

## SHARA-MUREN-SUME

On the morning of November 12th we found out that our visit to Shara-muren-sume was in vain, for the abbot was away on a journey, and only he could give strangers permission to cross the thresholds of the temple halls. We were thus obliged to content ourselves with looking over the grounds and temple precincts from without. This is an ancient and very well-kept monastery, all in Tibetan style and the finest in Durbet. All the houses and walls glittered dazzlingly snow-white. The white town lies in the form of an amphitheatre with a wide view to the south-east; and the frozen Shara-muren, like a band of silver, winds over the plain between low hills. We were told that 1,200 lamas lived here, but this figure may be exaggerated.

## DURBET WANG'S RESIDENCE

Surrounded by gaping lamas we got into the cars and continued S. E. and E. S. E. for fifty kilometers to reach DURBET WANG's residence. This country, whose tribes conquered half the world seven hundred years ago, is now but thinly peopled. It is seldom that one sees travellers or even a few tent-villages.

The Durbet prince was a jovial and rather fat old gentleman, who accorded us a friendly reception in his big reception-hall, furnished in the Chinese style. He showed us his two temples, rather small, built in Tibetan style and very well-kept. On parting he gave me a little prayer-mat and I presented him with an alarm-clock.

## DEVA GUNG

We resumed our journey to the north-east and E. N. E. through Chinese settlements and fields, reaching Baishing, where DEVA GUNG resided, by the time twilight fell. This man was *tuslakchi* or adviser to the DURBET WANG, and was very rich and powerful. He owned tens of thousands of sheep, thousands of horses and camels and was a merchant on the grand scale. He had been married three times but had no children. DEVA GUNG was a stout, jovial and very forthright man, a free-born Mongol of old stock, proud of his descent from CHINGGHIS KHAN. He told us that KHABTU KHASAR, a brother of the world-conqueror, had a grandson OMBO, of whose four sons one became *wang* in Durbet<sup>1</sup>; and ever since then, which is to say from the fourteenth century, this man's descendants in a direct line have occupied the throne of Durbet.

<sup>1</sup> The complete name of Durbet is also Durben-khukhet, The Four Brothers. F. B.