

BERGMAN was confined to his sleeping-bag — jaundice can be a long business. We had come up against pretty serious difficulties right at the start; but patience! things would improve with time.

The doctor borrowed a pretty large felt yurt from our neighbours, a couple of Chinese merchants, and this was fixed up as a hospital for BERGMAN.

A party of Torgut pilgrims that we had met at Batu-khalagh-sume arrived at our camp on their 53 camels. There were twenty of them — men in blue and red sheepskin coats, and a picturesque sight they were. A lively, weather-tanned lad who was with them came up to the car in which I sat writing, got in with perfect assurance, sat down in the front seat and remained there till his father came and called him to start. And presently this party, too, disappeared over the hills to westward.

One day EFFE took CHEN to our old 1927 road in the south, to connect up our present map with NORIN's triangulations. The car soon returned, but CHEN preferred to walk back to the camp and make a route-map by pacing.

On the evening of the 4th, in a dead calm, white snowflakes were dancing round the tents. All night the snowflakes fell against the tent-cloths like little parachutes. Their sound was hardly discernible — a faint uninterrupted hiss. The cloth was gradually weighed down by the snow; and as it thus became air-tight it grew warmer than usual inside. It was still snowing next morning, but towards midday the sun broke through, and the snow that covered everything swiftly diminished.

When we left Peking we had forgotten to bring playing-cards with us, but YEW's skilful hands made a couple of packs from my visiting-cards, originally intended for quite other purposes. In China one must leave cards at every customs-house, every military post — not to speak of more exalted personages and all kinds of officials. But luckily I had a considerable supply; and I therefore gladly sacrificed a sufficient number of my cards to the bridge-lovers in our party. They began the fight at once, and it went on till 1.30 a. m. in BERGMAN's warm yurt.

Late that night a violent south-westerly storm threatened to blow the tents over. The men were mobilized, and all the tent-pegs were driven more firmly into the frozen ground with hammers. Petrol-drums were rolled up to weigh down all the folds and make our airy dwellings more capable of resisting the storm. The wind howled and whined, tore and tugged; tent-cloths banged and flapped, animated talk and exhortations were heard. But soon the camp grew quiet again, and only the wind's lament disturbed the silence of the night.

When the doctor was making my bed one evening, a jerboa sprang out of it. These pretty little rodents, who had been disturbed in their winter sleep, appeared in the other tents too. Presumably the warmth from our fires had made them think it was spring again, and that the winter had been unusually short.

At daybreak on December 7th EFFE and TSERAT drove with an empty lorry to