

I was awakened with the news that machine-gun fire had been heard to the north-west. Meantime, the doctor nailed a big red cross on white cloth to the wall of the verandah, and more wounded or sick soldiers came to his field hospital for treatment. A young officer entered and went straight up to HUMMEL, saying:

»General of cavalry MA HO-SAN is ill and would like the doctor to come to his quarters at once.»

This was the same MA who had had a shell-splinter through his thigh, in which connection he had been treated by our doctor at Turfan. YEW went with them as interpreter. Headquarters were in the finest Chinese house in the main street, north of the bridge. On their way there HUMMEL and YEW found the principal traffic artery swarming with soldiers, refugees, camels, horses, and loads of hay and straw on ox-carts. They got the impression that the defeated army was really over-running Korla. A certain degree of order prevailed, and one could not say there was any panic, though everyone seemed to be in a hurry.

They found the wounded man lying in bed. The wound was treated and dressed again carefully, and the general did not know how to show his gratitude. YEW did not miss this opportunity of asking what was going to happen about MA CHUNG-YING requisitioning our lorries. The general replied:

»General MA CHUNG-YING arrived here on horseback a few hours ago, and he will come at any moment to ask for the loan of your cars.»

»Does he mean to return them?«

»Yes, you can be quite at your ease about that. To show my gratitude for the doctor's excellent treatment of my wounds I shall, if necessary, demand that they be sent back as soon as they are no longer needed. My bed will be fixed up in one of them, and I shall stay in it as long as the cars are under our control. It is of the greatest importance both to MA CHUNG-YING and to me to get a good reputation abroad; and it is therefore in our own interest to help you.»

They rose and left. In the narrow passage outside the room they met a tall young officer of agreeable, energetic appearance. He looked at them closely, but did not salute. Both HUMMEL and YEW had seen MA's portrait, and they had no difficulty in recognizing him. In a second he had disappeared.

MA REQUISITIONS THE LORRIES

While HUMMEL and YEW were visiting the sick we had a message from »Big Horse«, requesting the loan of a lorry to take him to Kucha at once. A few minutes later a fresh messenger arrived, and requisitioned all four motor-lorries and as much petrol as possible.

GEORG had already put aside the supply of petrol that four cars would re-