

On one of the outside curves an inscription had been hewn in a block. Between some of the giant boulders there were gaps like doorways, through which we had splendid views of the fantastically wild valley. Our altimeters showed 1,150 m above sea-level. See Plates 25 and 43.

The first lorry, fully loaded, followed us, with a noise that echoed through the valley like thunder. All the men except the drivers were on foot, and running beside it to put stones behind the wheels where the engine refused to bear the immense strain put upon it.

The engine was victorious, and the lorry ascended to a part of the road which was not so steep. The others followed, and all went well. The four officers and their chief, who had been in such a hurry to escape the robber-bands that morning, were too superior to lend a helping hand.

A little higher up came the next difficult bit, where the cars had to be coaxed forward in zig-zag round bends only a few meters long, between giant blocks that in places overhung the road. The lorries banged and bumped against the rocks — now to the right, now to the left. In one horribly narrow passage between two huge blocks the lorries could only go forward with the help of an inclined plane of flat slabs, which compelled them to list heavily to the left in order that they might not strike against the overhanging rock on the right.

By three o'clock all the cars had got through without the slightest mishap, except for scrapings here and there. We now came to a part of the valley as narrow as a corridor, whose bottom was full of snow and ice. In one place it was only 4 m across. Swaying and rolling, we drove through what seemed to be a gateway. Savage, picturesque, defiant scenery!

Gradually the valley grew broader and the road improved. Only on the northern slopes of the mountains was there still snow. Outlines became softer and the mountains relatively lower. The valley grew wider still. The telegraph poles were standing here.

During one of our halts, just before sunset, one of the four Tungan officers spread out his overcoat on the ground and said *namas*, or evening prayers, turning towards Mecca. We thought he was a pious man, but he showed himself later to be a mean rascal.

The pass that forms the watershed is called Manan-chose, and is 1,770 m above sea-level. The road down the pass was hard and good. Far away to the south, bluish in the distance, we saw a new mountain chain; this was the Quruq-tagh. The valley was now very wide, between low, rounded hills.

It was nearly seven when we reached the village of Qumush and pitched camp No. 42. We were about 900 m above sea-level. Some Turki travellers were encamped outside the village with their camel caravan. One of them told us that PAI's car had been attacked and captured by several hundred robbers. Another