

An arm of the Tarim ran into the river from the right. It looked much larger than it was. No current was visible on its surface, and its tribute to the Konchedarya was negligible. We often heard duck and other waterfowl rise with a beat and whir of wings; and sometimes a fish jumped on the surface of the water.

The river was more capricious now than it had been the first day. After one or two semi-circular bends it took a course due south, after which it turned back to the north, then S. S. E., N. N. W., S. S. E. and N. N. W. again. It cut the most fantastic figures, as though seeking its way towards some unknown goal.

It was enough to make one giddy. As long as we were going east and E. S. E. we had the blazing sun right in our eyes, and its reflection in the shining water dazzled us. But then the river made a sharp turn, and before we knew where we were we had the sun at our backs and all the light effects changed. So the sun seemed to swing to and fro all day, first on the horizon, then higher and higher in the sky as the hours passed. While the compass-needle pointed north all the time the brass case of the instrument swung this way and that with my craft at the constantly recurring bends. At some of the bends the wood stood fairly thick along the banks, making a charming picture.

It was beginning to get dark as we reached the camping-ground for the day, Yar-cheke. Here the caravan-road from Korla to Charkhliq crosses the Konchedarya; and travellers and merchants with animals are conveyed across the river on a ferry composed of five canoes, with planks laid across them to form a deck. The ferry is drawn along a rope stretched across the river. The ferryman has his clay hut on the right bank, where we, too, pitched our tents for the night.

In the middle of the night a violent storm arose. HUMMEL woke up and hurried down to the boats to rouse our boatmen, who were sleeping on the beach. In rough water the canoes fill by degrees, and the cargo may be spoiled or lost altogether. Now all the baggage was carried ashore, out of reach of the waves. Our tents, that were threatening to fly away, were made fast with the help of boxes and sacks, and we crept back to bed, while the waves thundered on the bank.

The next morning did not encourage us to make a start. Sand and dust filled the air. We could hardly see the river for the haze that hovered over the whole landscape. It was out of the question to defy such weather. We stayed comfortably inside our tents. The boatmen sat in the ferryman's hut playing dice with sheep's bones, while the soldiers bore the cook company in his temporary kitchen. Meantime, we worked at our notes, read, and took life easy.

The morning of April 8th was chilly, and I sat wrapped in my fur coat, drawing my map with stiff fingers. Now, however, the weather was quiet, and we navigated new windings of the river.

Camp No. 56 bore the significant name of Churulmech, »The Winding (River)».

On the night of April 8th-9th the temperature fell still lower, to -1.8° C. While we were waiting for camp to be struck and the boats to be loaded KUNG