

been freed, we went on — only to find that the front spring of the small car was broken. The longest blade was off and must be replaced by a new one. At the camping-place there was no fuel except roots.

To the south, the Ma-tsung-shan was more magnificent than ever; for now the range looked higher, and was covered with snow from summit to foot. Blue shadows emphasized its rugged contours as the sun approached the horizon.

The whole of the next morning, January 28th, was spent in putting in the new spring, and it was nearly twelve before we got off. In an hour and a half we came to a double well, which according to our Chinese was situated exactly on the border between the provinces of Ning-hsia and Kansu. A little farther on we drove through a sort of gateway, fifty meters wide, between two conspicuous hills, and directly afterwards through another.

To the south of the road stood a herd of wild asses, ears pricked, nostrils distended, and eyes steadily fixed on us. They were tawny yellow in colour, with white chests and bellies, and as regally proud in their bearing, as supple and graceful as the Tibetan *kiang*, or the *kulan* of Tsaidam. When they had made quite certain that we were not of their kind, they swung round as if electrified and fled southward at a swift gallop.

Our road followed the bed of a river in among low hills, where bushes grew in abundance and the patches of snow became larger and more frequent. We were climbing all the time; soon we were at an altitude of 1,870 m, pursuing a north-westerly course. We were evidently approaching a watershed. A winding valley led up to the pass, and the highest point was 1,980 m above sea-level.

On the yonder side lay a plain, dotted with patches of snow. We followed a westerly direction, and pitched camp no. 29 at an altitude of 2,100 m.

The distance to Ming-shui could not now be more than 15 km; and on a brilliantly clear and still morning, after a night-temperature of  $-24.3^{\circ}\text{C}$ ., we proceeded towards this place. From Ming-shui we should have to cover another 260 km to reach Hami, the town where our fate would be decided. Fairly high, snow-covered mountains rose in the south. A splendid argali-head with great curved horns shone as white as the patch of snow on which it lay. A couple of antelopes dashed away southwards. On the eastern side of each tussock an arrow-head of snow showed that there had been a snowstorm from the west quite recently.

We crossed a low ridge between two mountains. To the west stretched an imperceptibly declining plain, with scanty tussocks and soil in various shades of red and yellow, in places covered with snow. At several points we crossed the tracks of wild asses in the snow. The mountains to the north and south, snow-clad from crown to foot, were like vast monuments of blinding white marble; the scenery had become beautiful in the grand manner, impressively majestic.