

tidal wave rolling eastward. The nearest mountains to the south, with their strips of snow, were still visible, and in the east a patch of blue sky shone out; but it was soon beclouded and disappeared. In short, the sky over Hami was dark and gloomy, perhaps an omen of the events that awaited us there.

The quantity of snow decreased. We were following the camel-route, which was well marked, as snow still lay on the track, because constant trampling had sunk it below the level of the ground, where it shone like a white ribbon. Here and there, however, the snow covered all the ground, hiding the track altogether; and in such places one had to steer by instinct. Once we lost the way completely, and had to halt and take our bearings. Then we got stuck in a hole, and five of our fellows had to get out and ply their spades. At times the surface was treacherous. It would bear the small car for a little way and then break, and there we were with a few feet of snow piled up under us, and the car had literally to be dug out.

It began to snow lightly. Now the whole sky was overcast. During the first two hours' travelling we got stuck in the snow twenty times.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached Wu-t'ung-wo-tze, «Poplar Hollow», — an ice-covered strip of water 15 m wide and 100 m long, supplied by an underground spring. Here GEORG collected two sackfuls of ice. Then we went on, along the crest of a terrace, where the grey soil was absolutely barren. It cleared up a little, but the Qarliq-tagh was still swathed in clouds. At the last river-bed we had passed our lowest point — about 1,035 m. We had thus descended by more than 1,000 m since leaving Ming-shui.

Before us lay the plain, seemingly endless. The clouds dissolved, and the evening sun peeped out. But it soon sank below the horizon, and we had to take our bearings by lamplight. We encamped in the middle of the plain after a day's journey of nearly 100 km.

During the night the temperature fell to  $-17.7^{\circ}$ . The Qarliq-tagh was a magnificent sight in the early morning hours, with its blue, shimmering snow-fields among the mighty contours of the mountains. But they were soon hidden in the same threatening cloud-formations as on the previous days. From Ming-shui we had followed a north-westerly course, but now we headed westwards.

## THE EASTERNMOST VILLAGES OF SINKIANG

After covering some distance we recognized the small, flattish hills among which Miao-erh-ku is situated. This village, the most easterly in Sinkiang on this road, was the first properly inhabited place we had reached on January 19th, 1928, after our former trip through the Black Gobi. At that time a few Turki families still lived in Miao-erh-ku. If these decent people had not now left their simple houses of sun-dried brick we should meet old friends and find out how the land lay, and