

were quite near the railway embankment, and kept on passing whole settlements of white tents inhabited by railroad workers. They were engaged on excavation-work, making embankments and laying sleepers. The rails had not yet got so far. The road began to get worse. One bounced up and down as if on pillows of soft, fine dust.

Sergiopol is not called a town but a *stanitsa*, and has a population of about fifteen hundred. The projected railway-station was to be erected at a considerable distance from the community; and there, too, was to be an aerodrome.

On the last day in August we went driving on to the south, over the river Ayaguz and dry saltswamps, now between rounded hills, now over endless step-pes. Within a short space of time we met no fewer than 214 ox-carts loaded with hides, wool and cotton. We spent the night in the open at the picket Ay.

The soft, dusty road made heavy going, that ate into our supply of petrol. Near the combined picket and village Qara-köl the road crossed a broad, but now dry river-bed. To the left rose the moderately high mountain-chain Tarbagatai.

Urdjar is a large and lively *stanitsa*, the population of which was said to be three thousand. Our road took us straight across the market-place, full of life and movement. One could count as many as four hundred standing ox-carts. The place seemed to be inhabited chiefly by Russians. Their houses are small, white-washed and quite clean.

A little way beyond Urdjar an irrigation-canal had flooded the road, that had in consequence become so soft that the wheels sank foot-deep in the mud. We made a detour, which was, however, little better. But with the help of jacks, faggots and planks we finally managed. We camped at the spring Malak under the open sky.

At one o'clock on the night of September 2nd we were woken up by a high wind, whirling and shrieking round the cars. Soon it began to rain. But we muffled ourselves up and went on sleeping. In the morning my whole bed was dripping wet and I crept under a lorry, while AMBOLT and LAGERBÄCK made a roof of tarpaulins between two of the cars. I was obliged to change every stitch of clothing on my body.

The wretched Renault had not put in an appearance during the night, so CARLSON and one of the drivers drove back to find out what had become of it. Later in the day they returned with the news that the lorry had become a total wreck, and that it had had to be towed in to Urdjar by oxen. There, fortunately, was a branch of Autotranstorg, and they engaged to transport our three tons of packing-cases to Bakhty with horses and carts in two days.

The sun shone mightily, and dried our effects. We had not gone far before one of the lorries sank in ground that had been softened by a stream that had flooded its banks. It took us two hours to get it free again, and some Kirghiz living in the vicinity were induced to come and lend a hand.