

Sometimes we were down in the valley-bed and in contact with its belts of ice; but each time we climbed up again to the winding cliff road. In one place, where a massive rock wall projected, the road was fearfully narrow. We stopped and waited for the lorry. We examined the spot, took it carefully, and got past. A cart appeared on a rise ahead of us. Luckily the driver stopped in time; a meeting on that narrow shelf was unthinkable.

Our boys had a philosophy of their own. Crouching on top of the lorry, they threw their sheepskin coats over their heads when it approached the most dangerous places, so as at least not to see the catastrophe if they were hurled to a violent death! It would have been better to jump off; but perhaps that was often easier said than done.

We were having a forced rest, while T'SERAT mended a puncture, when a young man passed. He asked us a great many questions: how many were we? how many rifles had we? and so on. EFFE thought he was a spy from a robber band that intended to attack us during the night.

We drove past a row of elms on the bank of the ice-bound river. This place must be lovely in summer. We encamped 2,100 m up, near the village of Hou-shui, »Meeting of the Waters».

The morning of January 24th was bitterly cold. The minimum temperature during the night had been -19.6° C. A party of horsemen came riding towards us through the valley. We wondered what sort of people they were; but they turned out to be only soldiers, who stopped and asked us a lot of questions. They told us that a band of about thirty robbers had been captured the day before. They were now being hustled off to Liangchow, fettered and chained together, to be tortured and sentenced.

We drove down to the river, that at this point flowed from the south-west. It was 35 m wide, and mainly frozen; but there was a narrow strip of open water in the middle. The small car got over. The lorry tried to cross at a spot where the river was 60 m wide, and carried several layers of ice with water between. It had not got far when it broke through the ice. The break through was gradual, thanks to the different layers of ice; and the bump on the bottom was not very severe. But the baggage had to be unloaded and carried across the ice to *terra firma*. The whole incident cost us two hours.

We climbed a hill on the left of the valley. Boulders, half a meter in diameter, had been moved to the side of the road. Farther on was another defile 4 m wide. We met wandering Tungans and Chinese peasants and merchants. Nearly all of them wore blue clothes or sheepskins that had once been white. Felt stockings and shoes, with fur or little felt caps, completed their attire.

We crossed a transverse gully in a deep-cut ravine with a bridge. Then came another sunk road in strata of clay and gravel. Here we met two carts with curved straw roofs, accompanied by several horsemen. One of these was a bridegroom