

perial rest-house. Surrounded by tall pine-trees lay broken walls, gables and heaps of bricks, the ruins of a fairy castle where the Son of Heaven used to rest on his way to or from Jehol. A more idyllic spot for a rest-house could hardly be imagined.

The valley narrowed, and on the left rose a precipitous wall of cliff. Shut in by the mountains lay a little village. We drove very carefully over this appalling road, which was nothing more or less than a dangerously outward-sloping shelf. At last it led straight down a dried-up watercourse between great boulders. Here we could stop and reconnoitre the ground. With our united strength we rolled aside some of the boulders in the middle of the road, and filled up the holes between those we could not remove. Then we drove on a little farther.

The car lurched and swayed and groaned, every now and then scraping the underpart of the chassis against rocks that cropped up in the road. Once we stuck so fast that the wheels had to be lifted with the jack and stones placed underneath them. We had met two motor-buses. How on earth do they manage to negotiate this astounding road? It was fortunate for the Son of Heaven that he was wafted in a palanquin over the steps and boulders of the Emperor's Road!

Having unloaded every ounce to enable us to get over this difficult stretch, SÖDERBOM and I drove on, while the others stayed with the luggage. Like a clockwork goat, the car climbed up the sills and steps and went bumping over the boulders. We had to hold fast in order not to be pounded to a jelly. To the left of the road, at the foot of a precipitous hill of solid conglomerate, was a miniature temple with steps leading up to an open balcony supported by four wooden pillars. Finding that the road up to the top of the pass could be safely negotiated only in daylight, and as dusk was beginning to cast its shadows over the mountains, we decided to spend the night in the porch of Kuan-ti-miao, as the temple was called.

Some soldiers came and peered at us, and assured us that they would clear the road of bandits and highwaymen so that we could rest secure.

On June 27th we reached the Luan-ho, and easily crossed its first two shallow branches. The car was taken on the ferry over the third one, which is broad and swift. At the moment the greater part of the river-bed was dry; but after heavy rain it can rise to gigantic proportions. On the other side, the road between the mountains was soft. To the right towered a cliff, that erosion had turned into two columns with a narrow cleft between them. Then there was a pass between steep, stony slopes, followed by a ravine with dangerous precipices and stretches of wild scenery.

Now we had only a few more li of this wretched road. It was almost impossible to believe that this was the road about which HÜTTNER, a member of Lord MACARTNEY's embassy, had written one hundred and forty years earlier: