

bank of the present one. Its level lay about forty feet above the actual flood level, and its own banks were sharply cut to a depth of some fifty feet below the great alluvial plain occupied by Ch'ang-ma.

During the evening, while a cheerless camp was being pitched on the rubble bed by the river, I had the satisfaction to find a well-marked track leading off to the south-east where the Ch'ang-ma people had before professed the utmost ignorance of any route. So next morning we induced our camel-men after a good deal of trouble to follow it, instead of their beloved high road to the plain. It was a steady but easy ascent in a side valley coming from the western end of the To-lai-shan range (see Map III.). There was low scrub in plenty, but no trace of water, and I was heartily glad when, after seventeen miles, some of the Ch'ang-ma men with the transport reluctantly disclosed their local knowledge by turning off into a well-screened side gully where we found a tiny stream issuing below sandstone cliffs. Here at an elevation of close on 10,000 feet we camped, and in the course of the evening the local men barefacedly owned up to a knowledge of the route which was to take us to Chia-yü-kuan. All their previous protestations of ignorance had been lies intended to save them from a troublesome track.

After this frank avowal and the experience gained about finding water in this barren hill tract hitherto unexplored, I thought it best to let our unwilling 'guides' guide us. The route which they showed took us in two days across the Shui-ch'ü-k'ou Pass, and through a very narrow and picturesque valley where we came again upon water, down to the outermost hill chain. At two points, known as Yen-mên-tzŭ and Ku-lung-shan, where the valley contracts to a tortuous defile between very high and precipitous cliffs, we found ruins of walls and watch-posts built to close the route. But there was no water-supply to be traced near them now, and there were other signs of desiccation having affected this region.

From the little shrine of Ch'ing-t'sao-an-tzŭ, where we camped on July 16th, I looked down upon the wide valley,