

Our course was changed to W. S. W. Beyond some tamarisks we saw two antelopes in flight. Fair-sized crests rose up on our right; we had mountain-landscape on all sides. There was no road, not even a path; but the route we were following in our own wheel-tracks was hard and good.

At 3.30 we stopped for a short rest at Burutu-bulaq and filled the petrol-tank. Starting off again, we left a cairn on our right, and soon after another, indicating that in days of old a road had run among these mountains — unless these cairns were simply guide-marks set up by hunters in more recent times.

At 6 p. m. we left Besh-bulaq on our right. The ground then became very wearisome to travel over on account of innumerable small intersecting gullies, lying one or two meters apart. A valley between lofty terraces led us into country all cut up by erosion. At last we entered new mountains and arrived at Nan-chan-bulaq, a spring whose water had a temperature of 12.5°, and tasted none too pleasant. We had covered over 160 km of wild, roadless country.

Reeds and tamarisks and some twenty poplars grew round this evil-smelling spring. Some distance away there were quite a number of such trees. Four simple little stone huts had been erected near the spring as shelters. Having no tent, we were pretty defenceless against gnats and mosquitoes, and in the morning against gadflies.

Our course now led W. N. W., over softish ground that soon gave place to a hard plain. This provided an excellent motor-road, though ours were certainly the only cars that had ever driven over it.

The landscape was continually changing in that patchwork of mountains and hills, broad steppe valleys and open plains. We drove along a hard, level gully through a regular avenue of fine, thick tamarisks. The Azghan-bulaq region was visible to the E. N. E. We were thus about 1,400 m up, and had risen 600 m above Lake Lop-nor.

We had now not far to go to the pass Kak-su-davan, which is only 40 m above the plain to the north, but is immensely steep. The car took it in jerks, a meter at a time, while we walked and laid stones behind the wheels to prevent the vehicle from running downhill and overturning on the winding ascent. On the south side of the pass Tserat had buried a five-gallon petrol-tin. We now collected this and emptied it into the tank.

We were now on a really good road, on which we could see the tracks of innumerable caravans. It was the road from Turfan to Ying-p'an, Sai-cheke and Korla; and it was much used since the road by Toqsun had been barred.

We drove south-west along a narrow valley, between pink, black and white mountains resembling tents. The road was marked by cairns on neighbouring hillocks. The country grew open again; and about four we were at the Toghraq-bulaq spring, rising out of the sand of the 8-m-wide valley bottom. The water was excellent.