

The travelling was rough for the next few days, but from the hills there were beautiful panoramas for miles round over low-lying well-wooded country.

Tzeliutsing was reached on June 30. It is an unofficial town of 200,000 inhabitants and is situated on the Wei-yüan River, on which there are hundreds of salt locks. The country round consists of treeless hills, and everywhere the heapsteads of the salt-mines stand out like miniature Eiffel Towers. These heapsteads consist of four or more legs, each leg being made up of poles lashed and clamped together. The legs are then tied together near the top. The salt-mines were discovered about the beginning of the Han dynasty, some 200 B.C. The salt wells belong to the salt merchants, and they pay duty to the Government on every picul (130 lb.) of salt sent out. Salt is, with the Customs, the chief source of revenue to the Government. In Szechwan, which had declared its independence of the Central Government, the revenue had been taken by the local government of Chunking on the Yangtse. There are 4500 salt wells in Tzeliutsing, of which about 60 per cent are working.

Pereira went over one of the big salt works. The shafts were sunk to a depth of over 3000 feet and it was a chance whether anything would be found. The sinking of a shaft takes three years' hard work. A hole about 6 inches in diameter is bored down, the head of the well being encased in sandstone for a depth of a few feet. If successful, salt brine or gas is found at the bottom. The gas is used for boiling the salt.