

forbid my attempting any detailed description. All the rivers draining this part of the Nan-shan make their way lower down to the plains through tortuous and deep-cut gorges quite impracticable at the time of the summer floods. So the only possible route, along which our Mongol guides took us, led in succession over high transverse spurs (Fig. 250). The first of these was crossed, at an elevation of over 13,000 feet, and led to a delightful series of Alpine uplands broken by a crest of red sandstone ridges (Fig. 251). Our Mongols who knew some Chinese called it Fêng-ta-fan.

From there we dropped down into the confined and picturesque defile of the Ch'iang-kan Ho, where the route throughout lay practically in the flooded river bed, causing serious trouble and risk. The luxuriant tree growth, now largely composed of non-conifers, was a strange treat for eyes so long accustomed to Central-Asian barrenness. Ascending the next spur we passed through a ruined 'Klaue' designed to guard the route, and then from the broad ridge overlooking the La-kê-ta-fan obtained a magnificent panorama of the Richthofen Range extending from the bend of Kan-chou River valley for a great distance west.

Northward the ridge, still over 12,000 feet high, fell away to the plains in gently sloping plateaus covered with rich pasture, which were curiously reminiscent in their structure of the loess-covered outermost slopes of the Kun-lun south of Khotan. But what a difference of surface conditions the far moister climate of the central Nan-shan had created! It was impossible not to feel that this region was already under the fertilizing influence of the Pacific Ocean.

We found the upper slope of this outer spur furrowed by broad valleys full of splendid fir forest, recalling scenery familiar to me from the Eastern Alps. Here Mongol camps abounded, and I was welcomed in state by a jolly-looking young Mongol chief who had received warning from Kan-chou of our possible advent (Fig. 252). Gladly would I have remained for a short rest among these cheerful nomads whom Chinese civilization has in the