

Presently we traversed a four-meter-deep erosion-bed with open pools of water in a bend. On the farther bank lay the little Chinese settlement Ta-shih-t'ou, or as the Mongols call it Budung-chölo (both names mean »Great Stone«). A couple of Chinese were just in the act of building a mud house.

Liu-tao-ku (»Six Valleys«) is the collective name for the whole of this tract. The ground is riven by innumerable canyon-like ravines, only a couple of meters deep, but with vertical sides everywhere. They combined to form a main bed to the north of our route, and this main bed had its outlet to the west or south-west. Near one of these natural cuttings two Chinese were ploughing the virgin soil with oxen.

### YANG-CHANG-TZE-KU

The route now followed the bank of the main bed, which has grass in its bottom and is to the north bounded by strikingly sculptured hills. It continues under the name Yang-chang-tze-ku (»Sheep-gut Valley«). Here, in the valley, a little Chinese merchant-caravan had stopped to rest. Around the tent were rows of bales containing camel-wool, straw mats and rope. A little streamlet flowed in the valley. The grass on the banks grew thick and rank. We followed the course of the valley, crossing and re-crossing the streamlet as we went. Sometimes it shrank to nothing more than a little stagnant water; sometimes it was quite dry. The valley grew sharper in outline between its flanking hills, which in some places were vertically cut.

At half-past one we passed a tiny Chinese settlement — a solitary farm surrounded by a mud wall. For another hour we followed the winding stream-bed in Yang-chang-tze-ku westwards, between its dark, nakedly cut, rocky sides. Finally we reached a bend, and climbed up on the hills of the right bank.

MENTU asked if we were going to rest here for the night; but when I heard that it was only thirty li (ten miles) to the next water I decided to continue. I had no one in front of me, and I therefore decided on the camping-site myself. Generally LARSON was ahead, and it was then he who settled where the night was to be spent. He always considered such factors as pasture, water, fuel and the general condition of the camels in making his choice of a site. For me, however, the length of the day's journey was a matter of indifference. If it was short, we had the more time for work in camp. If it was long, we had progressed so much farther on our way to the Edsen-gol.

The air was now balmy and sweet, and it was a delight to ride into the westerly breeze that began to increase in strength. In the north-west a threatening storm-centre began to gather over the hills, leaden grey and heavy. We might be able to reach the promised water before it broke loose. At half-past three we crossed a twenty-five meter wide stream-bed from the north; it was dry. To the west