

The road began to climb. The cars slipped and swayed on the hills and at the bends. The snow, too, became thicker. We put improvised snow-chains on the back wheels of the small car. Now we went uphill in real earnest, over solid rock. The road meandered in small zig-zags; it was well and carefully laid, and had a low fence. An impenetrable curtain of snow enveloped the chalk-white countryside — one could not distinguish objects for more than some 30 m ahead. And the snow went on falling.

At one or two steep places the road was not finished. The track was quite narrow, and stone ledges had not yet been blasted away. Progress became almost impossible for the small car. CHIA KUEI placed stones behind the wheels to prevent it from running backwards downhill again when it had made a few meters. Snow lay in heaps, and had to be cleared away.

After a few good-sized bends we reached the pass, about 2,600 m high, and zig-zagged down the other side. It was snowing still more heavily, and whole masses of snow slipped off the roof of the car.

We followed a tolerably large valley, into which side valleys ran. There were hundreds of pheasants about. They sat on the road and flew up a few meters ahead of us.

At 3 p. m. we drove in through the west gate of P'ing-liang and down a long street where the China Inland Mission had a station. This street was simply a sea of mud. The snow was shovelled out into the middle of the roadway, and obstructed the traffic. Everything was wet, dirty, poor and depressing.

We halted in the twilight at the village of Sze-shih-li-p'u, where we were 1,250 m up. Although we had been driving for nearly eight hours, we had covered no more than 95 km.

On the morning of February 7th the same dark, gloomy weather prevailed. On we went, through the broad valley of the day before, between hills that now became lower and lower.

The avenue was now continuous, but the road ran outside it. Snow lay in regular drifts. At about noon the road swung off to the left at a right angle, and ran down to the river Ching-ho. We crossed several frozen arms before EFFE drove out into the main stream. The car sank deeper and deeper, until the water was running through it. The things that were lying on the floor had to be rescued in haste, and we had to put up our legs on the back of the front seat, while the stream surged through the car. Luckily, we had not long to wait before we were towed out.

Shortly after this we had to cross the river again, and the same manoeuvre was twice repeated. TSERAT helped us, but on one occasion nearly capsized himself.

We drove through the town of Ching-ch'uan. The road climbed unpleasant slopes to a ridge, where the view was obscured by mist. The loess cliffs had assumed picturesque shapes — houses, walls, fortresses and towers.