

reduced the number of assailants to seven, and these had only fired on the car. PAI and his fifteen companions had returned the fire and killed one robber and one horse. The rest had fled.

On a height to the north of the village there is a *mazar* with a cupola. HUMMEL was up there taking photographs when a bullet whistled past his head. Our admirable escort was having some firing practice, still to frighten possible robbers. When we remonstrated with them for their carelessness, that might have cost the doctor his life, they replied that they were only shooting at a crow in a poplar. These wretched louts were a positive danger to us, not a protecting escort. Besides the danger of their »shooting practice«, especially when they fired from the top of a lorry, they also smoked like chimneys all day. We warned them, explaining that the petrol drums must not be exposed to risk of fire. If they blew up the escort would come off worst. The fellows laughed derisively and went on smoking.

We were slowly getting away from the northern mountains. The road was good, but rather sandy. Tamarisks and tussocks of herbage occurred, but scantily. After having crossed a broad basin the road led into a valley of a range to the left. Here snow was still lying in shady spots, and solitary elms appeared. Wu-shu-kou or Qara-qizil is the name given to a few small houses inside a stone wall inhabited by mail couriers. We climbed higher and higher, driving westward. Then the road began to fall again. We had steppe on our left and a reddish yellow mountain-range, very high, on our right.

To the south-west the surface of Baghrash-köl shone like a sword-blade beyond the tussocks of the plain. The lake was frozen. Near the village of Ushaq-tal (»Dwarf Willow«) GEORG and TSERAT stuck fast in the ice-covered river. They unloaded their lorries and carried the baggage to a dry place. The whole village turned out to see us. The place was inhabited by seventy Tungan families; all the Turkis had fled to Kucha and Kashgar.

On a house-wall in Ushaq-tal was a notice proclaiming that anyone refusing to accept General MA's notes to their full value would be shot. A silver dollar was worth 30 liang here, at Toqsun it was worth 40, at Hami 50 and at Turfan 70. It was said that KHOJA NIAZ HAJI had had all the cattle, camels, horses, sheep and goats in this region driven to Qara-shahr and still farther west.

THROUGH BURNING VILLAGES

At a quarter past six we drove into the village of Chuqur (»The Deep«). Profound silence reigned here; and the village was ghost-like in the twilight. In the middle of the main street, that lies along the high-road, stood a chair. JOMCHA seated himself on it with a comic air of dignity while we waited for two of the lorries that had not kept up with the rest. They came. We alighted from the cars