

getting away. An atmosphere of crushing gloom weighed upon our spirits. Should we ever see the drivers again?

The commander-in-chief and his staff had fled, and we had helped and accelerated his flight. We were thus compromised in the eyes of the northern army. We could fairly be accused, or at least suspected, of being among Big Horse's adherents. Not only were we in mortal fear for our drivers' safety and for our cars — we had also all possible reason to wonder how the victorious generals would treat us. Our expedition was being ground between millstones; and at that moment it did not look as if much of it would be saved.

To inspire the people of Korla with respect, we had the Swedish flag hoisted on a staff over the gate; and on the outside of the two halves of the door we had a red cross on white ground with the following inscription in Chinese:

»Sui-yüan — Sinkiang Highway Expedition under the Ministry of Railways of the Central Government.»

### AN ANXIOUS NIGHT

March 14th and the night that followed it are among those memories of our journey in Sinkiang that will fade only when long years have passed, and that can never be quite forgotten.

Weary after the trying events of the previous day, we had meant to sleep our fill, but at seven we were awakened by one of our servants, who announced that four soldiers, two with rifles and two with horses, were asking to see our belongings.

We got up. It was pleasant to emerge from our poky, dank dungeon into the fresh morning air.

»What do you want?» YEW asked.

»Both our horses are worn out. We want to exchange them for two good horses. We're looking everywhere, and wondered if you had any?»

»Do you think we've got horses in our boxes? Besides, if we had any, we shouldn't exchange them for your wretched hacks. Go and look somewhere else!»

This talk of exchanging horses was only a pretext. These men were spies, come to see if it was worth while plundering our quarters by night. Now the supreme authority, under whose protection we had been, had gone off to Kucha with our cars, and there was no-one in Korla who cared a straw what happened to us. Even the sentries who had been posted at our gate on March 12th had disappeared.

As our boxes seemed to be an object of interest to the undisciplined soldiery of the town, we did some furniture removal in our hovels. All our private boxes and suitcases were placed in a protected room under lock and key. The provision-boxes and a few good-sized cases were piled up under the projecting roof support-