan in which the food was cooked, and the man, plunging his spoon into the mess, emptied it on to his hand, and then jerked it into his mouth, looking at his companion as much as to say, "First-rate!" Then they took out the cups they carried in their bundles, filled them with rice and meat and lapped up these ingredients almost like water. They had never had such a good meal before.

d/ At Lam^{ba} the Giometchou is about 150 feet broad, running along between rocks with a good deal of noise, and we cross it at the bridge of Sougomba, where there is a large dwellingplace for lamas built on the hill. If we were to continue our journey northward, we should arrive at Sininfou, but after crossing the bridge, we turn round and encamp in a valley running down from the east to the Giometchou. Here, also, there is an abundance of game, including musk deer, partridges, pheasants, and hares; and whilst the eastern slope of the mountains is thickly wooded, the western slope is nearly bare. From time to time we see hamlets which are rendered habitable by the water from the torrents being turned into the fields, through aqueducts hewn out of the trunks of trees. The houses are better built, the ground floor, used for housing stock, being made of stone with wooden doors, whilst the walls of the first story are of mud. Above are balustrades which are used as storeplaces, whilst if the house is built against a slope, there is often a second story.

There are countless obos, and owing to the abundance of grass, the flocks and herds are very numerous; a fat goat or sheep costs two rupees.

May 13.—We have scaled pass after pass, and to-day crossed

the Ka-la, which is 15,500 feet high. We noticed in this region that many of the people have their heads closely shaven, the tonsure indicating those who have been made to take a vow of celibacy from their childhood. It is said that, in former times, young children were offered to Moloch in order to appease him, and that they were placed inside his statue, which was then made red-hot, in order that he might consume them. Most of the males are now consecrated to Buddha, and the youth thus set apart do not marry, while they do not allow their hair to grow any more, and wear a yellow garter on their leg. Owing to this system, families, as a rule, decline in number, and when the slightest epidemic occurs, they disappear, much to the satisfaction of the prolific Chinese.

This religious Malthusianism is calculated to please the economists who think that the world is really too small for mankind, and that there would soon be no place to lay one's head if people multiplied in conformity with the laws of Nature. But if they were to visit some of the waste places of the earth, they would come to a very different conclusion.

May 14.—We cross the Satchou with our caravan of thirty-three people, including sixteen women, seven men with long hair, and ten lamas, upon a raft made out of trunks of trees; this raft, which is paddled across by three men, being sixteen feet long by ten wide. The Satchou is very rapid at this point, running at a speed of nearly four miles an hour between high banks, and being from 270 to 330 feet broad. On the banks we see willows growing, whilst in the woods are wild lilac trees, raspberry bushes, and violets. After crossing the Satchou, we do not meet nearly so many people suffering from goiter as we had done in the villages further west, and the population seems to be altogether more vigorous and cheerful, having been put in better heart than usual this year by the frequency of the rains. Some ill-natured people had announced our coming, and had added that we should bring a drought with us. But as we brought rain instead, our partisans were triumphant, and we received a very friendly greeting.

May 15.—We left the banks of the river this morning and penetrated into the pine forests of the mountain side, our bivouac being in a glade near a torrent. The rain is falling in heavy showers, but the natives whom we employ to collect wood for the fires are young and cheerful, and go to work with a light heart, cracking their jokes as unconcernedly as if it were quite dry overhead and underfoot.

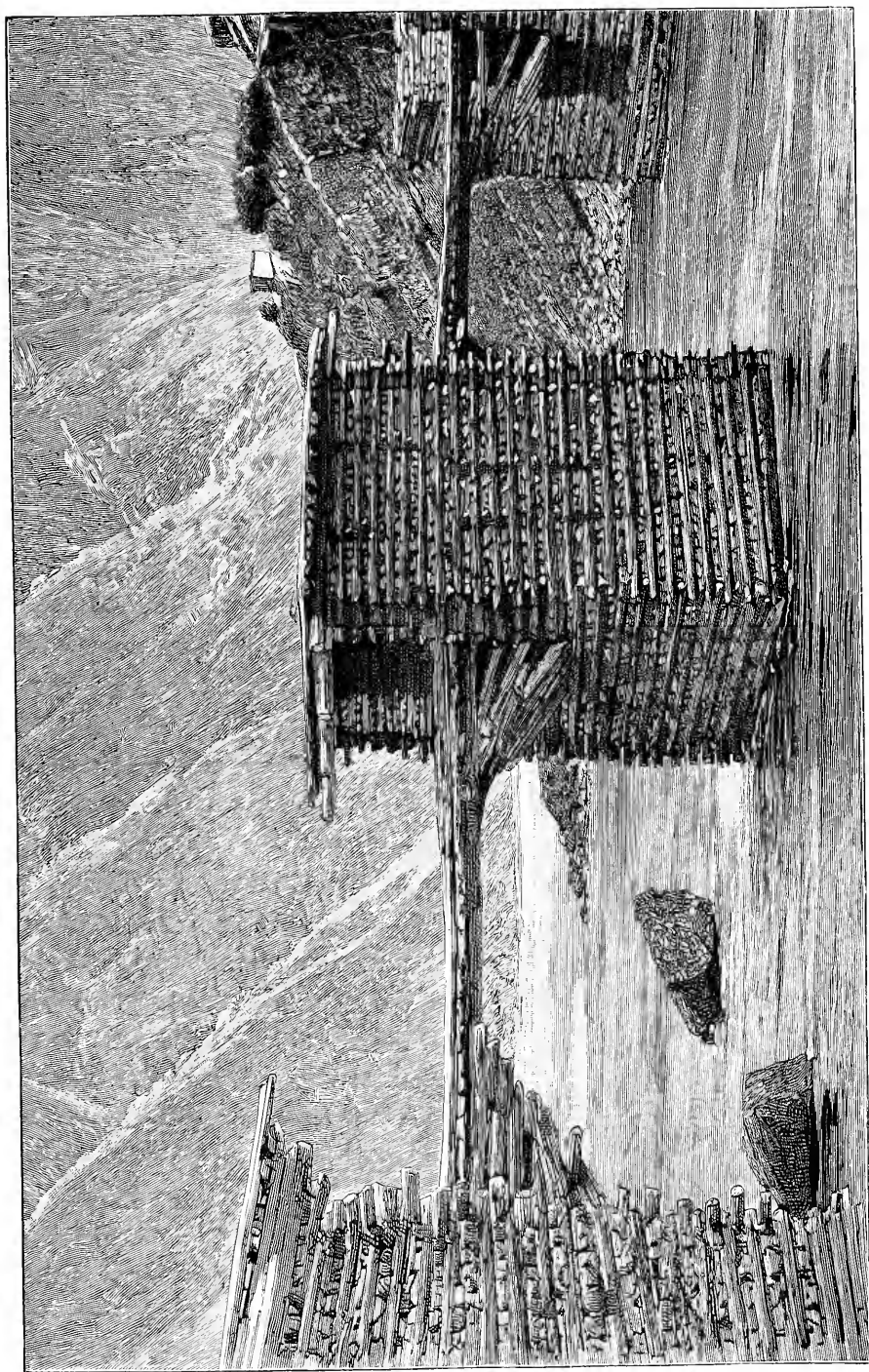
From the time of leaving Tchoka, we see several instances of an admixture of Mongolian blood, there having been very few cases of this before we crossed the Satchou. The people, who have broader faces, are not rich, but their country abounds with game, and we add several animal specimens to our collection.

May 17.—We have scaled a pass of nearly 15,000 feet, passing bare rocks covered with snow, and assailed by a snowstorm, which reminds us that winter is not yet over. Descending to Rouetoundo we see a lot of monkeys, two of which we kill; while Rachmed captures a new-born one, which he puts under the care of the little she-ape we have had with us since we left Houmda, where we bought her from some Chinese soldiers.* She takes so much care of her bantling that she suffocates it, and it is a touching spectacle to see her licking the little body and trying to recall it to life.

In this region the tribes are somewhat independent, and as it sometimes happens that several different tribes supply a contingent of porters and carriers, there are frequent quarrels as to the distribution of loads, these quarrels not ceasing until one of the chiefs draws lots.

May 19.—Traversing grassy steppes, where the bears go about in large groups, descending into gorges, and scaling some bare plateaus, we, to-day, reached Küchoune, and again saw men armed with swords and carrying rifles. They are taller than any we have seen before, and have regular features and a proud air, looking at us with a certain amount of contempt. They made a difficulty about supplying us with yaks, and when these animals had been brought, the chiefs discussed angrily amongst themselves whether we should be allowed to load them. Per-

* She is now in the Jardin des Plantes, Paris.



BRIDGE AT SOUGOMBA.

mission being given at last, we crossed the La Tchou, near a village where a Chinaman carries on trade. After three hours' march the drivers refused to advance further, and began unloading their animals, with the intention of leaving us in the desert. We had to take prompt action, and compelled them to advance by flourishing a revolver over their heads, but they did so at a very slow rate, and with a sneering sort of laugh, pretending that they must stop again to load the yaks better. However, we made them understand that this was no time for joking, and compelled them to step along for five hours, but had to look so close after them that there was no time to go after the bears that we could see all about the steppe. Rachmed killed one yesterday.

In the evening we make friends with our yak drivers, and they promise to do a long stage the next day. It freezes at night, for we are at 8450 feet, the minimum being 25° F.

May 20.—Having found some warm springs not far from our camp, we descended the valley as far as Ouochichoune, where we saw black tents on the river banks. The chief of the district came to say that two Chinamen had brought him orders not to sell us anything, but he did not intend to obey them, and would let us have as many yaks and horses as we might require. This is a simple matter, for stock of all kinds is abundant, and a good sheep costs a rupee.

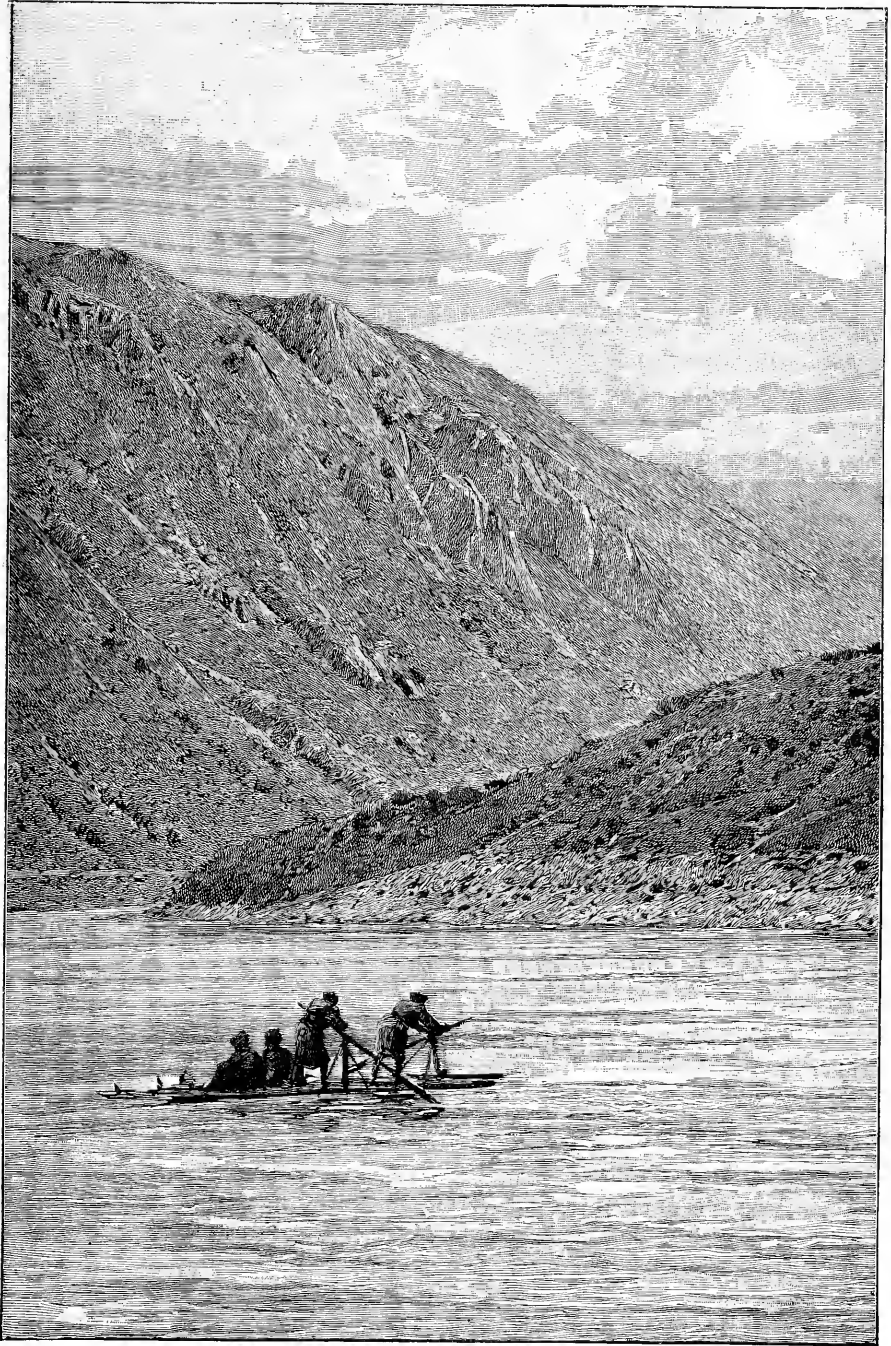
We are visited by several lamas, one of them being an enormous man, and this strikes us all the more because we have seen so many thin people since we entered Thibet. Fatness is the appanage of the chiefs and of the rich in this, as in all other Eastern countries; and it is curious to note that the same Thibetan word (*bembo*) is used to designate a high rank, or the good condition of a sheep or a yak, just as "gordo," in Spanish, is alike applied to fat or to wealthy people. Whilst upon questions of philology, I may mention that the cuckoo, which has received an onomatopœian name in all languages, is *kouti* in Thibetan, *kounjou* in Chinese, *kokouska* in Russian, *kokou* in the Tarantchi dialect, and *pakou* in Uzbek.

To return to the lamas, those at Ouochichoune lead a very easy life. Here, too, we are eye-witnesses of a procession, in which a lama rides a horse led by two women, who are preceded by four others burning sweet herbs, the incense of which rises up to his nostrils, while six more bear presents that have been given him for the prayers he has recited. The good man rides imperturbably on, grinding his prayer mill.

May 21.—To-day we meet with another lama on horseback, protected from the sun by a peaked straw hat with broad brim, and followed by three women, barefooted and bareheaded, driving three yaks which were carrying his luggage.

May 22.—We reach Dzérine by way of mountains which might rather be called hills, and as no more snowy peaks are to be seen on the horizon, it might be imagined that we were about to emerge upon the plain. But this is only due to the cramped horizon, for as soon as we scale a pass we can tell by what a chaos of peaks, ridges, and chains we are shut in; indeed, we shall see nothing more of the plain until we reach the Tonquin delta.

At Dzérine we received a visit from the second Thibetan chief of the Goundjo, who told us that the Chinese are doing all they can to prevent us going to Ba-Tang, that they have vehemently urged his superior to refuse us the means of transport and provisions, but that the latter would do as we desired. Having arranged for him to accompany us, until we have found an interpreter speaking both Thibetan and Chinese as he does, we make arrangements for the transport of our baggage; and as the population of Dzérine is not large enough to supply all the porters we require, the chief sends out horsemen and men on foot to requisition them. The porters arrive in due course, many of them being very tall, and measuring six feet two inches. They have very large faces, with the skull tapering to a point, like an egg, dental prognathism being the general rule. They are very vigorous and good-natured, playing together like children, whilst their houses are built like those we saw at preceding stages, though here and there are attempts at windows with wooden shutters.



CROSSING THE SATCHOU.

May 24.—Leaving Dzérine with a caravan composed of several petty chiefs, who are most anxious to serve us, we follow the narrow valley until we reach, by an adjacent gorge, above which is built a lama house, a gentle ascent leading to a pass of 13,100 feet, after having crossed a first one at an altitude of 150 feet less. This stage was got through very cheerily, our carriers singing and amusing themselves all the way, like packs of school-boys, and greeting us with a smile every time they passed us.

By way of wooded plateaus and mountain spurs, where bears, wolves, foxes, and pheasants abound, we reached a gorge leading to the village of Hassar, which is perched upon a promontory at the junction of the gorge with the valley where flows the river Mahtchou. There are a few patches of marsh and of cultivated land in the delta, and we watch the plows, drawn by yaks, at work, followed by the men sowing the grain, who walk along with measured tread, whilst the women stand about and call out to frighten away the crows and pigeons, which fly off to the willow trees lining the pathway. The slopes of the mountain are bare of trees, and it is only very high up that one can see any pines overhanging the heights where the flocks are feeding.

The houses of Hassar are all crowded together on two sides of a street. It is not every day that one sees a street in Thibet, and we lose no time in going off to encamp on a piece of fallow. The curiosity our presence excites is good-natured, and the chiefs endeavor to meet our wishes, as we have gained a reputation for being generous, and it is known that we give medicine to those who ask for it, but that, while paying handsomely for what is done for us, we will not stand any nonsense. Our lama, Losène, is very useful to us, as he has the art of being at once patient and energetic, while he frightens the recalcitrants by warning them that we are terrible people owing to our arms of precision. Now and then we awe the natives by the distance we fire a bullet, and by the number of birds we kill at one shot. Losène, to whom we have repeated the thing a score of times, represents us as being "very good to those who are good, and very hard upon the bad."

Not far from our tent is a naked boy, three or four years of age, who has an enormous head, a big stomach, and a bent spine. The poor child cannot walk, as his legs have no power, and one can tell by his deformed knees and hands that he is in the habit of dragging himself along like some creeping thing. He has a bestial expression and a dull, lifeless eye. The chief of the district helps him up, to show us that he cannot stand without support, and adds, "No father or mother."

Our lama, Losène, takes a piece of money out of his purse and gives it to the poor boy. This kindness of heart differentiates the Thibetan from the Chinese, for again and again have I seen people dying of hunger in the Celestial Empire without anyone paying the slightest heed to them, while the ferocity and evil disposition of the Chinese children is something incredible.

In the valley of the Mahtchou were many houses in ruins, and the natives, being questioned as to who demolished them, replied that this was the work of the Sokpou, who live in the north, and that the latter, having heard that the lama houses to the south contained a good deal of treasure, made a raid upon the district, massacring the inhabitants and burning the houses and forests.

In reply to further questions on the same subject, we were told that the survivors of these massacres returned and asked for assistance from the neighboring tribes. Money was found for them by the lamas, and the fortresses and crenellated walls on the hills were built. They had been allowed to fall into disrepair since a sense of security returned, no recent attacks having been made by these Sokpou.

"But can you explain more precisely where these Sokpou live?"

"They live on the route taken by the servants whom you sent back before we started on our journey. Their country is further off than Natchou."

"In the Tsaidame, then?"

"Yes, that's it."

"And when did this invasion take place?"

“ A very long time ago.”

This is one more proof of how impossible it is in the East to obtain the slightest historical information. It would seem as if the present alone interested them. Trustworthy documents are not to be had, and the historians who are content to derive their materials from Asiatic sources are not likely to understand much of the past which they seek to revive.

After leaving Hassar, we mounted the course of a river which winds about among lofty rocks, forming a narrow defile. A very awkward pathway, a rough sort of staircase cut in the rocks, leads to a cultivated valley three or four miles long, where are to be seen inhabited villages and numerous ruins. Once more taking the southeasterly direction, which we had abandoned for a time, we climbed a plateau and descended again into another valley, where we came upon the village of Akker. Our arrival was heralded by thunder and lightning, and we took refuge from the storm under some fine poplars, when we had time to note that the fields were well cultivated and inclosed, and that value is placed upon timber, some small poplars, recently planted, having been surrounded by thorns to prevent the cattle getting at them. When the sun came out after the rain, the valley seemed to be a sea of blood, for the soil is quite red, and glittered after being so deluged with rain.

Having changed our beasts of burden at Akker, we pitched our camp at Landjomme on a small plateau with just room for a score of houses. Our tent is near a spring, under poplars, which at a distance we took for willows, owing to the similarity of foliage.

The inhabitants, having seen that we shot the small birds, try to frighten them away by throwing stones. They appear the most insolent of any of the people we have met with so far, the native chiefs exercising an administrative rather than a patriarchal authority. Thus the Thibetan chief who accompanies us has a copper cup out of which he is in the habit of drinking, and this cup, which he has left for a moment, suddenly disappears. No one has seen it, of course, but when he tells two

of his men to seize one of the onlookers and flog him till the cup is returned, it reappears as if by magic.

In the evening, when the flocks are being driven home, we hear a doleful dirge like that of the Mussulman women who accompany the dead to the cemetery, and very possibly a body is being taken up to be laid out on the summit of the mountain.

Rain comes down at night, when we leave for Dotou, with a cloudy sky and north wind, and in the morning we are told that two Chinese from Ba and one from Tchamdo are waiting for us there. The Chinese mandarin recently sent from Peking to Lhasa has just been through Ba and Tchamdo, and we learn that, having been informed of our journey by the Thibetan authorities, he told them that they were to assist us, and that his predecessor said the same. Be this as it may, the Thibetans will help us in carrying our luggage as far as Tatsien-Lou, and it is the reverse of unpleasant to have these promises renewed just as we are about to come into contact with the Chinese authorities.

The ride to Dotou from Landjomme is over some bare tablelands, and a very easy pass of 10,800 feet, leading to a region undulating like the last spurs of a mountain chain. A few hamlets are to be seen in the low ground, a few ruins on the hills, and the whitened walls of a few lama houses, but there are no more wooden houses, as this is not a forest region. In three hours' time we arrived at the lama house of Dotou, built upon a level piece of ground near the Mahtchan River, and were soon surrounded by a crowd of inquisitive people, who held their noses, either out of disgust or out of astonishment.

A few paces from where our tent is pitched is another inhabited by the Chinese, of whom mention was made to us at Landjomme. These latter mix for a few minutes with the crowd which is having a look at us, and then return to their tent, emerging from it soon after in "full fig" to pay us a visit. Their chief is a petty mandarin with a white button, equivalent to about the rank of corporal, but that does not prevent him from addressing us with great dignity. Having shown his card and greeted

us by pressing his fists close together, he says that he has been sent by the chief of Djankalo (Tchangka) in order to welcome



BABIES OF KOIOUM.

us and accompany us further on. He is entirely at our disposal, and hopes we will come to his tent and take a cup of tea. In

fact, he had been beginning to get uneasy about us, as he had expected us a week sooner, and was afraid that some accident had happened. However, he was very glad we had arrived safely,



SCENE IN INHABITED THIBET.

as his provisions were beginning to run short, but now he could send off a messenger to his superior at Djankalo and say that we had arrived all right. After this avalanche of compliments, he withdrew with comic gravity. I may add that there are no

people who possess the art of assimilation to so perfect a degree as the Chinese, who can either ascend or descend the social ladder with astonishing rapidity.

The principal attraction of the Dotou lama house is a series of prayer mills. Beneath a gallery, running almost entirely round the house, are enormous bobbins composed of printed prayers and transixed by a long piece of wood, which is held in position by two beams. These bobbins are turned by hand, and as it is said that each is composed of 10,000 prayers, and as there are at least 100 of them, it is easy to see what an enormous quantity of prayers can be said in a walk round the building. Our arrival, however, distracted the worshipers from their pious occupation, and when we unloaded our beasts, they came and felt the weight of our packages and wanted to put their hands on our clothes, their attitude being intolerably insolent. What interested them most was our wild yak skin, which they would have pulled all to pieces if we had not made them keep their hands off it.

I had scarcely gone into my tent when Prince Henry called me to come out, and when I went I found a free fight going on, with Rachmed holding down a man all covered with blood, and others flourishing their swords or throwing stones. Akkan and Abdullah effected a clearance by firing a few shots from their revolvers in the air, and the Chinese made off, leaving two or three of their comrades prisoners, including the man on whose chest Rachmed had got his knee. The cause of the disturbance, as it then appeared, was that this latter, one of the chiefs, had tried to handle the yak skin, in spite of Rachmed's injunction, and so from words they had come to blows. However, in response to the entreaties of our lama, we set the captives at liberty again, and then our Chinese friends, who had held well aloof while all this was going on, appeared on the scene, and assuming the most valiant air, went out on the terrace of the lama house, overlooking the place whither our assailants had fled. The chief then came back, and in the course of a conversation said these people were quite beyond management. "We give them good advice," he added, "but it is all to no purpose. They are such

ill-conducted savages that neither at Peking nor Lhasa is it thought desirable to have them for subjects. It is quite impossible to quit the highroad and penetrate into their mountain retreats, and we never meet them without there being disputes. Last year they robbed an envoy of the Emperor, and they recently refused to provide beasts of burden for our mandarin who was going to Lhasa. We ourselves could only get these horses by holding out threats that you would fire on them when you came. Nothing is to be done with them by reasoning; and if we use force they give us back blow for blow. So all we can do is to leave them alone, though we are 1300 men distributed over the posts between Lhasa and Tatsien-Lou."

When we look at the three soldiers whom the Liantai (treasurer-payer) of Ba-Tang had sent us as a protection, we could not help smiling to one another. It is easy to understand that the Thibetans do not feel any alarm when they see them coming.

These three men do not convey a very high idea of the Chinese army, for one is a bloodless opium-smoker, devoid of all vigor, shivering in the mountain air, though we are barely 10,000 feet high, so sensitive to cold that he covers up his ears even in the daytime, as well as his head and neck. He has yellow teeth and a lackluster eye, and it is as much as he can do to keep on his horse. He admits that his pay is six rupees a month and that he spends half of it on tobacco. As to the wearer of the white button, whom we have nicknamed the "Colonel," he does not smoke opium, and is a most consequential little man. It is amusing to see him strut about, swinging his arms, straddling his legs, and bending his figure, whilst his hands with their long finger nails are, with much affectation, thrust out of his broad sleeves.

The third is not so martial or warlike, and has been sent to join the two others because he speaks Thibetan. Unlike them, he has not a *retroussé* nose, but regular features.

At Dotou we dismissed our guide, the lama Losène, who was delighted with the presents we gave him, including a few chro-

mos representing lion-shooting in Algeria, and bear-hunting in the Ural. He bade us farewell with emotion, and wished us a pleasant journey. Although we have a Thibetan interpreter, and, after leaving Tchangka, shall meet Chinese military posts, the worthy Losène urged us to be on our guard, for, as far as Ba-Tang, we should traverse a region inhabited by very ill-disposed and dangerous men, who might attack us as we go through the mountains.

Bearing this in mind, we take our cartridges and keep close to our baggage, with an eye on the ridges above the road. The route we follow reminds us of the highlands of Thibet, and we see many flocks under the watchful eye of shepherds who carry long guns with pikes at the end of them, with black tents under the protection of the same fierce dogs. All trace of vegetation has disappeared, whereas a few days ago we could have fancied ourselves in the Alps, with jasmine, lilac, tulips, and poppies all about us.

May 28.—Sleet is falling, with a bitterly cold southeast wind, and we wonder if winter is going to return. Leaving the valley, which we have followed since Dotou, we traversed a pass of over 13,000 feet, leading to an undulating steppe, with peat-bogs and a few black tents, dotted about with flocks. We halted near these tents, the occupants of which were not so rudely inquisitive as the natives of Dotou, and learnt that the place is called Gatî by the Chinese and Hado (with an aspirate) by the Thibetans. The route from Hado to Tara first lies over a pass of 13,000 feet, and then through a grassy valley, beyond which are some pine-clad slopes, with a few patches of cultivated land within half an hour of Tara. There are no traces of irrigation, but beyond Tara, which is situated upon a sort of natural terrace, vegetation reappears; the pines, the poplars, the oak with leaves like those of the holly tree, the wild raspberry, and the thorn giving the valley a delicious odor. Where the valley opens out, a chapel has been built, and above is a lama house. Following the right bank of the Tsonron, we pass through various hamlets. As wood is plentiful, there are a great many chapels and *chalets*

built of the material, so that we might again fancy ourselves on the Alps. The inhabitants are a fine set of men, some of whom wear hats with broad white brims, looking like the Mexican gauchos, while their wives have so far modified their dress that they wear petticoats tightened at the waist, instead of tying their pelisses tight over their haunches.

The whole of this valley is very full of animation, and in the pine woods to the south of it, the villages are perched like nests amongst the verdure. We halted at Tsonké, the houses of which are built upon the left bank of an affluent of the Tsonron, with a white-walled lama house on an eminence above. The chiefs of this village were very civil, and were ready to supply us with what we wanted. Their horses, however, are not what they might be, though bigger than those we have hitherto had, this increase in size being due, as we are told, to their having been crossed with the Sininfou breed.

The stage from Tsonké to Tchounneu is a delightful one, for on leaving the valley the road rises at once to a plateau covered with pines and oaks—the leaves of which are like those of holly—and dotted here and there with grassy glades and with gorges in which torrents babble. The path is through the wood, well protected from the sun, and with squirrels darting from branch to branch. By way of two small passes we got to Tchounneu, and encamped in an inclosed meadow, a mild southeast wind making things very agreeable. The inhabitants appear to be rather violent, judging by the readiness with which one of them drew his sword when one of our men told him to keep his hands off our luggage. The incident, however, was not repeated.

The Thibetan interpreter chatted part of the evening with us and said, as we had assumed from his regular features, his father was a Mussulman, and that he was quite young when he came to Ba-Tang with the missionary Lou.* He described this missionary as being very kind and intelligent, speaking and writing both Chinese and Thibetan very correctly, as giving all he had to the poor, and as knowing all about everything, even the mending of a watch.

* Father Renou, as I afterward discovered.

Europeans may smile at the idea of a man being regarded as wonderful because he knows how to set a watch right, but the Chinese only recognize our superiority to them in the art of constructing machinery, if they do even in that. To return to our interpreter, who is a Christian, though he does not like to own to it, he is the father of five children, and he has been selected to come and meet us because he speaks Thibetan and Chinese. Asked as to why he had left Father Lou, he said, "I did not leave him. He died twenty years ago, without a priest by his bedside, surrounded by his Christians, who adored him, and who were heartbroken. Before death, he said where he would like to be buried, indicating a spot on the mountain side, where he had planted a small knife in the ground. We did as he bade us, and when we get to Tchangka, I will show you the place."

"Have you remained at Tchangka since?"

"No, I went to Ba-Tang."

"Why did you not stay there?"

"Then you don't know that the Christians were driven out from there two years ago, the lower classes having been excited against them?"

"By whom?"

"By some ill-disposed persons who accused them of having been the cause of the drying-up of a lake in the mountain, which admits of the fields about Ba-Tang being irrigated. So the people destroyed the houses and chapel of the Christians, and drove them away, the schoolteacher, who attempted to protect the holy books, being killed."

"What did the Chinese mandarin say?"

"Nothing."

"Were no damages paid for this?"

"It appears that the missionaries will get some, for you have a minister at Pekin, who has put in a claim to the Tsong-li-Yamen, and we are told that justice will be done. In the meanwhile, we have to dissimulate, and many Christians have died of starvation.

“ You acknowledge you are Christians. Why did you not say so sooner ? ”

“ I had seen that there was a priest amongst you, and I even thought the chief was a bishop in disguise, for we are expecting fresh priests.”

Thus it was that we heard about the destruction of the Ba-Tang Mission, which Monsignore Biet, bishop of Tatsien-Lou, had already announced by a letter in the *Missions Catholiques*, and at the same time we learnt that the Chinese government readily makes fine promises which it does not keep, and that foreign diplomatists are easily contented with smooth words, wrongly imagining that the interests of Europe can be separated from those of the Catholic missionaries. If they were to travel in the heart of the Celestial Empire, they would see that a European is considered by the people as the representative of a nation which is loathed, and which, though tolerated on the coast, is maltreated and killed at every available opportunity inland. To submit to the pillage of the missions, is to encourage attacks upon the Consulates.

June 1.—When we resume our journey, the weather is delightful, the minimum for the night having been 65°, while the fact of this being the 1st of June, and of our being due in a month at Tatsien-Lou, where we shall get news of Europe, imparts fresh vigor to our steps as we descend the valley. We only hope that the meeting with the mandarins at Tchangka and Ba-Tang may not raise fresh difficulties to delay our first meeting with Europeans, a few days hence. The valley is pleasant enough with its fields of scanty barley, and its stream with salt deposit on the banks, and as we get a little further on, we come upon a lama house built upon a promontory at the junction of two valleys. All the lamas are out on the walls to see us pass, and most of them are remarkable for their corpulence.

From the valley we climb to a table-land covered with pine woods, and reach the pass of 18,000 feet which leads down to Tchangka. Westward appears another valley, from which emerge long files of yaks carrying heavy loads, and our interpreter says

that it is the high road to Lhasa, whilst, pointing to two upright stones, he tells us that it is at the foot of them that Father Lou and another Christian are buried. It is rather strange that a French tomb should be found at the meeting-place of the ways

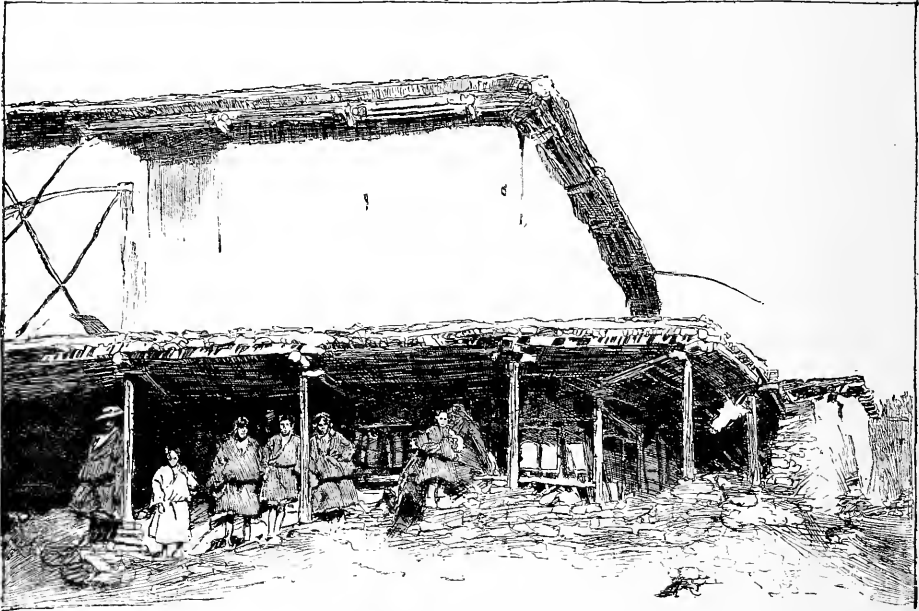


RUINS IN THE VALLEY OF THE MAHTCHOU.

which other Frenchmen have been the first to trace in the unknown land of Thibet, for it is at Tchangka that we get on to the route of Fathers Huc and Gabet, which, at a later period, Fathers Renou, Fage, and Desgodins, followed part of the way.

A Chinaman arrives on foot, and says that the Mandarin of Tchangka wishes to receive us in state, and as a few green trees, surrounded by a palisade, are visible in the small plain we express a desire to encamp beneath their shade. We are agreeably surprised to find that this has already been done, our tastes having

already been made known in advance by the mandarin who had gone on in front. So we make our way toward the town of Tehangka, if the name of town can be given to a small group of houses; and as we enter, we find the garrison of the place drawn up in line. It consists of about twenty warriors of all ages,



LAMA HOUSE AT DOTOU.

whose sole weapon is an oilskin parasol. They have all of them a most woe-begone and starved appearance, and, as may be seen from their glassy look and emaciated features, most of them are opium smokers. In order to conform with Chinese etiquette, we alight from our horses and pass in front of these troops, who do us honor by kneeling on the ground and pronouncing words which we do not comprehend. Then we mount our horses again, and go off to the garden, which is shut in by tall and leafy poplars. The crowd, composed of Thibetans, Chinese, and half-breeds, surges round us with noisy and disdainful curiosity, and escorts us to the tents which the mandarin has put up for us.

Very soon after our arrival we receive a visit from four soldiers, one of whom has accompanied us from Dotou, and from two white buttons, including the corporal whose consequential appearance is described above. They have come to present us the respects of the garrison, and to offer us a box of zamba and a box of beans, in which one or two dozen eggs have been placed; but whilst they are making their genuflections, their attendants whip off the boxes—for fear, no doubt, that we shall accept the presents. This is a great disappointment to Abdullah, who dotes on eggs, and so it is to Rachmed and Akkan, who load the garrison with insults, and only recover their equanimity when they see five other warriors arrive with a table in the form of a large wicker basket, which they are carrying on their shoulders with a pole, and inside which are visible several cups filled with different ingredients. This, the corporal informs us, is a repast sent by the Mandarin of Tchangka, who regrets that he is not well enough to pay us a visit to-day, but hopes to do so to-morrow. After thanking him for his kind attention, we ask the speaker to supply us with some fresh eggs, chicken, and pork, as we have seen several pigs about the streets. The corporal promises to go and see about this, and we sit down to table, in the literal sense of the word, for the first time these many months past. The staple of the meal consists of slices of pork and chicken cut up into small pieces. The whole is cooked in pig's lard, and Rachmed makes off, like the good Mussulman he is, whilst Abdullah, whose voracity is stronger than all the prescriptions of the Koran, enjoys the rather tasteless dishes, followed by a dessert of balls of pastry, inside which are bits of colored sugar, and a small bottle of ara—a horrible concoction of spirit.

This meal delights several of our men, who have got tired of the bad food on the road, mutton and goat flesh being so repugnant to some of them that they can only eat bread, or rather a paste made of barley or bean meal. Whilst we are enjoying this repast, a Thibetan chief, who is the most important man in the region, arrives and treats us with great civility. It seems

that orders were sent to Tchangka concerning us three weeks ago by the Chinese chief at Lhassa, and that it is six weeks ago that it was known that twelve men with camels were advancing on Lhassa ; the Ta-Lama of which had sent orders about us to the lamas and the Thibetan people.

When we ask to whom belongs the garden where we are encamped, we are told it is the property of the garrison, and when we inquire how this is, the answer was: "It used to belong to Chinese bonzes, who had built a pagoda surrounded by trees, but the Thibetans, having risen in rebellion, killed the bonzes and destroyed the pagoda. But the Chinese collected numerous troops, again reduced the Thibetans to subjection, and, in order to punish the rebels, insisted, amongst other things, that this ground should be made over to the garrison of Tchangka. The soldiers have put a wall round it, and feed their stock there, whilst, as the site is a convenient one, it has been used for entertainments, promenades, religious festivals, and military parades."

"Do the soldiers often drill?"

"Now and then."

"When did they drill last?"

"Two years ago."

"Why don't they drill oftener?"

"They have no arms. There are only four swords at Tchangka for 150 men ; the others are in the stores at Ba-Tang."

"Are there really 150 soldiers? We have not seen more than thirty or so since we came."

"There ought to be, for the mandarin draws pay for that number. But as he himself receives a salary of not more than five or six ounces of silver a month, he increases his pay by reducing the contingent. Those who die are not replaced, and as most of the soldiers are married, their male children are put down on the roll, so that they may receive their father's pay when they are old enough to take their place. This is why you have seen lads of thirteen or fourteen among the soldiers drawn up in line to salute you."

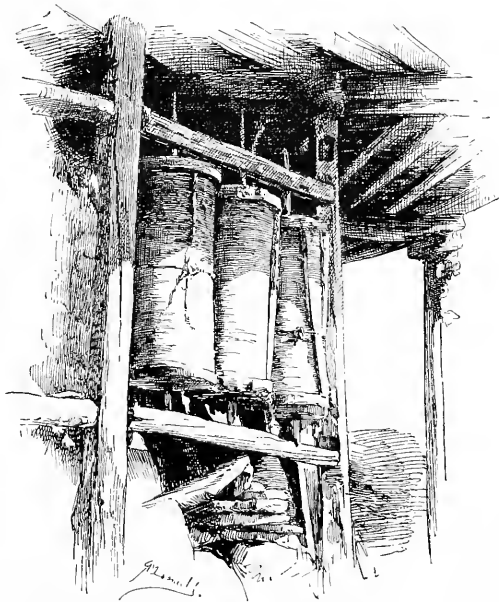
"Which are the unmarried soldiers?"

“The opium smokers, who have not enough money left to keep a wife and family.”

“The women are Thibetans, are they not?”

“Thibetans or half-breeds.”

When the corporal has gone, the old interpreter confides to us that he will not come with us to Ba-Tang, for, he says, “Our chief hates me, and I know that he is intriguing with the mandarin to accompany you further, and as the mandarin is, like him, a native of Setchou, he is sure to have his way and take my place.” We ask the interpreter to get in a good supply of eggs, for we have not much confidence in the corporal, and we know how readily the Chinese promise all one asks, and how cleverly they get out of keeping their word. Still, we have been told that we shall have some fresh pork to-morrow, and we go to bed dreaming of broiled chops which are sure to be delicious.



PRAYING MILL AT DOTOU.

CHAPTER XV.

AMONG THE CHINESE.

Religious Prophylaxy—"Red" and "Yellow" Lamaism—The Lamas as Capitalists—From Tchangka to Kouchou—The Tea Trade between China and Thibet—Leindünne—Anarchy—Chinese Inns—The Blue River (Kin-Cha Kiang)—Frenchmen in Thibet—Chinese Justice—An Orgie—Chinese Soldiers : The Courage of Numbers—At Ba-Tang—A Series of Questions—Tatsien-Lou—The French Missionaries There—A Difficulty with the Mandarin—Apology—Chinese Administration—Sending Home the Collection of Photographs—The Red River—On French Soil—Hanoi—The Future of Tonquin—Conclusion.



A DANCER.

June 2.—Last night there was a minimum temperature of 27° and there has been a south wind all the morning, followed by rain. Three shots announced that this was the fifteenth day of the Chinese month, when the people go to the pagoda to do reverence to the statues, the secretary of the mandarin informing us that his master had gone there, and might be too occupied all the rest of the day to pay us his promised visit, whilst he would not like to intrude upon us in the evening.

Then he handed us a long letter in Chinese and Thibetan, which, upon his reading it out, told us that, having arrived on the fourteenth day of the moon, we were to leave on the sixteenth, and that we were to be provided with six saddle horses, six pack horses, and thirty-three yaks. Two soldiers were to go ahead and collect the horses, while two others were to accompany us. And in five days we were to reach Ba-Tang. This piece of news was very welcome, for we had had enough of arguing and fighting at each relay. So we thanked the representative of the authorities, and asked him to convey our compliments to the

mandarin, just making an allusion to the promised fresh pork. He said that some should be sent to us forthwith, but Chinese superstitions, concerning which I might, if time allowed, write a long chapter, prevented us from eating the flesh of one of the small black pigs which run about in Tchangka. The lamas had ordered the slaughter-house of the town to be closed, because prayers were at this moment being offered up for rain, and it would not do to offend the deity by an act of bloodshed. To kill a pig at this moment would, we gather, excite the anger of the gods, and the harvest would be endangered. So it is all up with the pork chops!

The whole population is given over to prayer, men, women, and children pouring out to the white tents pitched in the plain, where the lamas have conveyed the statues of their gods, and are making supplications to them. It is not at all unlikely that our presence is the cause of these measures of religious prophylaxy, for fear that we may have cast a spell upon the ground we have trodden. A short time ago, we saw the Thibetans pass our baggage over the fire so as to purify it before they put it on their shoulders, whilst on another occasion the men who were at work in the fields we went through snatched up a handful of earth—like Marius predicting the birth of the Gracchi—and, throwing it into the air, mumbled a form of prayer to disinfect the soil.

All the devout people of Tchangka are astir and on their way to the tents, and a horse is led carrying six packets of very long prayers pressed tight between slabs of wood and fastened with strips of leather. Then comes a fat lama of high rank, riding at his ease upon a mule led by two lamas bareheaded, who hold the reins in one hand, whilst with the other they turn their prayer mills. Behind them come the bearers of drums and cymbals, and last of all a crowd of clerical and lay worshipers, marching cheerfully along. All the lamas of Tchangka and their flocks have turned out to avert the misfortune which our presence is calculated to bring upon the valley. It appears that the divinity had been entreated for some little time past to send rain, and that these prayers were just about being answered when we

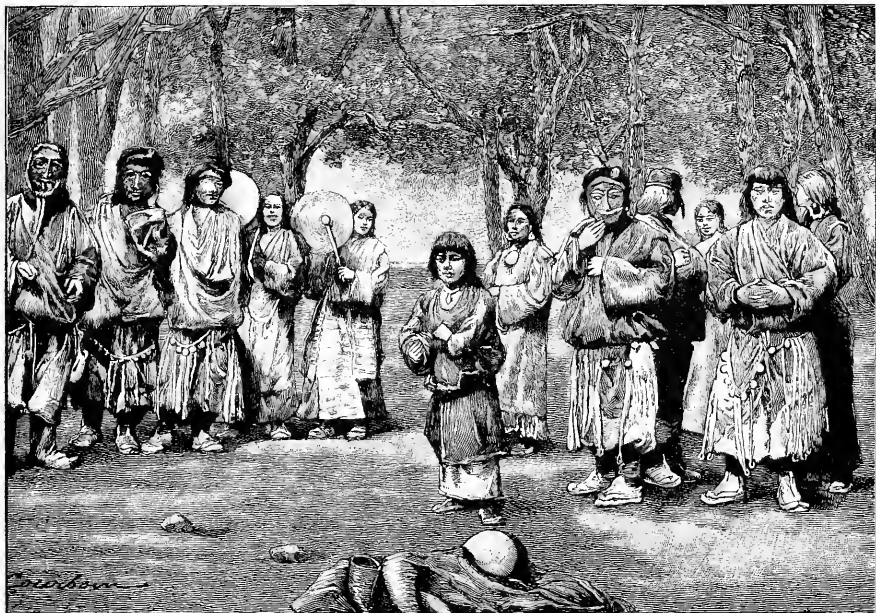
arrived. As strangers could not be other than hostile, the lamas had no difficulty in persuading the faithful that the clouds would disperse without sending down any rain unless they were kept back by fervent prayers. So the lamas of Tchangka are said to be unfavorably disposed toward us, the more so as they are "reds," that is to say, they have not accepted the Tsongkapa reform, the partisans of which are distinguished by their yellow headgear. These "reds" were much annoyed at the receipt of the letters from Lhassa, recommending us to be well received, for the theocracy of Lhassa is "yellow," and the lamas of the old school say that we shall be the cause of terrible drought, and they will not contribute for their part to the transport of our baggage. They also decline to lend us any yaks, so that the chiefs of the neighboring tribes have to do all the work.

A certain antagonism always reigns between the lay and the religious chiefs, but the latter are not always the richer.

The lama house of Tchangka owns a good part of the valley, and in course of time it will be in possession of the whole, the lamas being the only people who have any capital in hand, so that they lend money to the poor, and enrich themselves by usury. A time arrives when the debtors are unable to pay, and then they surrender their land and become in reality serfs attached to the glebe. From that time they become themselves the property of the lama house, which furnishes them with implements, seed, and manure to cultivate the soil, and they make over the harvest to their new masters, their pay consisting of enough flour to keep them from starvation during the winter.

These red lamas are not all given up to celibacy or to a life devoid of worldly pleasures, for, when tired of the cloister, they are at liberty to resume a lay existence, on condition of abandoning to the community the endowment they paid for admission. In the same way, if, once more tired of ordinary life, he knocks a second time at the door of the monastery, he will be admitted if he is prepared to make a second payment. Whenever a property is for sale, these lamas buy it; when, therefore, they pray for rain, they are really praying for themselves.

It is to be supposed that in this case their prayers are answered, or that we are not such very dreadful people, for there is a fall of snow and rain during the night. This ought to put the lamas and their serfs in a good humor, but the former are most splenetic, and continue to look at us askance. One of them distinguishes himself by the persistency with which he drives off the inquisi-



DANCERS AT TCHANGKA.

tive people who come to look at us. He is a long, thin sort of fellow, emaciated, no doubt, by constant privations, who, with his long eagle-like nose, his hollow cheeks, and sharp chin with its tuft of hair, has anything but a taking appearance. From time to time he makes a dash into our inclosure, scolds the inquisitive people who have collected, and drives them off to the door, raising his arms as a shepherd does when driving a flock of sheep. He, at all events, seems to be a thorough-paced bachelor, judging by the unceremonious way in which he treats the women.

June 16.—The rain comes down in torrents, but that does not damp the ardor with which these lamas turn their prayer mills

as they march behind us, as if they wished to purify the soil we have been treading. The people, however, escort us a little way, and the garrison, thanking us for our presents, wish us a pleasant journey. As we descend the valley, which gradually narrows, we meet numerous caravans of yaks conveying tea, and at Poula we obtain a relay after a march of sixty li, or a little over eleven miles, which would show that the distance of the li is not definitely settled, or that the Chinese have, for some reason, exaggerated the length of the stage. Thinking eleven miles a very short journey for people in so much of a hurry, we do not allow ourselves to be tempted by the meal of pork, fish, and pechké (a kind of cabbage) which is served us in a white tent, and insist upon pushing on to Kouchou, as had been arranged before the start. But it seems as if there was no intention of keeping faith with us, and, after some discussion, the chief of the lamas and the civil chief of the district arrive. They tell us that we cannot start till to-morrow, and that we must await the return of the yaks, which have gone on to Tchangka with bales of tea.

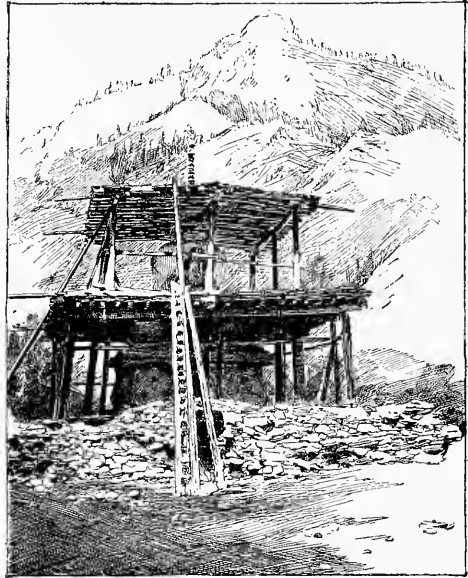
We ask if these persons have received orders, and the mandarin's men declare that either last night or early this morning they were advised of our arrival and told to keep yaks for our use. As we are in possession of an enormous sealed document, authorizing us to requisition beasts of burden in the name of the Emperor of China, we protest, and request the white-buttoned mandarin, who has escorted us from Dotou to Tchangka, to speak on our behalf, telling him that he was a powerful chief and that the Thibetans would obey him at once. But he says that they are not under his jurisdiction, and goes on smoking his pipe in an unconcerned sort of way. So we take the matter into our own hands, and by dint of parleying, discussing, threatening, and promising, get what we want, and go to pass the night at Kouchou, a military post in the hollow of a small valley. The road to it is through woods and over a pass 12,400 feet high, whence we can distinguish to the west a white chain which the natives call Dameloune, so far as we can understand them. While eat-

ing a good-sized omelette with bacon, about 10 P. M., we learn from the commander of this fort that in two days' time we shall be on the territory of Ba-Tang, and that our arrival has been looked forward to very eagerly.

June 17.—The road we follow is that of the pilgrims, and it is marked by numerous obos with large quantities of engraved prayers. We also notice on the obos and on the top of the chapels, small columns of wood, surmounted by balls, by crescents, or other roughly carved ornaments, but all done in exactly the same way. Each of these columns has twelve hollow rings, and this figure twelve, which is constantly recurring, must tally with some religious or superstitious fancy. We asked explanations as to this from competent persons, but were unable to get any. I can only guess, therefore, that it has something to do with the Thibetan cycle of twelve years.

Certain authors have stated that Lhassa is the resort of countless pilgrims. I do not know upon what they base their statements, but we met very few, and there must be some mistake, unless, indeed, the population in the south of Thibet and to the north of the Himalayas is very dense, and so devout that it supplies the great bulk of the pilgrims.

The tea trade between China and Thibet is very important, the transport being effected chiefly by the road from Tatsien-Lou to Lhassa, by way of Tsamda. The relays of yaks are settled by custom, each village contributing its share to the conveyance of the tea, and receiving a fixed contribution, generally in kind.



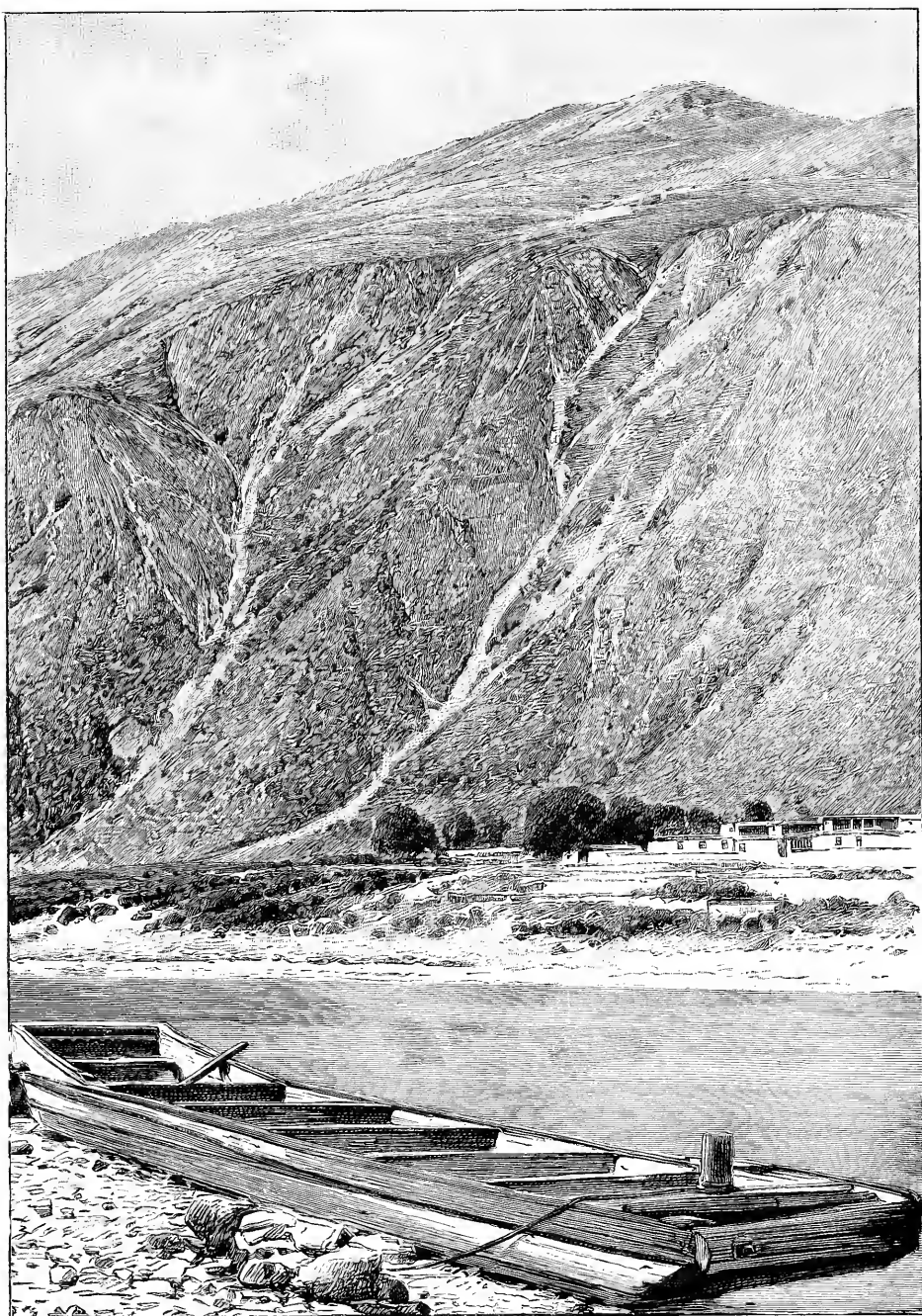
A BUDDHIST CHAPEL.

Three hours after leaving Kouchou we get a relay at Leindünne, where we arrive by way of cultivated valleys and plantations of oak and pine, the people appearing to be better off in every way than those in the districts we have been passing through. Some of the people are even fat, and the women of a more civilized type—both as regards appearance and dress—than the Thibetans. Their clothes are of coarse cloth, sometimes red, sometimes striped in the Thibetan colors of green, red, and yellow. In the sunlight this blending of colors produces a very striking effect, reminding one of Andalusia.

After leaving Leindünne the route branches off to Ba-Tang and Atentze, the time of a journey to the latter place being, according to the Chinese soldiers, four days; whilst from Atentze to Yunnan-Fou it would take a month. But the road is so bad that it can only be done on foot, and the best account of this region is to be found in the work of the French missionaries Desgodins and Biet.

Although the valleys are well cultivated, the crops are not sufficient to feed the military post at Leindünne, which is obliged to get its supplies from Atentze; and although the post is within a two days' march of Ba-Tang, nothing is bought there, prices being too high. Whilst we are gossiping we see some splendid mules, richly caparisoned, and carrying bales of tea, being driven by; they belong, we are told, to the Tale Lama in person, who sends them round with tea every year to the different lama houses. We notice that the houses in this village present some effort at decoration, in the shape of corbels and patterns on the window-shutters; whilst, to judge by the large quantity of *manis* (engraved prayers) freshly painted in bright colors, this must be a land of sanctification. We cannot, however, ascertain whether the peasants pick up a handful of soil and throw it into the air as we pass from a religious motive, or because we are supposed to bring them ill-luck.

During the night it snows and rains; and as the rain is still falling at dawn, our Chinese soldiers give us another proof of their reluctance to travel in the wet. These men are quite use-

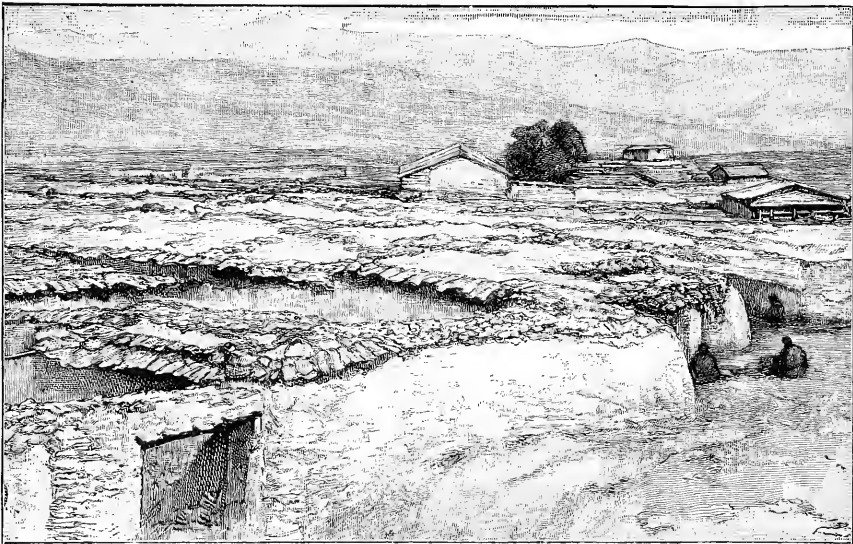


THE KIN-CHA KIANG.

less, their authority over the Thibetans being *nil*; and all they can do is to smoke their pipes and say "Io, Io." The whole country appears to be in a state of anarchy, and the native chiefs are not obeyed by their subjects.

It is eleven o'clock before we descend the valley with our baggage, and after an hour's march the animals are unloaded, and fresh disputes begin between men of different tribes.

Whilst the natives are quarreling over our baggage, we go to look at one of the water mills at the edge of a stream. It is like



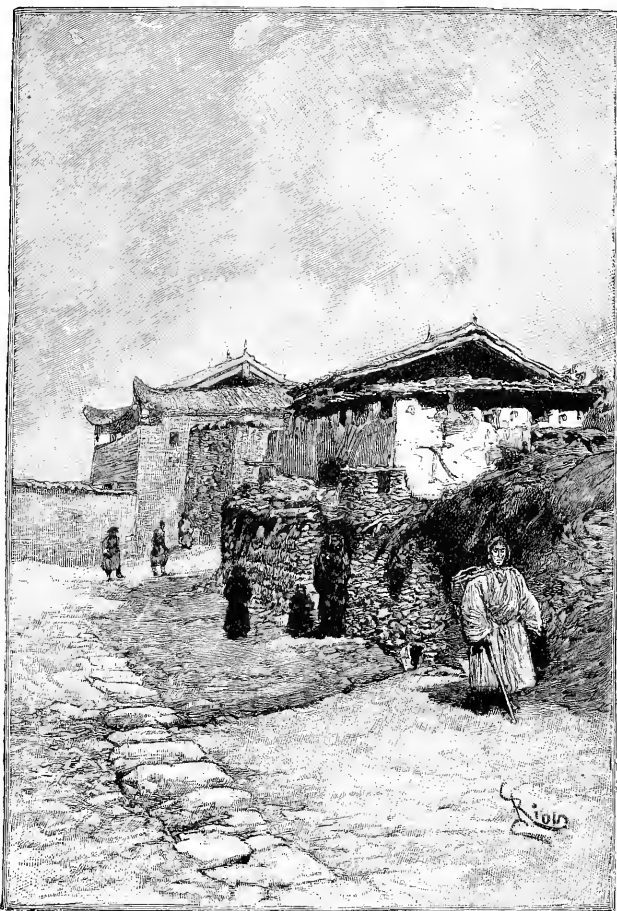
BA-TANG : VIEW FROM THE ROOFS.

all the mills in Asia, the water being supplied through the hollow trunk of a tree, with an undershot wheel setting the millstone in motion. In the center of the upper stone is a hole, through which the grains drop into a bag made of goatskin, held in its place by a rope tied to the wall.

After an hour and a half's talk the population consent to carry our baggage to the next relay, only two miles off; and from there, after fresh disputes, we arrive at Kountsetinne. Having been driven out of the inn of the place—where we had

intended passing the night—by its filthiness, we pitch our tent in the courtyard, bad as the weather is.

I need not repeat my description of these filthy Chinese inns, which are so disgusting that those of Thibet seem palaces in



CHINESE FORT AT BA-TANG.

comparison. It appears that this particular one is intended for the accommodation of the mandarins and soldiers on the march, and the keeper of it is very much disappointed at our leaving it, as he has been told that we paid liberally when we were well satisfied. However, we prefer to remain where we are, and

whilst the Thibetan and Chinese chiefs are sitting quietly smoking their pipes and drinking their tea under cover from the rain, the two principal ones hurriedly mount their horses and gallop off with guns and swords. It appears that, a few hundred yards from the village, at the foot of the gorge, some brigands, who had come down from the mountain, have taken by surprise the Thibetans who were conveying our baggage, and seized six horses. In order to execute this more easily, the brigands allowed the bulk of the escort to pass, and only attacked the rearguard. Our "white button" says that it will be useless to pursue them, as they have got well away to the mountain; and when I ask him if this is a frequent occurrence, he says that it is, the mountain being peopled by incorrigible savages.

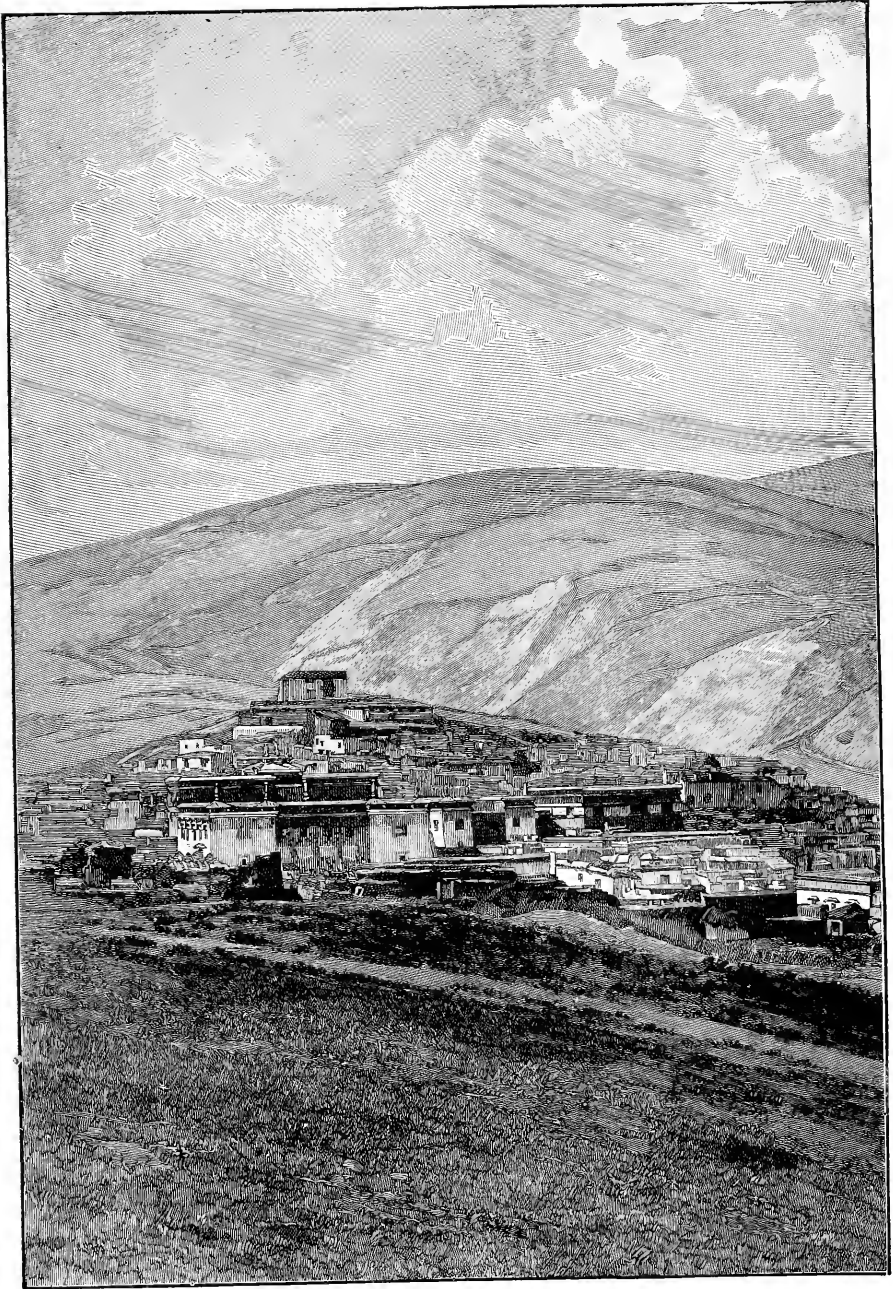
There are heavy showers all night; and when we start in the morning, the descent from the inn—which is at an altitude of about 8000 feet—begins almost at once, and we are soon amongst the clematis, the syringas, the jasmine, and the eglantines, with cultivated fields, and nuts nearly ripe. Still descending, we find ripe barley at 5400 feet; whilst about 1000 feet below the people are gathering in the harvest. At 4000 feet the harvest has already been got in, and we are able to give our horses fresh straw. The people inhabiting this slope of the mountain are rather fierce, and do not obey their chiefs better than those on the other side; but the dress is gradually being modified under the influence of Chinese fashions, and the native chiefs have the hair cropped close upon the front of the head, like the mandarins of the conquering nation. The people, too, do not wear the same sort of shoes as the Thibetans, the children having their feet in sandals, which are kept on by strips of leather passed between the toes and fastened round the heel.

As we follow a rather awkward path in the pouring rain, we suddenly come on a large river, in a valley nearly half a mile wide. This is the Kin-Cha Kiang, the great Blue River; but we cannot keep pace with its rapid current, for this river—the Yangtze-Kiang of the East—rolls its turbid flood at a tremendous pace over rocks and boulders, as if eager to bury its waters in the

deeps of the ocean. Leaving the river bank again, we get upon a more easy route, and, galloping along past eglantine trees, reach a delta formed by the Chisougoune as it emerges from the mountain. We cross it by a bridge which does not seem any too safe; and as we do so, we hear shots being fired from the high rocks on the other side. This is a salute from men who have been posted up there to keep a lookout for the brigands who infest the country, and they have received orders from the Chinese mandarin at Ba-Tang to look after us.

A little further on we pass a chapel built in the form of a triumphal arch, and thence we descend to the banks of the Yangtze-Kiang, the bed of which is so much broader at this spot that it can be crossed in a large, flat-bottomed boat, 50 feet long by nearly 9 feet in beam. This boat, which is of deal secured with iron clamps, is rowed by two women and two men, all of mixed blood, with a long-tailed Chinaman steering. The river is about a furlong broad at the point where we cross it; and as we are being rowed across, we cannot but think of the Frenchmen who have done so before us, and who have scarcely had justice rendered them. Our countrymen are about the only people who have had the good fortune to visit Thibet since it has been closed against Europeans. First of all, there came Fathers Huc and Gabet, whose daring voyage will not have been forgotten, and who have been rather harshly criticised. They have been blamed for not having mentioned chains of mountains which the state of the atmosphere doubtless prevented them from seeing, and they have been laughed at for describing as a broad river what those who saw it thirty years afterward found to be only a small one. But their critics seem to forget under what disadvantages they—the first Europeans to come into the country—labored, and I consider that Fathers Huc and Gabet effected the most daring and interesting of journeys with little in the way of resources except their own will and energy.

Since leaving Tchangka we have been upon what may be described as French soil, for Father Renou penetrated into Thibet, and got together the materials for a dictionary which may be



GENERAL VIEW OF BA-TANG.

compared to that of Csoma, the learned Hungarian, whose work he completed, thus opening the country to his successors by enabling them to study the language. Then came Fathers Fage, Desgodins, and Thomine, who penetrated as far as Tchamdo, and many others whose names should be familiar to all Europeans. These martyrs of civilization opened up the way for explorers, and the illustrious Prjevalsky, when traveling in Thibet, only followed a portion of Father Huc's route; whilst the Englishmen, Gill and Mesny, marched in the track of our missionaries, and Count Bela Szehechiniyi, accompanied by Loczi and Kreitner, endeavored to reach Lhassa. He had every possible document and letter of introduction; he was escorted by Chinese mandarins, and possessed a considerable fortune; but he could not get beyond Ba-Tang, and returned through the Yunnan. Cooper, having attempted to diverge from the beaten track of the missionaries, was murdered; whilst Baber merely followed the route they had mapped out, a good part of the information which his books contain being facts told by members of the Thibet Mission. Not a single European coming from the East has been able to get as far as the tomb of Father Renou, but from the village where we disembark the route has been fully described as far as Tatsien-Lou by Father Desgodins, who is still hale and hearty. We shall be passing several spots where French blood has flowed with a disinterestedness not sufficiently admired, and as we shall be within a few miles of the spot where Father Brioux met with a cruel death, we regret not being numerous or well-armed enough to strike terror into the men who murdered him.

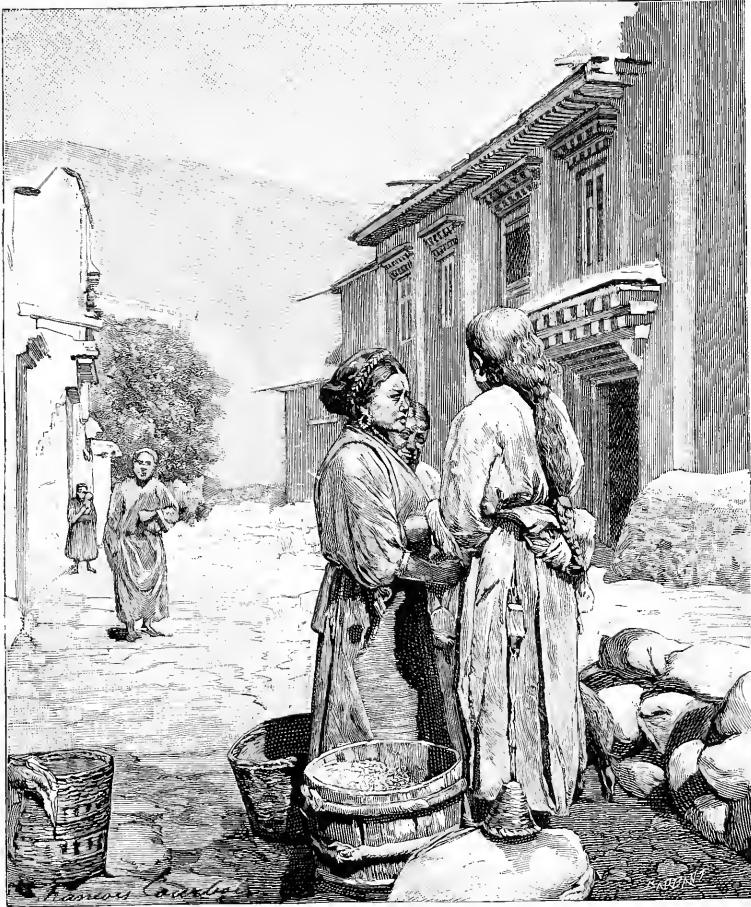
The great chief whom Liangtay, the paymaster-general at Ba-Tang, has sent to meet us is a Doungane, named Lichkūfan; and this Mussulman, who has regular features, is much more martial in appearance than his compatriots. Like most of his coreligionists, he thinks that his chief duty is to invoke Allah and abstain from eating pork in a country where it is difficult to get any other sort of meat, there being no mutton or yak-flesh except in places like Tatsien-Lou, where there are enough Mus-

sulmans to have their own slaughterhouse. He, however, is very regular in his ablutions, and his son, who has come with him, is also very natty in appearance. The father, who has the post of inspector of the troops, with a salary of about five pounds a month, has come to look through the accounts and satisfy himself that the garrison is in good trim.

After having drunk several cups of the fermented barley called tchang, and having got "well on," he had the fifteen ruffians with their cunning and degraded cast of countenance drawn up in line, and proceeded to hold a court of justice in the open air. A bench was brought out and placed at the door of the barracks, covered with red cloth. When he had taken his seat the captain of the archers sat on a stool beside him, whilst the soldiers were in a line to the left. The culprits were then brought forward, the first offender being a man who had been slandering others, including the wife of the captain. His calumnies had led to domestic unhappiness. The inspector in a voice of thunder shouts, "On your knees, sir," and down the wretch goes. Then the other soldiers are bidden to kneel and, after a few seconds, to get up again. The inspector eventually orders the culprit to be given six blows on the right cheek, and after a moment's hesitation three men come out from the ranks, two of them seizing him by the arms, whilst the other catches him by the pigtail and hits him six times on the cheek with a half-closed fist. As the punishment is being administered, the inspector gets more and more excited, positively howling at last, "Hit him six times on the mouth; that is where he gave offense." The punishment having been administered, the judge bids the soldiers be off; and they, having made a military salute to their chief, withdraw, the culprit coming up in turn and, with forehead touching the ground, thanking him sincerely for his goodness. The crowd disperses, the public appearing to be but little impressed by this scene, whilst the soldiers are scarcely able to restrain a smile, and the sufferer indulges in a grin.

In order to dissipate the painful impression which this affair has created, the inspector got up an entertainment for the even-

ing, the whole of the women in the garrison being collected in the largest room of the place. Tchang was distributed freely, and the ladies sang and danced. As we had got down to a level of



WOMEN AT BA-TANG.

3300 feet the heat was rather trying, and the inspector, as drunk as Silenus, presided over the *fête* half-naked, seated on a platform in the posture of an idol. The dancing women as well as the singers were invited to partake of the drink, and the orgie lasted the best part of the night.

Such is a glimpse of the military customs of the Chinese in

Thibet. I do not know how the army conducts itself at Peking, but I may safely say that from Kuldja to the Red River we saw nothing bearing the faintest resemblance to disciplined troops, or having any semblance of a feeling of duty, whilst on many oc-



LAMAS AT BA-TANG.

casions we had proofs of cowardice. These men are only plucky when they are many against a few, and all they can do is to assassinate unarmed missionaries and isolated travelers.

A few miles beyond Tchouपालongue, on the route to Ba-Tang, we noticed a house at the entrance of a gorge, and learned that it was here Father Brioux was massacred, at the instigation of the lamas and the Chinese. It seemed as if the Liangtay was anxious to persuade us of the insecurity of this region, for we were greeted by salvos of musketry fired from the tops of the rocks, and a little further on were accosted by a troop of ill-

looking rascals, who seized our horses' reins and put out their hands for something in return for their salutes. Needless to say that we showed them our whips and did not give them a farthing.

No doubt these military demonstrations are intended to show that we are being well looked after. The authorities must be aware that we have heard of the murder of our compatriot Father Brioux, and think that we may have been sent to make an inquiry into that affair. Then, again, the dispersal of the Christian community of Ba-Tang, the devastation of their chapel, and the pillage of their houses, are still more recent, dating only from 1887. It is known that the Thibet Mission addressed a claim to the Tsongli-Yamen through the French Minister—a claim which the Chinese Government promised to satisfy, of course, but equally of course did not do so. The Liangtay is aware how reprehensible the proceedings of the Chinese authorities are, and how much they deserve punishment, and public rumor has it that the object of our journey is to exact the reparation which is due, and to reëstablish the Christians in possession of their lands.

When we reach Ba-Tang, situated in a pretty valley rich with the harvest, we are treated as persons of distinction; honor is paid to us, and we are lodged in the newly built Kouen-Kan, which is reserved for mandarins of high rank. The lamas, however, avoid us in the streets by running back or taking refuge inside the houses; and when we make our way toward the lama house, with its high walls, surmounted by a brilliant dome, the priests hasten to close the massive door, as if they were afraid of our penetrating into this so-called temple of wisdom, which is but a refuge for a set of good-for-nothings.

We paid several visits to the sites of the houses which were the legal property of the missionaries, and found the whole of them in ruins like the chapel, between the walls of which the barley was sprouting. For the third season the Thibetans were about to reap the harvest in the fields of the mission without the Chinese authorities intervening, and one could not but ask what sort of a government this is to which European Powers

appeal for redress, and with which they sign treaties only observed on one side. It is difficult to understand why we treat as a serious factor the Emperor of China, who is not obeyed—either because he does not wish to be, or because he has not the power to enforce his will. A power which is incapable of protecting anyone, or of applying the most insignificant rules of police, does not deserve the name of a government, and I cannot understand the course taken by the nations of Europe.

Up to the present, murderers and fire-raisers have been going about here at Ba-Tang with perfect impunity; and yet the presence of a handful of well-armed men like ourselves suffices to make them feel uneasy.

Is it true that on the occasion of the Emperor's marriage all the diplomatists, with the exception of the Russian—though they do not, as a rule, agree amongst one another—asked to be allowed to offer their congratulations to the Emperor, and were refused? Is it true that when they attempted to make him presents, these presents were unceremoniously refused? Is it true that, after these rebuffs, they accepted the dinner which was contemptuously offered them? Is it true that they came in full dress, and were received by the chief of the Tsong-li-Yamen in undress, and in the room where all the tributary chiefs were massed together? Is it true that this latter fact is in the East—and in China more particularly—regarded as a peculiar display of disdain, which was not challenged as it should have been?

Perhaps I may have been misinformed, and for my own part I believe that our diplomatists are men of energy and prudence, careful of their country's interests, and of the strict observance of the Tientsin Treaty; and if there are a great many matters still in suspense, it is simply because they cannot do everything at once.

It was to save them the trouble of reading a long report, and in order not to add to the number of cases still hung up, that we did not send them an official complaint against the mandarin of Tatsien-Lou, who behaved to us like a good Chinaman, and who, owing to this, obtained his appointment to the post which he occupied temporarily.



ENTRANCE TO THE TATSJEN-LOU VALLEY.

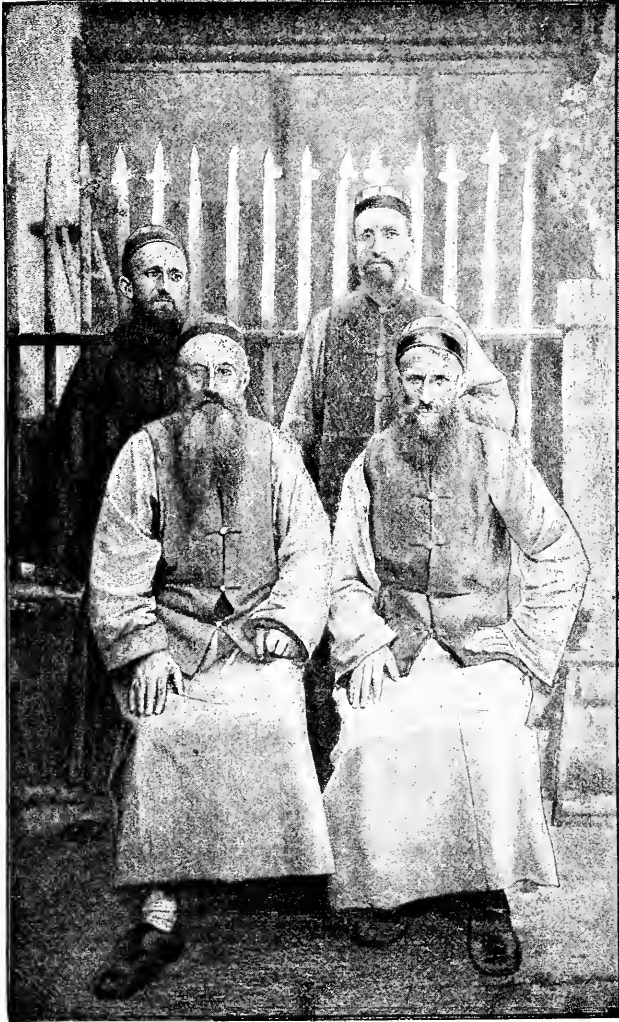
At first we had some little differences at Ba-Tang with Liangtay, who insisted upon our showing him the papers we had asked for from Peking, and which, as it appears, were sent to us through the Russian Consul at Kashgar. But when we explained to him that, having been sent by this roundabout route, they must have gone astray, he appeared to be convinced that we had none, and let us go on without them.

On the 24th of June we reached Tatsien-Lou, where we were very cordially welcomed by Monsignore Biet, Fathers Dejean, Giraudot, etc., and by an English collector, Mr. Pratt, who will be able to confirm the statement that the missionaries rendered him every possible service without asking him what his religious creed was, any more than they asked as to ours. Mr. Pratt will be able also to say that the mandarin of Tatsien-Lou endeavored to foment an attack upon us, under the grotesque pretense that we wanted to steal the treasures of the town.

I must, however, relate the facts of the case in some detail. Let me premise by stating that the Tatsien-Lou missionaries had for the past two years been promised passports authorizing them to return to Ba-Tang; but nothing had ever been done. So Monsignore Biet thought it as well to take advantage of our presence to open fresh negotiations with the mandarins of Fou Tchao Kong, and with the Liangtay of Ba-Tang, Ouang Kia Yong, the latter being just now at Tatsien-Lou, on his way to join his post. A council, at which we were all present, was held, and the mandarins promised the missionaries their passports, while the new treasurer undertook to let them go with him on the seventeenth day of the moon. He even asked us for a revolver, in order that he might be able to intimidate the Thibetans; and he was promised one. The engagements entered into by the mandarins were not, of course, meant to be kept, and on the morning of the fifteenth day of the moon we were officially informed that Ouang Kia Yong would start the next day—that is to say, twenty-four hours sooner than had been agreed, and that there was no sign of any passport.

In the afternoon we sent Dedeken, in European dress, with

the revolver that had been promised, and told him to get what information he could. He went to the door of the tribunal and handed in our cards, according to usage, and was told that the



FRENCH MISSIONARIES.

authorities were at table; so he was shown into an anteroom and kept waiting five hours, during which time, as the room was only divided from that in which the meal was being served by a

thin partition, he could hear the Chinese insulting France and the other European countries, the voice of the Mandarin Ouang Kia Yong being the loudest, so anxious was he that his insults should reach Father Dedeken's ears.

The festival lasted till nightfall, and then Tchao Kong, the mandarin of Tatsien-Lou, had the drum beaten through the town, and the crier was told to call out a man from each house, as the tribunal was in danger from the Europeans. So the people came rushing out—some armed with swords, others with bludgeons, and all with lanterns and umbrellas, for it was raining, fortunately, and this sufficed to damp their ardor. We were unaware of all this, but, being uneasy as to the situation of our companion, sent two armed men to ask him to return; Father Dedeken being much surprised when he got outside to find the approaches to the Yamen blocked up by a large crowd. Followed by five or six hundred people, and reaching the bridge across the stream, it suddenly occurred to him how likely they would be to throw him in; he stopped, and in a loud tone enjoined them not to follow him any further. After a moment's hesitation the crowd turned back, and he was able to rejoin us in safety.

These are the usual tactics of the mandarins for bringing about a massacre of Europeans, but they failed in this case for several reasons—one being that the population of Tatsien-Lou is chiefly composed of merchants, and is therefore of a peaceable disposition, whilst another was that the military chief, who is a Mussulman, and is on good terms with the missionaries, refused the 200 soldiers asked for. In the third place the Thibetan king would not move, out of antipathy to the Chinese.

The next day the Liangtay, Ouang Kia Yong, started for Ba-Tang by a roundabout route; whilst the people of the Kuinleangfou went about the bazaar insulting us, and saying that we were to be chained up and driven out like dogs, the missionaries sharing the same fate. The second man of the Kuinleangfou, one Lioupin, said that the Europeans must be killed, that he

himself had massacred some at Tchong King, and that it was not a difficult matter. This, of course, was meant to frighten us.

The mandarin, finding that he had not attained his object, after waiting three or four days, sent a confidential adviser to us with apologies at the bishop's house. The messenger, who was attired in full dress, had his master's card in his hand, and said that the latter acknowledged himself to be solely responsible, but that action had been taken, by mistake, without his knowledge. Our reply was that we could only accept these apologies when the passports had been issued to the missionaries as a proof of his repentance being sincere. The mandarin, however, had not done with us yet, for, having arranged that some things should be stolen from us a few days after, he then pretended to take action against the culprits, when, in the presence of a large audience and by means of false witnesses and impudent falsehoods, he sought to discredit us. Failing violence, he resorted to calumny. We lodged a complaint against him with his superior at Tchong-toufou; but only for the form of the thing. And our complaint bore the usual fruit; that is to say, he was promoted after we had gone.

This is a good sample of the Chinese administration to which European Governments appeal for justice, and to which they look for loyal conduct. To do so is sheer waste of time, for these people are cowards and are moved solely by fear. As I write these lines the war vessels of European Powers are collected in Chinese waters, and are awaiting the result of the negotiations of their diplomatists with the Chinese, and it is easy to predict what the outcome of all this will be. The mandarins will apologize and pay an indemnity, they will make certain custom-house concessions, and a few ruffians who ought to have been executed long ago will have their heads cut off. And so the comedy will end, whilst the mandarins are congratulated by their superiors and promoted, the people being told that the Europeans are always ready to sell their lives for money, and that they make threats which they never carry out.

We stayed more than a month at Tatsien-Lou to recruit our

strength before going on to Tonquin. That we were able to carry out this last part of our programme is due to the kindness of our compatriots.

During our journey we had formed several collections intended for French museums, and at Tatsien-Lou they had been considerably augmented by purchases which our fellow-countrymen had put us in the way of making. Had it been necessary to convey all this through Tonquin, it is doubtful whether we should ever have got through, but, fortunately for us, Mr. Pratt, the well-known English naturalist, offered to take charge of our baggage until he reached the first French consulate, which, as we calculated, would be at Han Keou, whilst we sent our photographs through the English consul at Tchong King, whose name I regret not having by me, so that I might publicly thank him. Photographs and collections alike reached Europe in good condition, and have since been exhibited in the Paris Museum of Natural History, where they will at present remain. Mr. Pratt was obliged to have our packages carried for a month overland, and then to purchase junks and go down the Yang-tze-Kiang as far as Shanghai, for our consul at Han Keou being absent, Mr. Pratt was kind enough to go on with them. At Shanghai he went to M. Wagner, the French consul, who declined to have anything to do with the matter, and he then applied to the procurator of the foreign missions, who saw them on board the steamer for Marseilles. Thanks to Mr. Pratt, we knew that the fruits of our long journey were as safe as the perils of navigation on the Yang-tze-Kiang admitted, and so we felt that we could make for Tonquin without any encumbrances. We should have left Tatsien-Lou sooner, but we heard on the 13th of July that some Europeans, who had started from Sinig-fou, were coming. However, after vainly waiting a week for them, we left by the route which Baber, the English traveler, had followed. It was the 28th of July when we bade good-by to the members of the Thibet Mission, whom we cannot thank too much for their cordial hospitality, and from whom travelers who may be brought into this region by the passion for research are sure of receiving

disinterested assistance, valuable information, and advice dictated by consummate prudence and experience. Mr. Pratt, I am quite sure, is of the same opinion, as well as Mr. Rockhill, the American diplomatist, who made such a daring journey from the Koukou-Nor to the Tatsien-Lou, by way of Jyékounda.

It is with a heavy heart that we say good-by to our fellow-countrymen, wishing them all success in their arduous enterprise. We determine to note carefully the residences of the other missionaries which we shall pass on the way, as being so many oases in the vast desolation of China. When we leave Tatsien-Lou we leave Thibet, and from the very first stage the eye wanders over moist valleys inhabited by a very dense population which utilizes every handful of vegetable soil, and even manages to grow a few heads of corn in the corners of rocks, and upon the stony sides of the mountains. Village succeeds village with painful sameness. The pagodas are half to pieces, and as you enter the village you see figures of gods painted in bright colors but crumbling to pieces, and then comes a sort of triumphal arch on which are inscribed moral phrases like those of schoolchildren's copy books. The streets are infested by yelping curs and dirty pigs wallowing in the mud; by children as dirty as the animals; by women with legs the size of a chair rail, and feet like snuff boxes, and by porters or mules carrying heavy loads. The inns are horrible dens impregnated with the most varied odors, that of opium not being the least unpleasant. These inns have the most pompous names, such as the "Polar Star," the Chinese having a great weakness for the four cardinal points. The staple articles of food are rice and pork, and eggs and chickens are to be had in the villages; omelettes being made with the former, and soup with the latter.

We cannot but be struck by the economy of the people, their parsimony, their avarice, their art in turning everything, yes, literally everything, to account. Thus they make lamp wicks out of the heart of a certain kind of rush, and they also use this for cupping. They have a way of supplying what is wanting in the products of industry with a skill of hand and a patience



FISHING WITH CORMORANTS.

beyond all belief, and if they did not smoke they would not indulge in a single superfluity. It might even be argued that the opium smoker does not indulge in a superfluity, as he eats and drinks less than the non-smoker. In this land of hunger, where the struggle for existence renders people so ferocious and pitiless, the essential thing is to keep body and soul together, and I have seen men dropping from inanition on the roadway, and the Chinese stepping over them without offering to give them assistance. The famishing wretch might die, and his body would lie there without anyone taking notice of it.

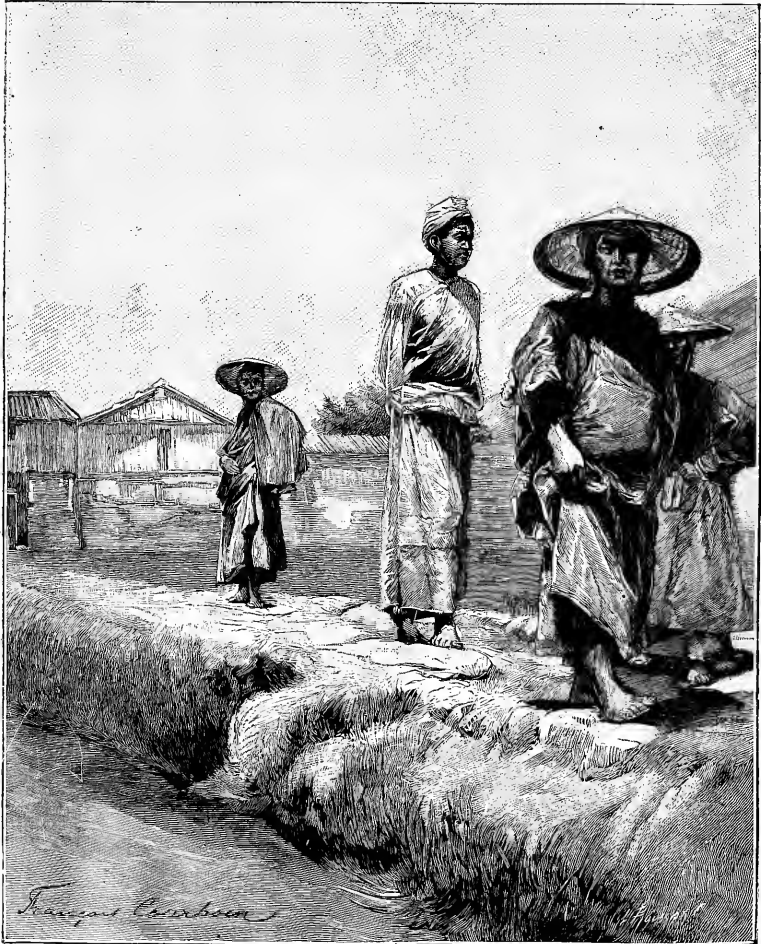
In the regions we traversed before reaching Yunnan, we did not see any display of the feeling which certain people call altruism. In these populous regions of the Setchouen no one has time to think of others, the difficulty of getting a bare subsistence being so great that it seems to have hardened men's hearts toward their fellow-men.

Our carriers are poor wretches who have been recruited specially for the work, and have scarcely a rag upon their bodies. They feed on dried biscuits, Indian corn cooked in oil, and what rice is to be had in inns on the roadside. But they all have their opium pipe, and when the imperious need for the drug begins to make itself felt, they quicken their steps so as to reach the inn where the contractor is awaiting them with the opium, which constitutes the bulk of their pay. These inns, in which we try to sleep, are, however, so infested with vermin, that we cannot, as a rule, close our eyes; so we even look back with regret upon those of Thibet, which at the time seemed so revolting. We are much struck by the men who carry enormous loads of tea over very steep paths. It appears that these men belong to families in which this business is hereditary, and that they form a corporation.

At Foulin, we quit the highroad, which goes on east, and make our way toward the Yunnan over the highlands of the Tienchan. On the road we come upon Chinese towns and villages formed chiefly of emigrants from the Setchouen, the mountain being inhabited by the Lolos, a tall race of men with long

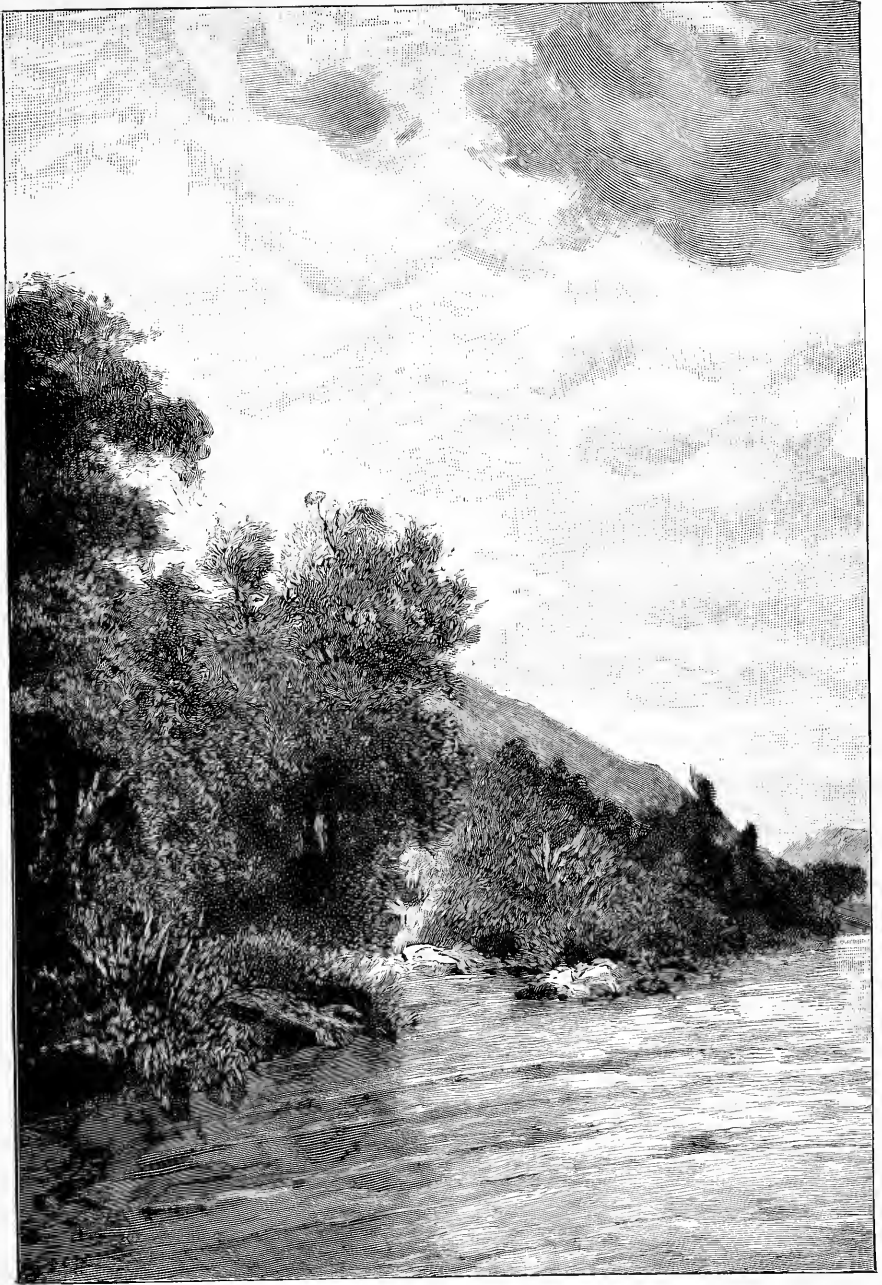
feet, very energetic and warlike, and inspiring great terror among the Chinese, whom they rob whenever they get the chance.

The Chinese whom we encounter in this district appear to be a most wretched set of beings, very small, eaten up with fever,



LOLOS.

and disfigured by enormous goiters. They are, as a rule, inoffensive, but we meet with occasional difficulties in the populous places, the inhabitants sometimes insulting us, and throwing stones at the doors of the inn where we are lodging, although,



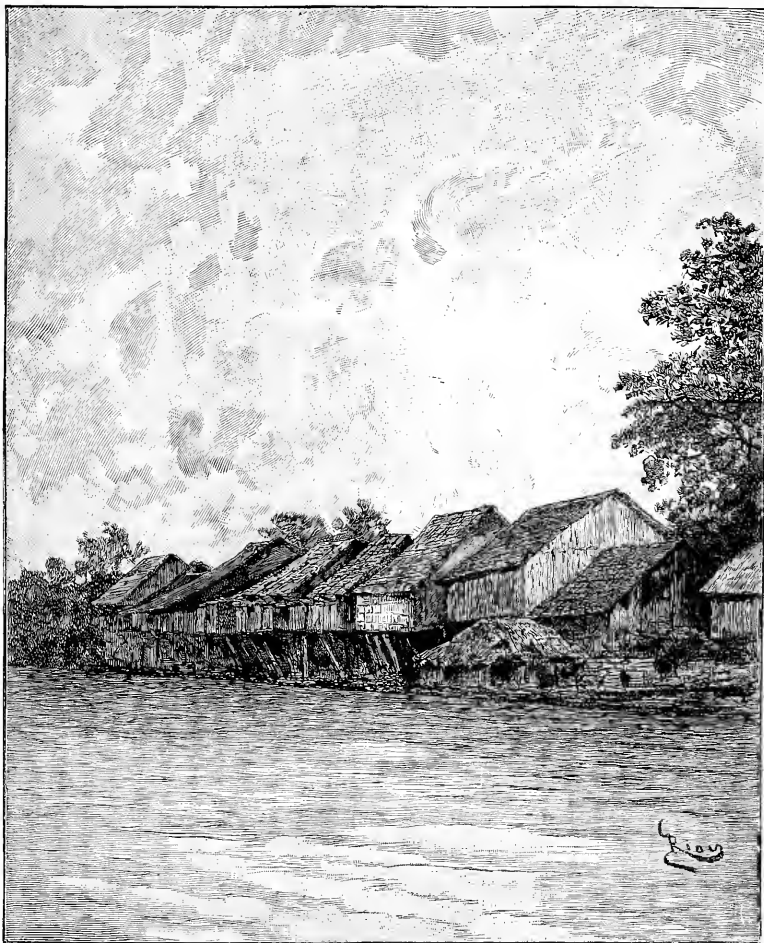
THE RED RIVER.

on these occasions, the mandarins tell us that we shall be in safety within the precincts of their tribunal. We inform the crowd that, if one of them dares to lay hands on us, we shall shoot him, while the mandarins are told that we shall hold them responsible for the bloodshed. This has the desired effect, and it is the same with the future bachelors of letters whom we meet on the road, this being the period for examinations, for although they are often more numerous than we are, and apply very insulting expressions to us, we never hesitate to use our sticks, and keep them in respect. We would rather die than let ourselves be insulted; and it was by acting upon this feeling at all risks that we were able to go along the banks of the Red River, after a halt at Yunnan Fou and another at Mongtzeu, where our consul, M. Leduc, and the Europeans employed in the custom-house received us very cordially.

We embarked upon the Red River, which was so dark as well to deserve its name, on the 22d of September, having, since we left the frontier of Siberia, traveled nearly 3750 miles either on foot or on horseback, so that it will be readily understood how delighted we were to stretch ourselves on the junk which M. Janson, the Danish telegraph engineer, had engaged for us. On the evening of that day we were at the post of Bac-Sat, on French soil, and on the 25th at Laokai, where M. Laroze gave us a very friendly reception, and where we changed our junk. This was but the prelude to many more such receptions during our progress through the colony, whilst at Hanoi itself M. Raoul Bonnal and General Bichat were most cordial, as indeed was the whole population of Tonquin, to whom we here tender our sincere thanks. If we were struck by the beauty of the Red River, not less so were we by the comfort and animation of Hanoi, whilst from what we saw of the delta, of the wealth of vegetation, and of the extreme fertility of an inexhaustible soil, we could only conclude that this is a colony out of which a great deal may be made. All that is needed is that an agreement should be come to as to this child, whose coming was rather unexpected, and upset certain calculations and plans; but he, I believe, has life in him,

and will make his way in the world if he is taken proper care of.

Everyone is aware that it is easier and quicker to get back from Tonquin by sea than to traverse the ancient continent of



LAOKAI.

Asia, in order to get to it. For the return voyage we embarked at Haiphong, and so by Hong-Kong to Marseilles. From Hong-Kong we sent our Chinaman back to his native land ; he was to return in company with some Belgian missionaries. That vain

little fellow Abdullah, who has some good qualities all the same, left us at Port Saïd, whilst Rachmed was to accompany us to Paris before returning to Russian Turkestan, and Father Dedenken is going to spend a little time in Belgium. Prince Henry and myself, the only two Frenchmen of the party, are going to stay in France for a time, and, before laying down the pen, let me add that we are all very pleased at the results of the journey; whilst I must thank my companions for having reposed confidence in me, and for having worked with all their might to carry out a somewhat daring scheme. Having all done the best we could, we hope the critics will not be too hard on us.

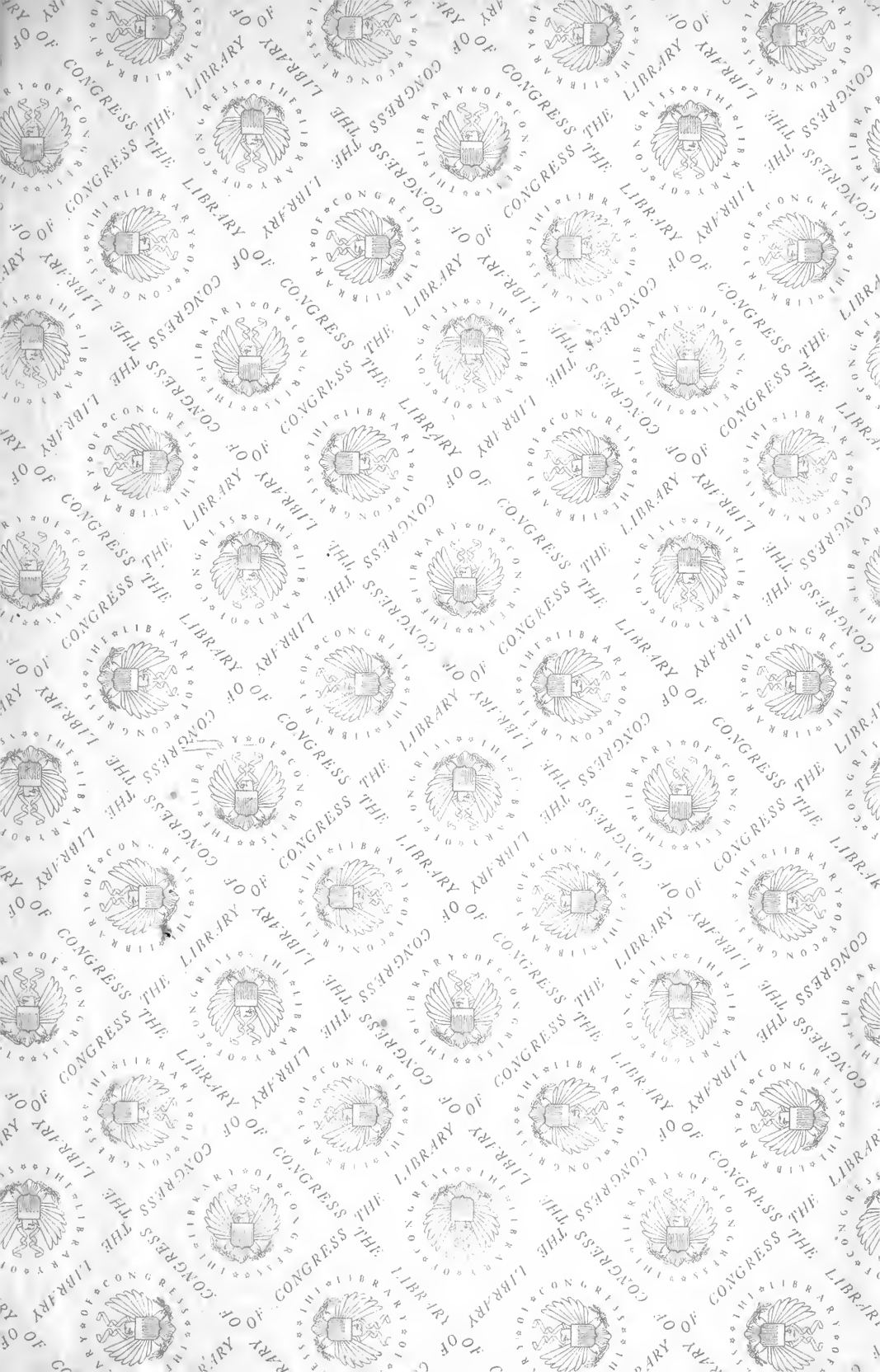


RACHMED AND A THIBETAN INNKEEPER.

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