

people drink. The entertainment was not over till eight. Then there was an interval, during which the table was laid afresh.

Just then KEMAL, KAYA EFFENDI came to see us. He spoke excellent French. The conversation turned mainly upon my travels in his native Turkey, to which he was longing to return. He had had enough of Kansu and Sinkiang, and wanted to go home. He was now in Turfan on a special mission for General MA, and was to return to him next day.

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On the morning of February 20th YOLBARS sent us a message that we could not leave Turfan for three days, as the road to Toqsun was harassed by Kirghiz robbers, who had killed two merchants and carried away a number of camels, horses and cattle. Military patrols had been ordered to clear the road for us, and we could not start until this had been accomplished.

The Poles had tried to persuade YEW and me to take them to Kashgar. They were bound for that place; and the British Consul-General was keeping their mail from home. When we turned a deaf ear to their entreaties they applied to KEMAL, and he, who was returning to General MA on the 20th, wrote me a very polite letter in which he assured me that General MA would be particularly grateful if I would take the two Poles in our cars. I replied with an equally polite »no».<sup>1</sup>

The first night without frost was noted on the morning of February 21st (+2.6° C.). There was a fearful coming and going at our quarters all day. Two officers arrived from Davan-ch'eng, and asked us to take eight of their comrades to Aqsu. We replied that we meant to use only one or two cars from Korla to Aqsu on account of shortage of petrol, and would therefore not have room for so many. We afterwards had a talk with General LI, who arranged that only four should accompany us.

Curiously enough, LI asked us to start at once. I replied that we should not be ready till next morning. He gave us special letters of introduction to the military commanders at Qara-shahr, Korla, Kucha, Aqsu and Kashgar.

Later, he presented to us the four officers who were to travel with us and at the same time serve as escort. They made an unpleasant impression from the first moment.

That evening some of our fellows saw a party of young Turkis being driven to one of the town's two assembling-places for recruits. They looked unhappy and gloomy, walking with bent heads and dragging feet, now and then urged on with a rifle-butt. There must have been two hundred of them.

<sup>1</sup> Our apparently hard-hearted and disobliging behaviour towards people who asked us for lifts was shown later to have been justified and wise. 'Professor LI' was later on arrested in Urumchi and one of his students was shot. When we met PLAWSKY on a later occasion, at the beginning of June, he told me that LESZCZYNSKY had been executed. He himself was arrested a few days after his arrival in Urumchi.