

My cook had a good deal of trouble yesterday in securing even very modest night quarters for us. The houses, on which the signboards of inns appeared, were such filthy hovels that I preferred to ensconce myself in a litter or an arbah. At last the cook discovered a dirty little house in a back street, but as soon as we got there the old hag who owned it began to raise objections. She refused to let me have the »kang» in the only possible room and all the persuasion and amazing patience of my Chinese proved unavailing. However, I hit upon the right way and said that I had no objection to sharing the kang with her. With a volley of oaths the old hag snatched up her blankets and disappeared into another building. We went through a regular nightmare. She ordered us about the whole evening, picked quarrels and made no end of fuss, so that it was with a sigh of relief that I pulled on my fur-coat this morning and shook the dust of the place off my shoes. The mandarin, who had provided me with smoked mutton and pork yesterday, had ordered out no less than 4 »jais» to escort me. If it was his intention that they should be of some use to me, I am afraid that he failed in his purpose, for they were almost the worst I had ever had — and that is saying a good deal.

April 10th.
Tyngtja myng
village.

It was still cloudy, there was a dense mist halfway up the mountains and a cold west wind was blowing. — From the gate of the town we proceeded in a SE direction towards the river and soon left the strawberry and cream coloured apricot flowers of the suburb behind. The ground on this side of the river, plentifully irrigated, was of reddish löss, the chain of mountains approximately 1/3 of a mile N of the town being brick-red and bare. There was only an occasional small green slope, on which this year's grass was beginning to show. We crossed the river about 2/3 of a mile below the town at a place where it flowed in 3 branches. The largest was 8—9 fathoms wide at 6 a.m. and the water came 3/4 of the way up my horse's legs. The current was swift and the bottom firm and slightly stony. The mountains and the ground on the opposite bank were grey, like yesterday's, and consisted of rather stony clay and löss. Here, too, we passed through rows of fruit-trees and across many irrigation canals. Following the river, or rather, the mountains on the right bank, we rode on in an ESE direction. The valley, a mile or two in width, grew rapidly narrower. About 7 or 8 miles from the town it was already confined between spurs of the mountains and the road took us along a narrow ledge a good many fathoms above it. This place, called »Shao shy hui», with its steep mountain sides and red, green and other colours, would have been beautiful in another light. As it was, everything looked grey and dull. »Kekliks» were cackling both above and below us — we longed to dismount and devote an hour or so to shooting, but were told the road was rough and the distance to be covered during the day was long.

Coming down from the slope, we crossed the river again close to the little village of Sungdjahsia. In an instant Tchao, the drivers of the pack-horses and the »jais» had stripped to the waist and plunged into the foaming river that flowed in a single arm and reached our horses' bellies. For a time we followed a low ledge of the mountains on the left bank. They were still red and seemed to be of sandstone. Then we cut across an open, cultivated and inhabited plain, about 2/3 of a mile in length, and again followed a ledge of a fairly steep spur of the mountain. On its summit we saw a picturesque miao with many buildings,