

Here in Hami we had a foretaste of the countless rumours that flashed through the air like dragon flies. The Turkis were cautious in their utterances. They cherished an inextinguishable hatred for both the Chinese and the Tungans. The Chinese were infidels and ate pork; the Tungans, on the other hand, were at least Mohammedans like themselves, but they hankered after absolute power over the province. So long as MA CHUNG-YING was lord over Hami the Turkis must stand by him. If any opinion was expressed at all it must be to MA's advantage; and he was generally declared to be sure of victory. The result was that we got a false idea of the real situation from the outset, and this was not corrected until we reached Turfan.

We now received fresh details of the rebellion west of Hami, of which we had already heard from the wireless. A few hundred Turkis from Kucha had stealthily advanced against Hami with the intention of capturing and plundering the town. General MA had sent fifteen hundred soldiers to surround them. They had been defeated and scattered. Some seventy prisoners had been beheaded on the spot; but the leader and the rest escaped. This had taken place a week before our arrival in Hami, and that was why we had been advised to look out for robbers on the road to Turfan.

Five hundred men of MA's punitive force had been recalled to Turfan; the rest had left Hami that very day, February 8th, taking with them seven hundred Turki youths who had been called up for military service.

#### DINNER WITH BATH

On one of the first days we were invited to a dinner of welcome at Commandant CHANG's. We arrived punctually, and had to wait an unconscionable time before our host crossed the threshold of the little room. He pleaded a temperature, and could not, therefore, be present at the dinner. The real reason for his not wishing to eat with us was religious: he was a follower of Islam, and we were pork-eaters. We had chicken rissoles (swimming in soup among pigeons' eggs), shark's fins, fish-roe, seaweed, lotus-buds, bamboo-shoots, white bread and other delicacies — things which hardly could be bought for money in Hami. Hot brandy was also handed round; though it was forbidden in the army and might only be served out to wounded soldiers.

At the beginning of the dinner one of our party had spoken of a hot bath as a solace after our desert-journey and all the dust from the roads that we had collected on our persons and swallowed during the last few days. Hardly had we risen from the table before one of our deputy hosts announced that the bath-house was heated and ready.

Guided by lantern-light, we went in procession across small yards and along narrow passages, where dim forms crept like ghosts, to a hovel that we were told