

## VI. FROM URUMCHI TO PEKING

### THE START FROM URUMCHI

**O**n December 17th several of our friends were assembled to see us off. At two o'clock, when we had thought of leaving, it appeared that the whole of our baggage was to be examined by the customs. Everything was opened; but the examination actually did not take more than an hour. At the eastern town-gate we were stopped by soldiers between the two arches. Our passports and permits were inspected. Order above all things! At last we got away in earnest and went speeding over the wintry steppes of Dzungaria.

### THE BUS JOURNEY FROM URUMCHI TO CHUGUCHAQ

Our bus offered tolerable accommodation but certainly no superfluous luxury. Besides ourselves we had a couple of Sarts as fellow-passengers. There was only just room for our baggage on the lorry.

As this was now the third time I had made this trip, and as I have already described it fairly circumstantially on pages 18—22, I will here mention only such details as constitute a divergence from the previous occasions on account of the season of the year.

As there was evidently no means of knowing what sort of villains might be travelling in our bus we were stopped for passport-inspection three or four times on the way.

Just before midnight we drew up outside Father VELTMAN's station in the eastern part of the Manas oasis, where we were entertained with tea and wine and food, sitting up afterwards for a couple of hours' chat before tumbling into bed.

A stretch of the road in the oasis was flooded with irrigation water and bits of ice. The driver turned aside into a field, but was soon helplessly stuck in a ditch. We all got out and tried to push, but the bus was not to be budged. Some ox-