

»FOLKE BERGMAN!»! I thought I must be dreaming. I spun round, saw the gate just opening, and in he came — tall, quiet and smiling as usual. I hurried towards him.

»Well, of all the luck! This is like being in heaven!» he said.

»It is indeed, old fellow. Is HUMMEL alive?»

»Yes, he's alive all right; at any rate he was alive when I saw him the day before yesterday, and he was clearly on the mend.»

»Thank God! Where is he?»

»At Kirghiz-tam, ten li south-east of Qumush.»

»Then we may meet him at any moment?»

»His animals are done for, and there's no pasture and no fodder. He was taken in a lorry from the camp on the Qum-darya to Singer in the Quruq-tagh — EFFE squeezed out the last drops of oil. At Singer, where the air is cooler, he stayed for a few weeks to recuperate; and it was there I joined him. Since then we've been making our way with horses and a litter step by step through blazing hot desert mountains. And now I've come on ahead to get fresh horses for him.»

All the misery, all the annoyances, and all the trials inseparable from journeys in Central Asia are amply outweighed by the unforgettable moments that now and again fall to one's lot. Nor would BERGMAN easily forget our breakfast together in KAZIM BEG's garden. I had brought him news that all was well in his home in Stockholm.

KAZIM BEG was ordered to procure three good horses and 150 cattiees of fodder. These, HUMMEL's servant KONSTANTIN, who had now come with BERGMAN, was to take to HUMMEL's caravan at Qumush.

Meantime, however, we had to hurry on. We said good-bye to BERGMAN and KAZIM BEG and drove up into the Su-bashi valley.

We passed the jet of clear water that springs from the cliff at Arghai-bulaq and reached the huge pile of rock-débris that blocks the valley, taking its first steep slope in the gathering darkness. But it was out of the question to risk the car on such ground; the light from the head-lamps was not enough — it was best to wait for daylight.

A VIOLENT THUNDERSTORM

At about half-past four we were awakened by a light rain. As day was breaking, we went for a walk up the rocky defile, and found out that it was impossible to get the car any farther; the road had been too spoiled by water. The rain presently grew heavier, and compelled us to return to the car for shelter.

That afternoon the sky suddenly became gloomy and overcast. Leaden grey clouds gathered heavily over the mountains, and it grew dark, as though dusk