



Fig. 19. Hsia-k'ou on the Luan-ho

ally back again, the Luan-ho washed the base of the cliff on the right side of the valley in one place, only to leave it and, as it seemed, go over to the left side. But before it had got half-way to the left bank it swung back to the right to make a fresh attack against the sheer wall of rock. This manoeuvre was four times repeated. It was as if the river *must*, at any price, break through the cliff to the right. And finally, at the village Kuei-k'ou, it was successful. With terrific violence and irresistible might the Luan-ho forces its way along a narrow, deep, rocky passage behind the mountain-chain that has for so long resisted it. The water seethes and boils as in a witch's cauldron. It thunders as in a maelstrom. Using all their force, the oarsmen thrust the boat out from the cliff-face to the left. The bend in the stream at this place forms an acute angle. From E. N. E. the direction changes to south-west after the bend. The river now becomes wild and narrow between the cliffs. In the actual bend lies the village Kuei-k'ou («The Devil's Mouth»). Once upon a time, as the local folk-lore has it, a devil and a dragon came to this place. The devil said to the dragon: «You can't force your way through this mountain!» The dragon replied: «Can't I?» And he forthwith broke his way through the mountain, upon which the devil laughed himself to death.

This part of the river at Kuei-k'ou, where it develops such violent force after flowing calm and broad for a long time, is extremely picturesque, and one is kept in the greatest suspense. But little by little the valley widens, the cliffs retreat from the banks, the river becomes once more broad and slow, and we glide gently S. S. E.

On the left, a rock-promontory juts into the stream, and on its brow thrones a little temple. A number of boats with raised masts lay moored at its foot. Here is the inland-revenue station Hsia-k'ou or «The Lower Mouth», and here we rested for the night.

The speed of the current changed continually, decreasing, on the whole, down towards the coast. Here, at Hsia-k'ou, it amounted to sixty-four centimeters per second.