

car to the north-east, north and north-west. We were stopped now by steep ridges, now in narrow valleys blocked by fallen boulders. A broad gully strewn with red gravel opened the way for us. Little plains extended between low red and black hills. We nosed forward with a zig-zag course. At times we even left the small car and pushed forward on foot through this labyrinth of ragged little hills, whose general line, however, was from east to west. We had already passed the watershed of the border chain of hills, and the ground seemed to be falling again towards the Lop depression. But we were still about 130 m above camp No. 133. It was clear that we were approaching the bay I have mentioned, that lies north-east of the old dry salt crust around Lop-nor.

A detour to the north-east and east took us near to the edge of this bay, which resembles a great bright yellow plain cut up by darker streaks and by *yardang* belts and *mesas*. Later in the afternoon a gully showed us the way down to the level ground of the basin. Three modest tussocks grew in the gully; and we saw tracks of antelope and wild camels. Creatures that can exist on so scanty a diet must be easily satisfied!

After a patrol of 80 km we returned to TSERAT and pitched camp No. 134. The rugged hills we had passed in the course of the day consisted of porphyry, gneiss and slate.

The night of December 8th—9th was unusually mild, with a minimum temperature of -6.5°C . Again we left all superfluous baggage in camp, to make the lorry as light as possible.

We followed in the main our tracks of the previous day, only avoiding difficult passages and trying new ones. The part of the Pei-shan in which we now were forms a peninsula shooting out like a huge tongue with several points — a promontory jutting out westward into the Lop depression. The difficulty was to find a suitable spot for crossing it. The afternoon was merging into dusk when we pitched camp No. 135.

The evening was spent in keen discussion of our plans. Our food supply was running short, and we had water for three days only. Our situation was complicated. It would have been easy to leave the lorry with its crew and all the baggage at camp No. 135, while the Chinese and I, with EFFE driving, made a last push to Altmish-bulaq. If the ground were favourable it could be done in one day, for the distance round the north-easterly »*shor-bay*» was about 170 km.

If I had been alone I might have staked all on one card. But I was responsible for all the members of the expedition and their families; and I was in the service of the Chinese Government.

We therefore decided to leave the motor-lorry, with TSERAT and JOMCHA, at camp No. 135, while we others made a short trip in the small car down to the level bottom of the Lop depression. We would set out on the morrow, December 10th, returning to camp the same day. We could then all leave for Anhsi together.