

minutes to allow the engines to cool. Slate rocks, yellow, brown, grey and red, rose in wild, rugged masses on either hand. Sometimes obstructing stones had to be cleared out of the way, or holes filled up. At other times sharp stones that had stuck between the double-wheels had to be removed.

The telegraph wire lay along the foot of the mountains or in the bed of the valley; the posts had been cut down for fuel. Wilder and wilder grew the ravine, winding to and fro in the sharpest zig-zags. We saw the body of a soldier half covered with sand. On one quite short stretch we counted seventeen dead horses.

At half-past one we were at Arghai-bulaq, where a stream of lovely ice-cold, crystal-clear water, as thick as a man's fist, runs out of the perpendicular mountain-wall on the left side of the valley. A barricade of stone was erected just above the spring. Numbers of dead horses, fragments of clothing and saddle-cloths, and several soldiers' bodies partially concealed by stones showed that fighting had occurred in this place. On this battlefield nothing but the murmuring spring and the wind's breath disturbed the sleep of the fallen.

THE DEFILE AT ARGHAI-BULAQ

The valley now took a sharp bend. This rounded, it was only a few minutes' drive to the foot of a cone-shaped mass of rocks which filled up the valley — at its narrowest point only some 20 m across. Many of these blocks had the size of small houses, while others were a good deal smaller. A whole section of cliff, a hundred meters or more above the bottom of the ravine, had fallen from the right-hand side and filled up the valley. When this happened it is impossible to say: but to judge from the weather-worn and rounded edges of the giant blocks, many thousand years had passed since this mass toppled down into the valley. The main fall had presumably been caused by a severe earthquake, but more recent shocks may have contributed to this huge pile of rocks.

As early as 1928 I had been planning a motor-trip from Urumchi to Eastern Turkistan, and asked Mr HUNTER, the widely travelled British missionary, if he thought it possible to negotiate the Toqsun pass in a car. He replied that it was absolutely unthinkable. Native carts could be taken that way, but only when empty and with the draught animals taken out of the shafts. They could be coaxed and steered among the rocks with the aid of ropes and a few sturdy fellows; but for cars the track was quite impossible. Yet the CITROËN expedition had taken this route. But it had carried dynamite and blasted away the worst blocks obstructing the way. Since then the Chinese authorities had kept the road in order, and it was thus in a pretty good state when we reached the place. A very steep, winding incline had been made, the gaping holes between the rocks had been filled up with small blocks and gravel, and the surface made as even as was practicable.