

In a short time we were outside the Great Wall, which is here interrupted in several places. Near the village of Ching-chang-yeh we crossed the river P'ing-fan-ho on the ice, and an open arm of the same river by a bridge. We were going south-east along a fairly wide valley, with the huge, snow-covered mountain chain on our right. The Great Wall is here built of clay blocks and sun-dried brick, and is about 3 m high. The P'ing-fan-ho is a fair-sized river, and where the valley was broad and open large ice-sheets are formed. In several places we saw the ruins of fortifications, houses and walls. We crossed a frozen tributary from the lofty range to the south-west. The Great Wall crosses the main stream at this point. Now we had it to the right of our road, and now quite close on our left. The watch-towers seemed more frequent than before. The wall sometimes gave the impression of being crenellated; but this was perhaps only because time and weather had worn away its top. At one point, where it was undamaged, it was 4.3 m high, 0.85 m thick at the top, and rather more than 2 m thick at the base.

We encamped in a village 2,200 m above the sea.

The next day the road ran between trees along the river-bank, and the valley was rather narrow. The river was ice-free and the current swift, with floating ice-floes and with the banks frozen hard in places. The scenery here was magnificent. At the village of Wo-shen-yeh the river was wider, and frozen over, resembling a lake. We crossed on a high, short, plank bridge at a point where it had narrowed again.

Beyond the village of Feng-p'u we drove over another sunk road, 4 m deep. Luckily we met no carts there, though traffic had increased, and was livelier than we had ever known it since leaving Kuei-hua nearly a year and a half before. The road soon became 6 m deep and more, and wound this way and that. There was another road to the right, up on the original surface of the ground, but it could not be used by carts. At one place a little wooden bridge crossed the sunk road. A highway that had been worn so deep into the ground must have attained a respectable age.

## P'ING-FAN

When we finally emerged from this corridor we had the Great Wall quite close on our left. We passed a Taoist temple with pretty roofs, and soon after reached the north gate of P'ing-fan. We were stopped here by soldiers; but they just looked at our cards and let us pass. In a short time we were with the mayor, who was most insistant that we should stay to dinner. But we asked to be allowed to proceed after we had had a cup of tea with him. Our host told us that the district of P'ing-fan had had 100,000 inhabitants thirty-eight years before; now it had only 70,000. 1,200 families lived in the town — Chinese, Tungans, Manchus, Mongols and Tibetans.