

Tamarisks and reeds looked up out of the water. It was a delicious place! I sat with my sleeves rolled up and dabbled my hands in the cool rippling water. The channel we had been following for half an hour came to an end; the mainland bounded it on the north. Here we landed, and CHEN had no difficulty in finding his camp No. 106. A *mesa* rose near by, and I climbed it to draw a panorama.

While I was thus occupied, the boatman ALI rushed up all out of breath to report that he had found the fresh tracks of two riders, going north-east on big horses. He was convinced that they were scouts searching for us. A little later SADIQ told us that he had seen the tracks of two camels, two horses, three donkeys, seven sheep and a man on foot. We decided that it must be our passenger, the archaeologist HUANG, who, in company with 'Professor LI,' was also about in those parts, and whom we had not seen since starting out from Korla. He was probably now on the way to his old haunt, T'u-ken. Later it transpired that he had smelt out a store of flour belonging to the Tun-huang group at a spring called Nan-chan-bulaq in the Quruq-tagh. He had also come across the shepherd whom BERGMAN had sent to CHEN and me with several sheep, and had simply taken two of the animals without further ado. This way of obtaining provisions on the march is both practical and convenient, but it may be fatal to those who are thus robbed of their supplies.

We were home at twilight. The three scouts did not appear in camp till half-past eight, when they were immediately summoned to my tent.

APAQ told their story. When they had gone 80 li, and were nearer to the mountains than to the lake, they had come upon the track of a lorry and small car going east. The tracks of the small car were just to the left of those of the lorry. The ground was so hard that the track was not clear; but they followed it for a short distance eastward, where the ground was softer, and then they could see plainly that the cars had only gone to the east, and had thus not yet returned from Tun-huang. The *sai* was hard up to a point 15 li from camp No. 80. They had seen the same caravan-tracks that we had found near CHEN's camp No. 106. They had also surprised nine wild camels, one of them a gigantic beast, that had fled towards the mountains. The scouts had planted the flag in the tracks of the cars and placed the despatch-tin securely within a ring of stones.

The whole report, that APAQ delivered in a tone of complete assurance, sounded perfectly credible. The two cars, then, had passed eastward on one of the last days of April or at the beginning of May, on their search for a practicable road to Tun-huang.

It seemed to CHEN and myself curious that YEW, KUNG and EFFE had not yet returned. Perhaps they had remained at Tun-huang for some days trying to get petrol and lubricating oil from Anhsi, where the Eurasia Aviation Company had one of its depots on the Shanghai-Urumchi air-route. But the responsibility