

The arrival of Chinese settlers in these parts had begun about sixty years previously, while the Mongols had retired to the north. Wherever irrigation was possible, opium was cultivated; districts that were less favoured by Nature were considered good enough for the cultivation of cereals. After a couple of months, when the harvest was in and the sheep had grown fat on the fresh pastures, it was more profitable to undertake plundering raids than now in the early summer.

We camped, on the night of the 24th, in a meadow near Bayan-buluk, not far from Ho-chiao. The altitude was nearly 1600 meters.

THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY FOR THE CHINESE SETTLEMENT

On May 25th we passed the northernmost tracts to which the Chinese settlers had pushed in this part of the country. Traces of the plough became sparser and sparser, and the Mongolian wilderness stretched out before us. The ground became gradually more rugged, and from the top of a little ridge the eye swept over a wide plain, bounded to the north by low hills. We were now in Mongolia proper, in the grass-lands! To the east a mirage caused the illusion of a great lake. Some cranes sat by the wayside. LARSON's sharp eye detected a running wolf, and although the distance was considerable he dropped on one knee and fired. The yellow-white wolf fell. When the distance was stepped out it was found to be 520 meters. A crack shot indeed. To the north, again, one saw the contours of the village Bura-deresun. We camped beside the Abugayin-gol, a stream now carrying very little water. We had reached the regions where antelope begin to enter as a feature in the landscape. The commonest species in eastern and central Inner Mongolia is *Procapra gutturosa*.

On the morning of May 26th we paid off and dismissed our robber-escort. It was with a feeling of relief that we watched these yellow-red riders disappearing to the south. We ourselves went on over pleasantly soft, rather broken ground, with low hills and ridges to either side. The first grass of early summer had begun to sprout, and gave a greenish, shimmering appearance to the country ahead.

ROUTE-MAPPING

All the way from Pao-t'ou I had drawn a route-map over the way we had come; and I intended to keep this up until we reached Sinkiang. I used the simplest possible instruments for mapping purposes, as I had done during my earlier journeys in the interior of Asia: compass, watch, pad and pencil. The compass gave the direction of our movements, and with every change of direction I took a fresh bearing. The number of minutes required for each bearing was noted down. The