

their banks and the road is in many places under water. The soil consists of clay and fine dust, and cars often get stuck in the resulting mud. Sometimes it is possible to save oneself by making a detour; but otherwise one must just drive on as far as one can and then have recourse to man-power. It would be a fairly simple matter to introduce order and system into the organization for the maintenance of roads under repair, but so corrupt is the government in the country that nothing is done about it, and so this wonderful motor-road is unfit for use in the spring, when the cold goes out of the earth, and in the autumn, when it rains. But even at other times of the year it leaves much to be desired. As a matter of fact, the road between Semipalatinsk and Urumchi (since the completion of the Turksib railway) is from the purely geographical point of view the most convenient line of communication between Inner Asia and the outer world. Five hundred ox-wagons from each direction go under the toll-bar at Bakhty every day. It would pay to have this transport of goods taken over by lorries.

We drove on down regular avenues of leafy trees, poplars for the most part, but also acacia and mulberry-trees, passing a little town that had been destroyed during the Tungan revolt sixty years ago. In the little village 'Ti-hua-p'u our passports were again inspected. Every five li stands the frustum of a clay pyramid, as a sort of mile-stone. The road, running here on a natural ridge of hard material, was now excellent, and on either side extended yellowing woods. At Yeshilgan-tagh (The Fallen Mountain) lies a mighty block that has crashed down from the steeps up above. Before us rose pagodas on two dominating hill-tops, and presently Urumchi's town-wall appeared to view.