

with him. He seemed to think that he had enough of that commodity himself, but was almost prepared to use force to obtain money.

The aneroid barometers indicated 607.1 and 602.2, the hypsometer +93.85. The Hsing-Hsing-Hsia station lies about $2\frac{1}{2}$ — $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the pass. The whole distance is supposed to be 90 li. I should call it 26—27 miles. The pass seems to be wrongly marked on the 40 verst map, for, as already indicated, it is at most $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Hsing-Hsing-Hsia. The Chinese reckon the latter distance as 10 li. The mounds, hills and mountains are in a chaotic jumble, and as I was occupied in practising Chinese, I will not attempt to describe their direction etc. Hsing-Hsing-Hsia lies between two small mountains at the bottom of a gorge, a couple of hundred paces wide. It consists of 3 sarais situated on either side of a small impanj. The garrison is made up of 7 men under the command of a Shytchan belonging to the putui of Hami. There are two wells with plenty of good water and a mapoza station. The snow is 6—7 vershoks in depth and lies from November to February. There is rain a couple of times a year between April and September. Burans are common in winter and especially in spring. Usually from the W, though often, too, from the E. There are plenty of kekliks in the mountains.

November 5th. Day broke grey and cloudy. We started in -8.2° R. and a high west wind. For a short time we followed the gorge between mountains crowned with small stone cairns. Soon it lost itself among small, mound-like hills. *Ma-lien-ching-tzu station.* $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles beyond in a SSE and S direction we reached a plain, strewn with creeping plants and open to the S as far as we could see on such a cloudy day. We crossed it in a SE direction and re-entered the mountains after 4—5 miles. The ground, which had been sandy and loose in the gorge and over the plain, was again firm. The surface of the rock protruded in many places.

Some distance into the mountains there was a miniature miao. Two low bars in front of it were so drenched in waggon oil that the ends had become swollen and looked like a couple of black heads, dripping oil. A little further on the ground takes on the character of long ridges and conical peaks, of no great height and divided in places by open patches. The soil here was red clay. Salt patches were visible here and there. The mountain ridges developed long slopes until about $4\frac{1}{2}$ —5 miles from the miniature temple they spread out into a large plain, open as far as I could see. The ground rises slightly to the S. Shortly before Ma-lien-ching-tzu spiky plants and low reeds appeared. The distance is reckoned by the Chinese to be 80 li, while I estimate it at 20—21 miles.

Ma-lien-ching-tzu consists of two main groups. One contains the ruins of an impanj, in which a post of 12 men was still stationed. 3 sarais and 3 wells with good water. The level of the water was $2\frac{1}{2}$ —3 arshins below the ground. There was no mapoza station. Letters are carried to the post by soldiers. Snow from November to March, 5—6 vershoks in depth. Rain 5—6 times a year between May and September. Burans are common in spring and autumn. In the course of the day we met 8 arbahs and about 15 settlers from Hsian and Honan. One of them walked with small, springy steps and carried his slightly bulging equipment, done up into a parcel, on a narrow springy board.