

THE START FROM PEKING

Finally, on May 8th 1927, dawned our last day in Peking. For six whole weeks the German and the Swedish members of the expedition had been in Pao-t'ou all ready to start, and for more than two months the tug-o'-war with the opposition had gone on when at last the hour of liberation struck.

Our train was to leave Peking about noon on May 9th. At the Hsi-chih-men station outside the north-western corner of the Tartar City several of our European and American friends, many of the professors and students of the university, and our Board of Directors had gathered to wish us God-speed. There was now not the slightest trace of dourness or ill-will among the Chinese gentlemen who had been our opponents. They all beamed with good-will and assured us of their best wishes. A little episode occurred just before the train left, that was at the same time characteristic of Chinese mentality and an echo of a time long past. Old CHOU, the chairman of our Board of Directors, stepped forward and handed a paper to each member of the expedition, two Swedes and ten Chinese. On the paper was written the following poem in Chinese:

»The T'ien-shan to the north and the great desert Shamo to the south!
The grassy plains delight you with their smiling green, the boughs of the willow-tree sway cheerfully.
Glorious is this new penetration to the north-west.
You ride on camels and wear the apparel of travellers.
You drive antelopes before you and shoot black eagles; you eat dried meat and drink sweet cream.
You measure the earth and ransack the heavens, interpreting the riddles of space and lifting the veil from unknown forgotten times.
You open the portals to antiquity and discover hidden treasures.
Leaving with empty hands, you return with precious burdens.
You contribute to the cultural wealth of the nations and write descriptions for those in far countries.
Time is flying, the responsibility is heavy, the journey will be long.
Let us unite our forces in the struggle to the common goal and with confident hearts wipe out the boundary-marks between Europe and Asia!
Let us abandon the narrow sentiments of nationalism and unite in the infinite pleasures of comradeship.
I have composed this hymn to greet you on your departure with eternal song.»

The author of this dithyramb had for two months been our most implacable and obstinate opponent, and in every way more fiercely nationalistic than anyone. Yet when the genius of poetry entered his soul all his fences and palisades of separation fell down like a pack of cards and his »eternal song» was as it were the prelude to the comradeship and the harmonious collaboration that afterwards prevailed in our wandering community.

FROM PEKING TO PAO-T'OU

The train took us over the level alluvial plains with their villages, fields and groves of leafy willows and poplars, their roads upon which wanderers, waggons and pack-animals crept along; and the Western Hills, whose dim contours had