

IV. THROUGH DZUNGARIA

At last came the day, September 30th, when with the two Swedish driver-mechanics I was able to set out from the frontier-town of Chuguchaq, leaving AMBOLT behind in HUMMEL's care.

We started in the afternoon, working our way through the bazaars and driving through the Chinese town, where we were stopped by a couple of sentries for another inspection of our passports. It was dark before we reached the village Durbeljin, where we spent the night.

We set off again at half-past five on October 1st, rolling onto a solid bridge over the river Emil-su, that disembogues in Ala-köl, a lake situated in Qazaqstan to the south-west of Chuguchaq. Shortly afterwards we were crossing the river Aq-su, that in May had caused us so much trouble, though now it was carrying but a foot of water and was no more than fifteen meters across.

Beyond the village Kurte we suddenly struck a whirling blast from the east. Here commenced that stretch of the route that is called Shamal-örteng or The Windy Station¹, where the wind is always blowing during the cold season, and even, as now, at the beginning of autumn. In winter-time, in biting cold weather and whirling snow, this part of the road may be dangerous for travellers. In five places little clay walls have been erected by the wayside, to shelter those who are nigh frozen to death. On the leeward side of the almost circular wall it is possible so far to recover that one can then stand up to the stretch that separates one from the next resting-place.

Driving between low mountains we passed the little village Toli and began to climb in a stiff wind. Here lay a dead camel, and there were a couple of horses that had fallen by the wayside. Just near circled two eagles, that had been disturbed by us in their meal. Past the village Yamatu the road led up into a narrow, winding and picturesque valley with steep rocky walls on either side. Here there were plenty of pigeons and mountain-partridges.

From Igirmi-su, where we filled our petrol-tanks, the road fell gently past the

¹ In Chinese, Lao-feng-k'ou, or Old Windy Gap. F. B.