

way to Beli-miao, where the Mongol princes had assembled to discuss autonomy for Inner Mongolia.

Everywhere there was political unrest. At Pao-t'ou lay the robber-general SUN TIEN-YING, of evil repute since his plundering, in 1928, of the Eastern Imperial Tombs, from which he took treasures of enormous value. He was now about to move off with his savage hordes to the Kuku-nor region, to colonize the surrounding country. A little war threatened to break out between him and the governor of the province of Ning-hsia, who refused to allow SUN's troops passage. According to current reports, marauding soldiers from SUN's army were now and then raiding as far north as the road along which our convoy was to advance westward,

From Sinkiang, too, echoes of the current rumours reached our ears. The young General MA CHUNG-YING («Big Horse»), who was master of Hami and Turfan, was still engaged in a bloody war with Urumchi. General FU telegraphed to MA announcing our approach, and MA replied that we were welcome.

War and rebellion everywhere; robbers in every second village; an accident, a death, the very first day! Truly, this expedition was not beginning under friendly stars or cheering auspices. GEORG took a gloomy view of the future, and thought that DONGORA's death was a bad omen for us all.

But no-one hesitated; and our Chinese comrades, YEW, KUNG and CHEN, showed in all crises from the first day to the last a courage and a resolution that excited our admiration.

RETURN OF BEXELL

If October 22nd had been a day of sorrow, the 31st was a day of rejoicing. BERGMAN had come up from Peking in the morning with the new car. And in the evening BEXELL and BÖKENKAMP arrived with GEORG.

On the return journey from Beli-miao GEORG had caught up with the two missing members and their caravan. He promptly relieved their camels of their loads, which were stowed on the empty lorries, and hastened down from the mountains to Kuei-hua with these two long-lost and now happily recovered sons of the expedition.

They looked like highway robbers — bearded, dusty, ragged, but healthy, weather-beaten and browned by the autumn sun of the Gobi Desert. Their whole appearance spoke of the strenuous life in the wilderness that awaited us.

A wonderful meeting! Such things hardly happen in novels. Our former expedition, that had lasted nearly seven years, had now been linked up into one connected chain in the very town from which we were to start on a new journey, and this almost on the eve of our departure! Our anxiety on behalf of the last field-workers was relieved, and we need no longer worry about them. The gates of innermost Asia stood wide open to give us passage, and the game might begin.