

the 26th was finally settled upon as being suitable in all respects.

In the meanwhile there was plenty of work to be done, laying in provisions and providing ourselves with every possible necessary. Nothing would be procurable on the way except perhaps a sheep here and there, so we had to buy up supplies of all kinds sufficient to last the party for two months. Some people think that on a journey it is absolutely necessary to make themselves as uncomfortable as possible. But I had learnt by experience to think otherwise, and determined to treat myself as well as circumstances would permit, so that, when it should become really necessary to rough it (as it afterwards did during the passage of the Himalayas), I should be fit and able to endure the hardships. So, besides a couple of sacks of flour, a sack of rice, and thirty tins of beef, which were to be our main stand-by, I had also brought from Peking such luxuries as a few tins of preserved milk, butter, and soup; and here in Kwei-hwa-cheng I procured some dried apricots and raisins, a sack of Mongolian mushrooms, which gave a most excellent relish to the soup, another sack of potatoes, a bag of