

then to explore the head-waters of the Su-lo Ho and of the river flowing to Ta-t'ung, the northernmost large tributary of the Huang Ho. The pony-men were soon overtaken, but proved more recalcitrant and sulky than usual. They protested that there was no route across the big range facing us on the south; that another pass like the one behind us would finish their animals; and that anyhow there was no one now to guide us farther.

The latter assertion was true enough; for the only man of the escort who had ever been in these mountains knew nothing beyond the Pei-ta Ho Valley, and professed a holy fear about crossing into the mountain desert behind it, haunted by 'wild Tibetans.' That a move was possible over ground unknown to their cherished 'guide' or 'ta-lu-ti,' 'the man of the high road,' as the Chinese term characteristically signifies, or in fact even over ground where there was no 'road' at all, was a lesson still to be learned by our Chinese. With a good deal of trouble we managed to head off the convoy in the right direction to the river. While the Surveyor kept in front to show the way and search for a likely ford, I myself with Chiang and trusty Tila Bai brought up the rear.

For nearly a mile we marched along the top of a low and narrow ridge clearly marked as the remnant of an ancient side moraine of the ice stream which once descended from the Huo-ning-to Pass. A mile and a half more of alluvial soil covered with rich pasture brought us to the right bank of the river. Its bed of gravel and mud was fully half a mile broad, and the two main channels filled by a rapid current of water, and each about forty yards wide, looked at first an awkward obstacle for the baggage.

So our obstructive transport men seized the opportunity of making a stand here. With a great deal of vociferation and gestures manifestly intended to express the ferocity of despair, they refused to advance a step farther. Leaving the Surveyor and Chiang by the bank to prevent a stampede, I went ahead with Tila Bai and after some searching up and down found a ford. The water was up to four feet deep in places and the current strong; but luckily the bottom was firm. In order to encourage the