

and stand irresolute as though wondering what to do. This manoeuvre is repeated several times during their flight. One day I got to within 50 paces of a flock, but, of course, had no gun with me. I have never been able to fire at them at less than 250—300 metres and at that distance you cannot see their small horns and altogether they appear extremely small through the sights.

After losing much time in shooting we reached the mouth of the gorge, when the sun was already so low that there was nothing for it but to give up the »thousand gods» and discover the sarai before dark. The mountains W of the gorge are of pure, fine sand. E of it granite mountains rise beyond a belt of sand-dunes. Blocks of stone, about a metre in size, are visible here and there on the gravel near the mountains. Among the smaller stones some milky white ones like marble are noticeable.

Yesterday, the 19th, we made two trips. Starting at 5.30 a.m., I absent-mindedly set off in the opposite direction from the one we should have taken. My men noticed the mistake, but said nothing, imagining that I was doing it purposely. I only realised my mistake after riding for over an hour and a half. This made the distance for the day about 43 miles. The weather was grey and cold, and an unpleasant wind buffeted our faces. In the afternoon and evening there was some snow and during the night the thermometer dropped to  $-11^{\circ}$  R.

The journey was not long to-day, about 17 miles, but a high NE wind made conditions really bitter. I found a Mongol caravan encamped near the wall of Ansi. They were the same Mongols from Uliasutai whom we met, when we were here last time. In their blue clothes with appliqués ornaments the men looked as though they were enjoying the fine weather.

Ansi does its biggest trade with the Mongols, especially with those in the S, whence 150—160,000 djin of wool, a few thousand djin of camel's-hair and sheepskin are bought annually. The merchants send the goods to Bautu, where they are purchased by the agents of firms in Eastern China and are forwarded on. A number of Chinese men run these and other caravans. The number of camels is about 2,500. Grain and other goods are supplied in exchange. Caravans come for grain as far as from Uliasutai. The tilled land in the oasis of Ansi is said to amount to 870 hou (1 hou = 60 mou). A tax of 2 tan 8 tou is levied per hou. 1 tou 8 shyn (1 tou = 10 shyn; 1 tan = 10 tou) is used as seed per mou. Ansi is connected by caravan routes with Uliasutai, Kuku Khoto via Chinta and Sining across the mountains in the S by a road with several passes.

*November 22nd.* We rested at Ansi yesterday at the request of the arbah drivers. Since the evening before a snowstorm had been raging with a strong east wind and great cold, so that the *Hsiao-Wan village.* journey would have been anything but pleasant, apart from the risk of losing our way on the wide plain. I employed my time in finishing some work. The storm and the cold were so severe that it was impossible to keep the door open and I had to sit in my dark cubby-hole with a candle even in the morning, a luxury that consumed two candles out of my small stock.

To-night there were again  $-11^{\circ}$  R. and it was not much warmer, when we started.