

three »elephants» sank in and stuck time after time. But the countrymen went to fetch their spades and helped us; and at last this obstacle too was surmounted.

In places the soil was absolutely barren. After a time we came to another string of bridges and an avenue of splendid trees which led into the bazaar of the town of Bugur, to the Chinese Lun-t'ai. Here there was almost a crowd. The covered bazaar made an impression of prosperity, and all the shops were open. Caravans, riders, beasts of burden, buying and selling, noise and movement. We did not stop, but drove on so as to reach Kucha before dark. GEORG's tracks had been visible the whole way; and the villagers of whom we enquired told us that a car had passed along the road the day before. So on we drove, through avenues and over more canals with bridges.

We had just driven through the bazaar of the village of Chompaq and were proceeding westward at ten minutes to four when BERGMAN, sitting at the wheel of the small car, cried out:

»Here comes GEORG!»

»What? GEORG! It's impossible; he only started the day before yesterday. It *can't* be he!»

GEORG's ADVENTURES

Surging white clouds of dust, however, that could only be caused by a swiftly moving motor-car, were visible between the willows forming an avenue along the road. It was not far away; the trees had hidden it.

In a minute GEORG had come up to us and jumped down.

»Thank God you're alive, GEORG!» I exclaimed. »What happened? How did you manage to get rid of them so quickly?»

»Well, after I left our quarters at Korla on the morning of March 6th I went straight to CHANG's house, where we had been tied up the night before. The whole escort, those five fellows from Turfan as well as seven others, got up onto the lorry at once, and didn't take any kit. I drove off as fast as I could over hard bits, bumps, canals, bridges, so my passengers were chucked about all over the place and had to hold on like grim death. They got a regular knocking about! All but two were sick and spewed like cats. CHANG himself succumbed, sitting by my side in the cabin, and made an awful mess all round him. It was fun to think that I was kidnapping him now. He was so tame that I could have tied him up and heaved him off the lorry. But although they were having such a bad time they stuck to their guns. After all, they had said themselves that they were in a fearful hurry to take MA's orders to Aqsu.

»I couldn't help pulling CHANG's leg and asking him if he didn't think it was a lovely trip and a beautifully smooth road . . . But I spoke my mind to him too,