



Fig. 36. A watch-tower, January 12th

Small children, half naked and frozen blue, with dripping noses, swarmed round the cars as soon as we stopped for a moment. We gave them chocolate and bread, and felt the grip of their little ice-cold fingers. The people warned us against the river that we should have to cross just east of the village. The road was for long stretches covered with ice. We reached the first arm of the river, where we met three Chinese Catholic nuns in long black cloaks and black head-cloths.

At the third arm a cart was stuck fast in the ice. This was the cart in which the nuns had been travelling. EFFE drove straight out into the water, but was soon hopelessly stuck. GEORG had to unload his »Edsel» and tow us back. It was getting late. We pitched camp while »Edsel» dragged the nuns' cart out of the broken ice. The river was called the Chieh-ho, and the little village where we encamped Chang-lu-p'u. It was 1,700 m above sea-level.

On January 13th it cost us four hours' hard labour to get the cars across the river. At the last arm, called Tu-lan-ho, the whole of the luggage had to be unloaded again and taken over in a cart. At this arm, too, the small car got hopelessly stuck. But we enlisted help from a village, and got dragged out with long ropes. The road was now horrible; for long stretches together it was under water, and several small streams had to be crossed.

In the ploughed fields at the sides of the road we sometimes saw a block of ice standing on end. This, we were told, signified a prayer to the gods for a good harvest.

LIANGCHOW

Conifers began to appear by the roadside. It was past five when we drove into a street leading to the north gate of Liangchow. We were stopped as usual, but allowed to drive in when the guard were convinced that we had no evil intentions.