

We climbed higher. The trees in an avenue we passed through were covered with rime, and looked like alabaster. After this the road kept to the hill-tops for a time. It was cold up there, and the snow lay fairly deep. The avenue had come to an end, and it would have been impossible to find the way if a few Chinese lorries had not been by.

The boundary between Kansu and Shensi runs right through the village of Yao-tien, and we were thus approaching the old heart of historical China.

Twilight had turned into darkness when, after a day's run of 150 km, we drove to the mayor's yamen in the town of Pin-hsien. Its altitude was 800 m, and it had 3,000 inhabitants.

We went on, up and down over a red clay landscape, once more shrouded in a mist of snow. We passed one herd of pigs after another, on their way to the slaughter-yards at Sian.

Now we were running downhill again. The hills became lower, and receded on either side, till we came down into flat country. At the village-gate of Ch'ienchow we were stopped by soldiers, who asked the usual questions. We had reached the border of the broad Wei-ho valley. The long strain was over now. No more need we sit with our hearts in our mouths, on the brink of precipices and in expectation of robbers in ambush.

More and more traffic. We passed or met both carts and motor-lorries. A flock of wild geese flew overhead from south-west to north-east. We were driving over a plain, extending in every direction to the wall of mist that formed the horizon.

Again we drove through villages and gateways, and were questioned by soldiers. In one of the villages they said that three cars containing foreigners from Sweden were expected. But as nothing had been seen of GEORG and his lorry since we left Lanchow, we were only two. Finding that the number did not tally, the soldiers became suspicious; and only after a good deal of palaver did they allow us to pass.

THE END OF THE ROAD

At 2 p. m. we drove past the town of Hsien-yang, with its great wall. We went through three gate-towers to the wooden bridge over the Wei-ho, a really big river. It was three o'clock when we reached the west gate of Sian, or Ch'ang-an, as the city is now called again, just as it was when the famous Han and T'ang dynasties had their capital here. This is where the old Silk Road can be said to begin — and for us to end. Sian was thus the last camping-ground of the long motor-expedition, and bore as such the number 175. February 8th 1935, on which we had covered 160 km, was our last day of motor travel.

We were all very glad to reach the end of this strenuous journey. I personally