

VISIT TO THE TORGUT PRINCE

One day GEORG took us to call on the Torgut prince, whose winter quarters were situated about 10 km to the north of Baller. The road there was phenomenal. If anyone accustomed to European or American roads could see it, he would swear that it was impracticable for cars. But GEORG drove through sand, over scrub-clad dunes, gullies and reed-beds, through brushwood and over fallen trees.

After this bumpy journey we arrived at half-a-dozen large, grey yurts, well concealed among tamarisk bushes and sand-dunes. Near some of them, wood was stacked up in large piles for fuel. Two of the prince's men bade us welcome and invited us into the reception-yurt, where the usual refreshments were served on small, low tables.

We were kept waiting a good half-hour before the prince deigned to enter and receive our *khadaks* or long pale-blue scarves of honour, as well as a supply of tinned food. He gave me field-glasses in return (which, by the way, he had received some time before from one of the members of our previous expedition!) In the course of the conversation the expedition was touched upon, and the prince asked what had become of the other gentlemen who had been his guests in previous years.

Nothing whatever had been heard from Hami. As lately as two years previously the caravans had come and gone undisturbed. But since then silence had reigned, as though an insurmountable wall had been raised between Sinkiang and the Edsen-gol.

Finally, a rather substantial dinner was served, and during the meal we were regaled with a bottle of fine French cognac that the prince had received as a present from the CITROËN Expedition.

Our homeward journey was great. We were assured that there was a much better way than the one we had come. But presumably GEORG misunderstood the description (though he had tasted nothing of the good cognac!), for he had not been driving for long before he got so effectually stuck that it took a couple of hours to get the lorry out again.

RETURN OF THE COURIERS

On the evening of January 9th the camel-couriers returned from Suchow. The mail-bag was opened in the mess-tent, where HUMMEL and I were sitting writing letters. All the envelopes were addressed in Chinese; nothing for us but a number of wrappers containing the *Peking Chronicle*. The official letters from the Ministry of Railways were read and translated by KUNG. One communication informed us that 2,000 dollars had been sent to the post-office at Suchow for us. Another stated that the governors of Suchow and Ning-hsia had been instructed to give us such protection and help as we might need, and that they had replied that they would do so. From the Minister of War we received permits for all the members