

hope that his son of 16 might prove a suitable substitute for Ljo, whose caprices were beginning to disturb me. The boy seemed bright and apparently spoke Russian well. Thanks largely to the persuasiveness of Father v. d. Meerendonk we came to terms and I now hope that I have a new interpreter. The reason for this change is my apprehension of being left in the lurch some day in the interior of China, where there is no possibility of finding an interpreter. The risk must be far less with this youth than with Ljo. The news was a great surprise to Ljo, who had evidently thought that a Cossack might be changed, but not the interpreter.

*May 5th.* Yesterday was one of the busiest days I have had for a long time. I had to make a contract with the father of my new interpreter, have the signatures witnessed, deposit six months' wages with the missionaries as a guarantee, pay off Ljo and Rakhimjanoff and write a reference for the former, write some letters, pay a final call on the consul, despatch my caravan and get started myself. Although I hurried as much as possible, I could not leave the town before 3 p.m. Fortunately, I had not to do more than about 2/3 of a mile on the other side of the river. My new interpreter had gone home beyond Suitin to prepare for the journey. It was agreed that he should come to Qulja to-day at 12 and reach the village of Kan by the evening. I am afraid, however, that he will not be in time and that I may have to wait here another day. In view of this the journeys on the first two days are to be short.

I wandered about the plain to-day with my gun. I shot a kind of partridge, a duck and a falcon. The partridges are so shy that it is difficult to get within range of them. I saw a fine bustard, but it was too far off for my shotgun. There was a high wind and the clouds were very low on the slopes of the mountains and hid their white summits. There is something mysterious and attractive about these mountain colossi that carry their heads high among the clouds. They seem to form a gigantic stairway through higher spheres into another world.

*May 7th.* My fears were justified regarding Tchao or Joseph, my new interpreter. Instead of arriving the day before yesterday in the evening, he came yesterday afternoon, which was not to be wondered at. I devoted the morning yesterday to roaming the plain with my gun. I only brought back a hare and a duck, it is true, but saw quite a lot of game at a distance. My small bag, as well as yesterday's, was despatched to the wife of the consul at Qulja with my best wishes for Russian Easter. I had fortunately avoided it by leaving on Easter Eve.

To-day at last we left the anything but hospitable village of Kan. Though showing me all the respect possible in my capacity of »miman«, the villagers did their best to bleed me, demanding shameful prices for fodder, meat and so on. From Kan the road goes eastward at the foot of the most projecting spurs of the mountains to the village of Tchaptchal. Here there is a sharp turn southward and we crossed the mound-shaped spurs of the mountains that are separated from the principal chain, as on the Sâ dawan — Kan road, by a good-sized valley. An insignificant river bed, Tchaptchal su, winds along it, the south-