

MANAS

On either side of the strong-flowing Manas river extended a gravel-plain. The river was broken up into several arms. Higher up, where it was collected in one bed, a bridge had been in course of construction for some years past; but it seemed destined never to be quite finished. In the Manas-oasis we had once more to submit to passport-inspection, to which by this time we were beginning to get accustomed.

At the Catholic mission-station we were received with open arms by Father VELTMAN, the Dutch priest in charge. Of course we must spend the night with him. He showed us his simple little polyclinic, his supply of medicines, his school, his home for orphans and his garden. Father VELTMAN was a very hard worker, not only in his Lord's vineyard, but also as a scientific collector. In order to meet his expenses he collected bird-skins, butterflies etc. for European museums. For his bird-shooting he required an air-gun; and at his request I had taken one with me. At the examination in Chuguchaq it had been declared harmless; but the authorities in Manas afterwards found it a danger to the community at large.

From Manas¹ one can see the Bogdo-ula in the distance to the east, lifting its mighty brow high above the earth. Father VELTMAN told us that tigers inhabited the reedy tracts not far from Manas. There is also said to be a species of leopard in this part of Dzungaria. Wolves howl in the waste lands, and not long ago a pair of these animals had accounted for seventeen sheep on the outskirts of the Manas oasis. Wild pigs are very numerous and do much damage to the crops. Wild dogs slink about in the brushwood and steal water-melons and maize; they even lick the axle-grease from the *arabas* under cover of darkness. That hares, pheasants and wild ducks were abundant we had seen for ourselves. Wild geese are also supposed to be plentiful, and deer, too, inhabit the woods.

We now had only 146 kilometers to go before reaching our journey's end. Father VELTMAN came with us. By the time we had left the Manas oasis behind we had driven over no fewer than twenty-four bridges, very small ones, certainly, but some of them so strongly arched that the lorries hung precariously on their summits.

In several villages one can still see the ruins of houses that were destroyed at the time of the suppression of the Tungan revolt in the 1870's. Now, in the autumn, when the water is no longer needed for the irrigation of the fields, the canals flood

¹ The Chinese name of the oasis is Sui-lai. It is Dzungaria's granary. In 1876 there was a terrible massacre of the population by TSO TSUNG-T'ANG's Hunanese troops. At this time General TSO put down the violent Mohammedan revolt in Sinkiang, and so ruthless were the ravages of his troops that after the wholesale massacres and treacherous atrocities committed in Manas General KAUFFMANN, who was in command of the Russian frontier forces, considered it his duty to address General TSO on the subject, and to make indignant protest against the indiscriminate killing of non-combatants. F. B.