

grey phantoms gliding soundlessly over the brown river, which resembled a lake. The current here was so weak and the wind so fresh that drag-ropes were not needed. The sails were now vertically rectangular, now square. They were kept taut by means of three cross-beams or poles. The lowest pole was placed so high on the mast that one could stand erect under it. Everything was grey, merging into yellow-brown — the bodies of the vessels, the sails, and the water that swirled at the prow.

All the boats that were bound for Jehol were taking advantage of the wind they had perhaps been awaiting for days, and there was an air of suspense on board. They rejoiced at every bend of the river that they could negotiate without needing to toil and drag at the ropes. On the left bank lay the town Yung-p'ing-fu with its wall.

The wind now became so fresh that the canopy had to be taken down, as it was too much of a hindrance in the head-wind. It was glorious to feel this breeze on one's body! At last one got dry after sitting the whole voyage with one's clothes sticking to one's skin. But the coolies were having a hard time of it. Their copper-brown bodies glittered like metal, and their bunched muscles knotted themselves with sinewy strength as they forced the oars through the water.

Now we could see before us to the south-west the mountain at whose foot Luan-hsien is said to lie.

Soon we heard the whistle of a locomotive, and after passing a last bend in the river we saw the railway-bridge over the Luan-ho. Some minutes after seven o'clock we had arrived, and were picking our way among the innumerable boats that were moored for loading and unloading. Our nearest neighbours were taking a load of millet for Jehol.

We were told that the express train to Peking left at midnight. We took our evening meal on board, letting the crew take our things up to the waiting-room at the station in Luan-hsien, and tipped them royally. Finally, we bade farewell to the captain and oarsmen, who had already got a cargo for their return journey to Jehol, and took the night-train via Tientsin to Peking, while the turbid waters of the Luan-ho proceeded on their way to the Yellow Sea.