

head-waters of the Ta-t'ung River formed a maze of steep and deep-cut gorges. Even if we could make our way down while the flooded condition of the streams lasted, there was every reason to fear increased difficulties about getting back again across the To-lai-shan range to the Kan-chou River the farther we descended. So I decided to keep to a broad ridge which we saw jutting out to the south from the To-lai-shan into the midst of those deep gorges. It promised an excellent survey station; but we had scarcely ascended it and set up the plane-table when the clouds gathering since the forenoon began to descend in a steady downpour of icy rain which changed before long into sleet.

In addition, the top of the ridge turned out to be a flat, bog-covered plateau, quite as bad as the uppermost basin of the Pei-ta Ho, of which it had once perhaps formed part. During the four miles' painful progress over this trying ground we all got drenched to the skin. Over bad shaly slopes we scrambled down at last into a sodden little valley, where our despairing Chinese would fain have settled down for the night though there was neither grass nor fuel. However, I managed to drive them on into a somewhat larger valley to the east, which promised a better approach to some gap in the To-lai-shan range. On the way we came upon a stretch of rich grazing which had evidently been visited in recent years by Tangut herdsmen with sheep and cattle. So the fear of 'wild Tibetans' was added to the other sufferings of our hapless Chinese on this miserable evening. We pitched our camp in continuous heavy rain, and I was glad that I could at least offer shelter to the men under the outer fly of my tent into which to huddle. Fuel there was practically none.

It proved a wet and dismal night, and though by 8 A.M. the rain ceased and the men could begin to dry their clothes, the outlook was far from reassuring. Our Chinese had become so demoralized that, unless we managed to get them, as promised, across the snowy range above us and on to the open Kan-chou Valley, there was every reason to apprehend their getting out of hand and