

were to receive all the petrol we required. But why must he first make bones about the matter, and insist on using his little power?

We also needed a fourth driver; and we experienced considerable difficulty in finding one.

AMBOLT'S ILLNESS

All these petty set-backs were, however, mere bagatelles when compared with an event that occurred just at this juncture and that upset all our plans. On the night of the 12th AMBOLT'S stomach began turning the wildest somersaults, and he kept to his bed the whole day. I was thus obliged to attend LI'S dinner alone. The other guests were seven Chinese officials, the Russian consul BOROVOR and the consul in Shara-sume in Altai. Jollification was here the order of the evening. There was vodka, white wine and champagne. I am no friend of strong drink and carousing; but the one idea of a dinner here on the frontier is to drink. To drink oneself helpless is considered a mark of politeness to the host. All kinds of drinking games stimulate the consumption. So, for example, a match is fixed in a box and lighted. One hands the box with the burning match to one's neighbour, and the box thus travels right round the table. The one who happens to be holding the box when the match goes out must then drink to the bottom. I can stand a good deal when it comes to the point but I felt under no obligation to show LI any particular politeness. I did not drink a drop more than I felt inclined to, and was undoubtedly looked upon as a poor sport — an opinion that the other heroes were free to re-consider when they woke up next morning like bears with sore heads.

When I got home at midnight AMBOLT had a temperature of 38.9° C. (102° F.) and felt absolutely finished. CARLSON was a splendid sick-nurse. I now relieved him, taking night-watch till six o'clock, when I woke CARLSON. The sick man was constantly in need of help. We had imagined that he had caught a cold and would soon be on his feet again, but on the 13th one did not need to be a doctor to realize that this was a matter of a violent attack of dysentery. He had apparently contracted it by carelessly eating some unwashed grapes. We now sent at once for the only barber-surgeon in the town, a White Russian named KALINKIN. He made a thorough examination and procured medicine.

The cars now had full petrol-tanks, we had got our extra driver and everything was ready for the start. The weather was dry and beautiful and the roads would therefore be in good condition. And here we were, more hopelessly anchored than ever. On the 14th AMBOLT was considerably worse. I sent an urgent telegram to Dr HUMMEL to come at once by car, as AMBOLT had a violent attack of dysentery. This telegram took ten days to arrive.