

solutely priceless to listen to the conversations between Big Horse and EFFE on the occasions when they drove together.

We heard from Chinese, Tungans and Turkis alike that MA CHUNG-YING's plans were gigantic. His ambition did not go so far as to seek equality with CHINGGHIS KHAN, but he was not content with anything below a level with TAMERLANE. He intended first to conquer the whole of Sinkiang and Kansu, and afterwards to unite with his kingdom the whole of Russian Turkistan. He was himself a Mohammedan; and his aim was to bring the whole of the Islamic world in Central Asia under his sceptre. He would become Sultan in Turan, just as RIZA SHAH in Teheran was of Iran.

MA CHUNG-YING's enemies thought that in fleeing to Kucha with our cars he was entering a rat-trap from which there was no escape, and that he was irretrievably lost.

Those who were acquainted with MA CHUNG-YING's past, knowing that he had hitherto always come safely out of apparently hopeless situations, thought that he would not let himself be captured now any more than then. He would disappear and conceal himself under a disguise, and bide his time until the next opportunity arose. As long as he was alive and at liberty there would never be peace in Central Asia.

And now the new world-conqueror was sitting in one of our driver's cabins, beside that lively, cheery lad KARL EFRAIM HILL, a missionary's son and of pure Swedish blood. It must have been a gorgeous sight to see these two young fellows, the general of about twenty-five and the driver of twenty, side by side on the road to Kucha.

We knew EFFE well enough to be sure that the general had not been bored in his company. None of us had ever seen EFFE serious or gloomy. The only night he had not sung was that time at Korla when we had pistols held to our hearts and were on the point of being shot.

When I asked EFFE how he had entertained his distinguished passenger he replied simply and modestly:

»I didn't leave him in peace for a moment. I sang him funny Chinese songs, and he laughed till he choked.»

»What did you talk about?«

»Oh, I told him stories and adventures I'd had, and soon he began to tell me about his campaigns, and the tight corners he'd been in, in Kansu and Sinkiang.»

»What was he like? Was he stand-offish, or condescending and jolly?«

»He was charming. We were like a couple of schoolboys. When we parted, he declared that he had never had such fun in his life. And I was really sorry to say good-bye to him.»

»Weren't you afraid he'd have you shot, to put two dangerous witnesses to his weakness out of the way?«