

Mao-mei and Chin-t'a who knew vaguely of the existence of this ' wall ' were prepared to attribute to it, as I learnt, the respectable antiquity of Chin times (A. D. 265-419).

Start  
towards  
Mou-wo.

As soon as we had passed into the desolate region of barren foot-hills our ' guide ' managed to lose the cart-track which was to lead us to Mou-wo and, once arrived on a wide gravel Sai beyond the outermost chain of hills, completely lost his bearings. It was but the first display of his and his fellow's lamentably inadequate recollection of the ground before us. Repeated again and again in the course of the next marches it soon taught us to trust mainly to the guidance of the faint caravan tracks traceable and to such knowledge as our plane-table gave us of the approximate direction to be followed towards our previously determined goal. On that first march after a great detour duly represented in the map, we managed to regain the cart-track. By it we were guided to the well of Yeh-ma-ching, ' the well of the wild horse ', situated in a wide shallow valley ascending towards what evidently was a continuation of the hill range which we had sighted from Mao-mei trending away to the north-west. I am disposed to recognize in it a part of the southernmost main chain of the Pei-shan, corresponding to the last range which Professor Futterer coming from the north crossed on his way to the Su-lo-ho and which his account describes as the fifth.<sup>1</sup> The geological specimens that I secured on our passage through it may help hereafter to check the morphological relation suggested by a comparison of our map and Professor Futterer's route sketch. Like the other specimens collected along our route across the crumbling desert ranges farther on towards the Karlik-tāgh, they are still undergoing examination by Professor W. J. Sollas of Oxford.

Crossing of  
southern-  
most hill  
range.

On September 6th the track that we followed continued to ascend the valley to the north-west between rounded hills, all covered with dark detritus (Fig. 283). We passed two more wells, but on approaching what was manifestly the divide of the range, at an elevation of approximately 5,700 feet, we lost the track completely on ground that was much cut up by shallow drainage beds. Cairns visible on almost all the surrounding hillocks only helped to add to our ' guide's ' confusion. In a well-defined line of reddish hills, however, that could be seen to the north stretching from east to west, he recognized the range along which, as he believed, led the direct route from Mao-mei to Mou-wo. He called it Chin-k'ou-tzū and talked of gold-pits once worked in it. In the valley about two miles wide into which we descended north-westwards there was plentiful grazing for the camels. But the well at which we halted proved dry, and those we sunk in the bed near by also failed to strike water. The straying of our camels and ponies during the night added to the discomfort of a halt passed without water or food. But by daybreak the camel-men in search of the fugitives came upon the track of Lāl Singh's party beyond the low hills to the north. The trace left by his cyclometer rendered it unmistakable. On descending to it we passed a well only five feet deep holding ample water. Then the old cart-track which Lāl Singh had followed took us westwards along the foot of reddish hills across a low saddle to a valley draining westwards to the open basin of Mou-wo (Map No. 42. B. 3).

Coal-pits of  
Mou-wo.

There we found Lāl Singh duly encamped by the side of one of the two wells dug in the dry bed passing below the coal-pits. Two or three houses half in ruins marked the quarters of the people from Chin-t'a and Mao-mei who until recent years used to come here for short periods in the winter to gather coal from the shallow diggings. Of this coal specimens were secured. A hillock overlooking the dreary plain is crowned with a little shrine. The pits extend irregularly for about a mile to the west of the stream-bed and seem to be worked to a depth of 15 to 17 feet from the surface, in narrow ditches. The information obtained from Lāl Singh showed that the route over which he had reached Mao-mei led by a long march on the first day over waterless Sai to a rain-fed

<sup>1</sup> See Futterer, *Wüste Gobi*, p. 22.