

set out in advance with the heavy baggage. We handed over our rifles and pistols to the two officers, and these, together with our carefully counted ammunition, were stowed in a packing-case which was then sealed and taken along.

FROM MIAO-ERH-KU TO HAMI BY CART

We were now to experience a new mode of transit, HUMMEL, BERGMAN and myself taking our places in TSAI's broad cart (*araba*), a vehicle with two high wheels. HUMMEL had lined the equipage with the yurt-felts, our sleeping-bags and rugs, and we were as snug as could be wished. One horse went between the shafts while the three others were harnessed with ropes in front, going abreast. Reins were not used. The driver directed his team with cries, such as *wah, wah, ee, ee*, and the horses understood him. Occasionally he used his whip. If the animals bolted it would not matter. The steppe extended far enough and the cart would remain intact.

Bathing in the sunlight, the mighty Qarliq-tagh throned to the right, and in the west appeared new portions of its continuation, the Barkul-tagh. The plain to the south of this alpine wall seemed infinite, and over it led our route to the west.

We passed an old watch-tower and made contact with the telegraph line between Tash-bulaq and Hami. At the spring Ch'eng-ch'üan-tze, where we pitched camp, a Chinese caravan was resting. At sunset it started off to the east. LARSON passed us with his hired camels.

Long stretches of the desert were absolutely sterile. Winding over its hard, dark surface the road looked like a broad, bright band. At the village Huang-lu-kang, where we encamped, our route joined the big caravan road from Anhsi to Hami.

On January 23rd was New Year's Day for the Chinese, so in the morning we received ceremonious visits from all the servants and from the oldest inhabitant of Huang-lu-kang. The wooden pillars in front of the booths lining the main street were ornamented with the usual red placards, but the booths themselves were closed.

On the outskirts of the village we passed LARSON's camp and several of the Mongols who had gone on ahead of us. At some distance to the south-west our camels from all three columns were peacefully browsing. There were in all 138.