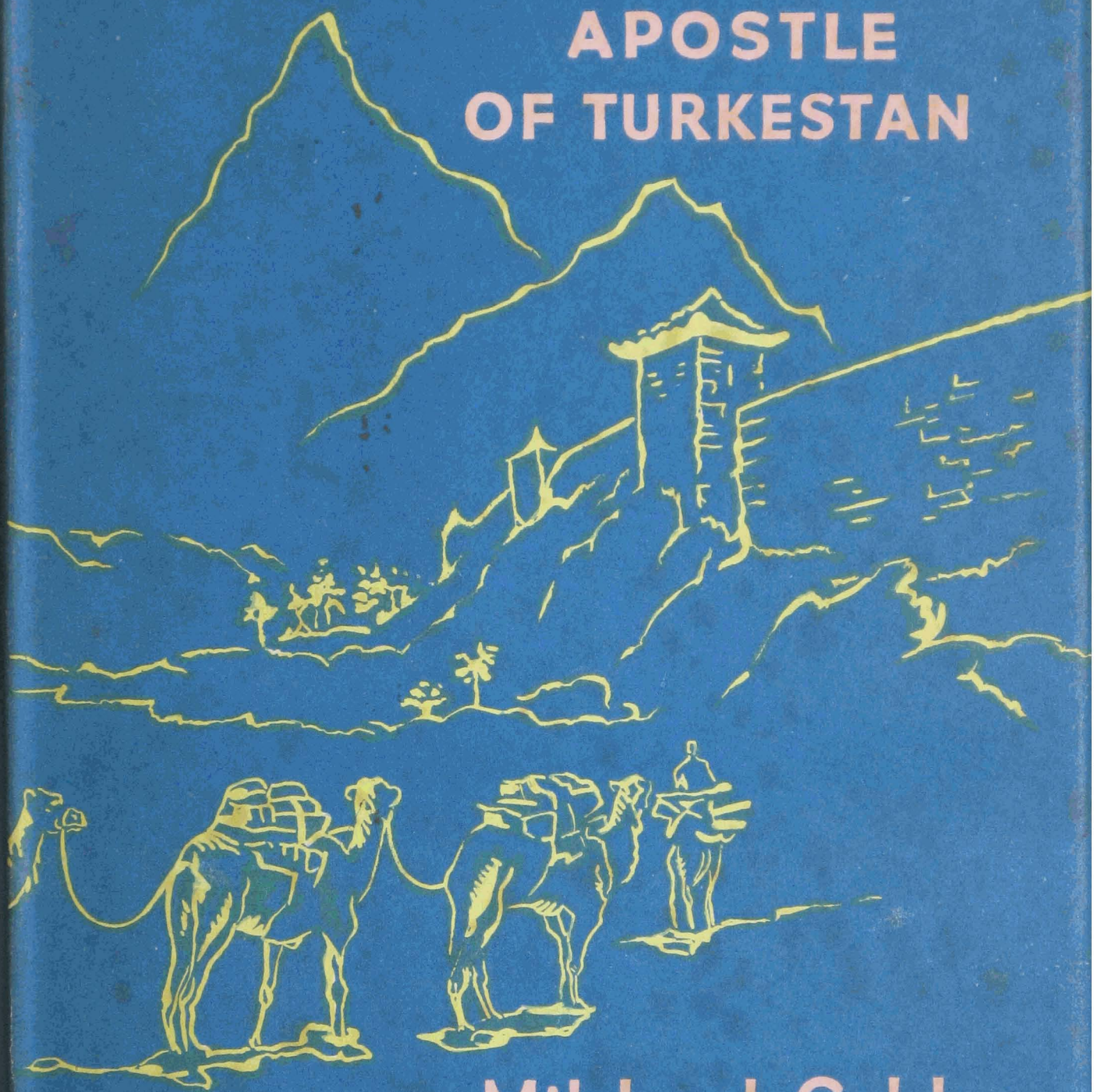


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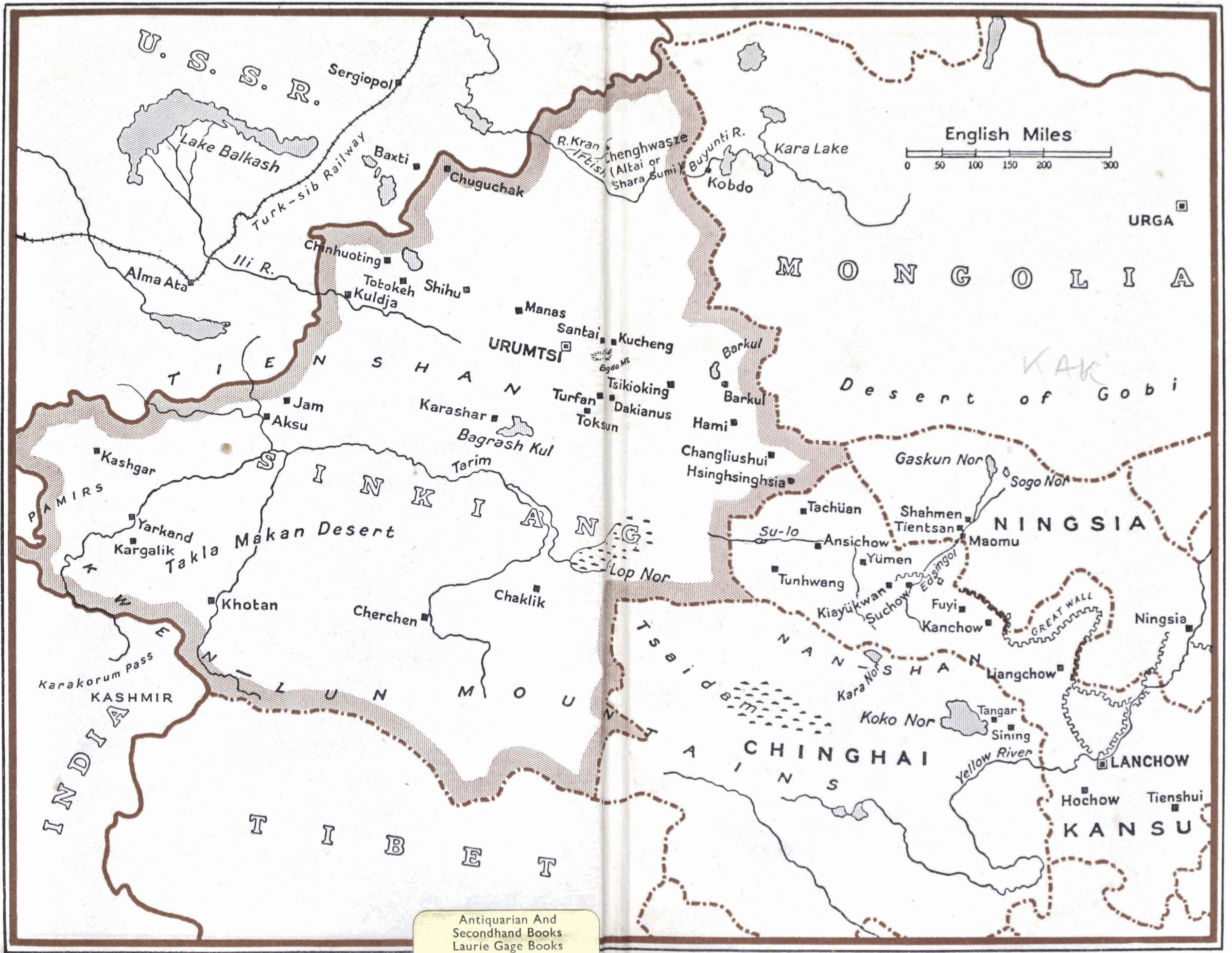
George Hunter

APOSTLE
OF TURKESTAN



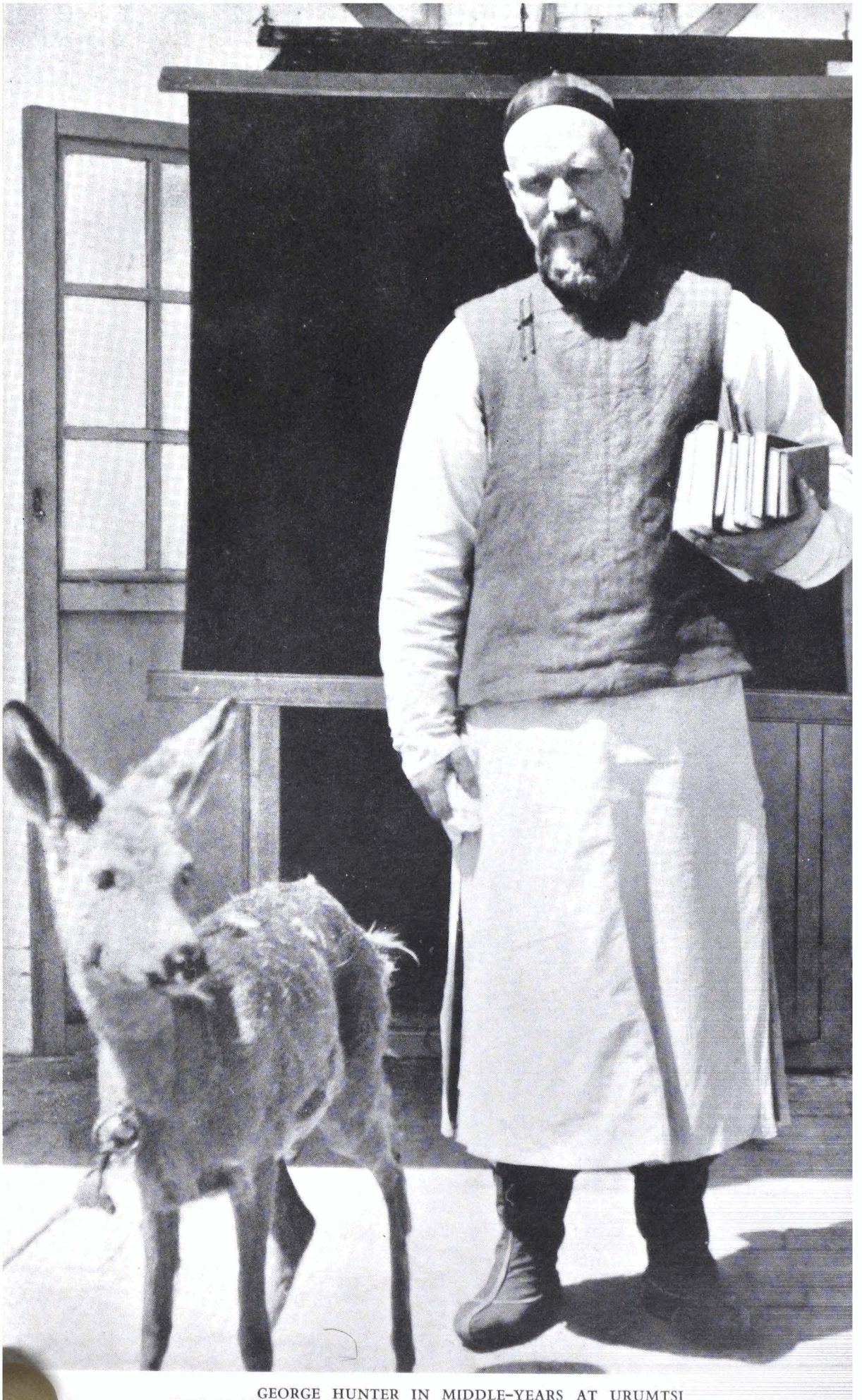
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GEORGE HUNTER IN MIDDLE-YEARS AT URUMTSI

GEORGE HUNTER

APOSTLE OF TURKESTAN



MILDRED CABLE
and
FRANCESCA FRENCH

*“Nothing was to enter into his life unpenetrated by its
central enthusiasm”*

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Authors' Note

This book is a record of the life and work of a unique man, and the authors have endeavoured to write faithfully and sincerely the story of a great soul. All statements and views regarding Church organisation and Mission policies recorded in this book represent the opinions of one man. Therefore, the authors are in no way responsible for the same.

Chapter One

NO thoughtful person can fail to recognise the fact that each generation produces a few men and women of such outstanding personality that they come into life seemingly, as did Melchizedek, without father and mother and without family. They stand somewhat aloof from their generation and no one thinks of them in connection with a human background, but only as isolated individuals who, called to a certain order of service, have no rest of mind until they have accomplished the task which was set before them, and who pass out of this world with few to mourn their loss and none to whom their going seems to cause acute pain. Their instinct was to keep free of human ties and to be under the control of none save that inner voice which has been the arbiter of their destiny.

Of such an order was George Hunter, and it seems almost an impertinence to attempt to draw aside the veil which, by his deliberate wish, kept so many things secret during his lifetime and to bring into the open incidents of his life of which he never spoke either to friend or companion, yet these, revealing as they do what were the particular and peculiar circumstances of his life, indicate some of the forces which made him what he was. "Scotsman of the Gobi," "Apostle of Turkestan," the "Lonely Warrior," he has been called by all these names and each one is in a measure true, but there was more behind that strange individuality than could be expressed in any single term. He has become almost legendary in those parts where he lived, for though it is not long as years go since he was torn from his home in Urumtsi, the chief town of Chinese Turkestan, things of eternity are not measured by time, and during the last few years of his life he saw the old order pass and the new order come. George Hunter belonged to the old and when it went he vanished with it.

The tall figure, slim and angular, the thick grey hair, blue eyes

and that characteristic bend of the head to the right as he greeted a friend, will always be remembered by those who knew him. He was British in all his sympathies as well as by nationality, and nothing which Britain did was allowed to be adversely criticised in his presence without the speaker receiving a strong rebuke. The Britain that he knew was pre-eminently the Britain of the Victorian days, and to him she stood for the land which displayed the flag of liberty, the land which had freed the slaves and the land to which in a special way had been committed the gospel of Jesus Christ for transmission to the world, and which therefore had become the centre of the great missionary societies.

He deplored more than most the sign of weakness which he detected when the British Government failed to strengthen its forces in Kashgar, where his own British passport was issued, for he knew that failure to assert her authority here would inevitably result in greater control coming into the hands of Russia, the Power which he most dreaded, but no word of politics ever passed his lips in that country where they were a forbidden topic by order of the Government, and therefore a tempting subject of conversation. As he travelled from one town to another, it was most amusing to see the devices of Turkestan men to inveigle him into some sort of statement as to his own political convictions. There was a notice pinned to the wall of each inn and restaurant which said, "It is forbidden to discuss matters of the State," and Hunter, when challenged by Chinese or Turki friends on some national matter whether relating to East or West, would point to this notice and courteously but firmly refuse to pursue the subject, saying: "Gentlemen, remember that we are forbidden to discuss affairs of the Republic." That was final and made of his reticence an obedience to the dictate of Government. It was passing strange that a man so cautious and so law-abiding should in the end have been accused of being a British spy, and have been condemned to imprisonment on that count, but so it was, and the last five years of his life were made hideous by the persecutions of the secret police, who set a watch upon his house, brought accusations against him of being in the pay of his country as a

secret agent, and finally arrested him and kept him in a jail where he was made to suffer untold misery at the hands of tormentors trained by the N.K.V.D. in the art of applying refined and cruel tortures.

The means they used followed the regular course adopted by these masters of Satanic methods, but they led to poor results as regards the endeavour to bring discredit on his private life or his social relationships. No man living could have had less to conceal, but the attempt which was made to unbalance his mental equilibrium was more successful. The interrogatories always took place at night, when exhaustion and calculated lack of sleep rendered the victim less able to resist than at normal times, and the injections given under the pretence of their being a tonic were deadening in the effect they had on the mind. Sometimes the inquisitor would appear to be friendly and at other times he was unrelenting in his abuse. So fierce was the mental pressure that, when writing later of his ordeal, George Hunter said: "The injections which were given in order to reduce my will-power told upon me and made resistance more difficult, and had they continued much longer I might have said that I was a spy." From that time he understood why the accused always pleads guilty in a Soviet criminal court.

The fierce, blinding light of an electric globe was so placed in the cell that the prisoner could never escape the torment of its glare, and a warder had him under such perpetual observation as to detect any attempt to protect himself against the torturing light. If he only covered his eyes with his blanket, the warder would step in and quietly expose his face. A fellow prisoner, incarcerated with him, wore a beard and to this was attached a string which the warder pulled each time he passed the cell door, thus effectively keeping him from any sort of rest. Gradually the perpetual light and the torment of surveillance told on the two men, for, as another victim of the same devastating methods has well expressed it, "an atmosphere of terror is maintained with artistic perfection."

"Do what you can," he wrote after his release and shortly

before his death, "to make the Church at home understand that this has nothing to do with the severities of normal imprisonment, but is based on profound understanding of demoniacal psychology. Long after you are released you still hear their voices taunting you, and for longer still you feel that they are after you seeking to hurt and destroy you." Has the world ever grasped the agony of helpless sufferers who are caught by these infamous agents, taken from their homes and often never heard of again? To the people of Urumtsi it seemed amazing that a British subject could be treated with such ignominy.

The perpetual examinations and reiterated accusations, lasting for long, weary hours, brought him almost to the point of despair. All through the weary months his persistent request for a Bible was refused, but he knew much of his Bible by heart and he wrote later: "It is so important that Christians should commit these words to memory, for it is impossible, in these days, to know what lies just ahead." George Hunter knew his God and nothing they could say or do shook his testimony or moved him from his one statement: "I am here solely to preach Christ crucified." Then, when the testing was becoming too severe, political events in Europe changed international relationships, and it became undesirable that a Britisher against whom no accusation could be substantiated should be kept a prisoner indefinitely; and so George Hunter was released.

He emerged triumphant, but broken. He had come to know the power of God in a new way, but he had lost his nerve, and on the few occasions when he allowed himself to speak of the incidents of his imprisonment he would drop his voice to a whisper and look round furtively as though he felt himself surrounded by enemies and spies. After his release he faced what, to him, was yet another intolerable insult, for the police would not allow him to revisit his home, to collect his precious books, or to look on the loved place once more. They conveyed him direct from the prison to the airfield, where he was put into a 'plane and flown out of Sinkiang into China proper. There they left him and from there he slowly moved back north-west until he came near to the

GEORGE HUNTER

frontier again, and had the comfort of feeling that should Sinkiang be reopened to the Gospel he would be first to cross the border and once more proclaim Christ and Him crucified on the trade routes of Central Asia. On December 20th, 1946, George Hunter died, far from his fellow missionaries, but cared for by faithful Chinese friends.

Chapter Two

THE future apostle of Central Asia was destined to a life of loneliness from his youth, for he lost his mother when he was still a child. He was born in Kincardineshire, and his childhood was spent on Deeside. When the desire to be a missionary grew strong within him, he made an offer of service to the China Inland Mission, but this met with a refusal. He turned his attention to other forms of Christian service and for some time he worked under the Young Men's Christian Association. A second application to the China Inland Mission was received more favourably, and in 1889 he was accepted by their Board. Before many months had passed he found himself one of a group of young men living together at the Mission Language School at Anking, a city on the bank of the wide Yangtze River. They were all engaged on the one serious job of preparing themselves for a life work of evangelism among a non-Christian people, but he gradually realised that the outlook of his fellow students was on several points curiously different from his own. He saw young men fresh out from home, keen and enthusiastic to preach Christ among the Chinese; he listened to the clear testimony which they gave on arrival and read in the missionary magazine the accounts of their spiritual experience, such as: "I was brought up in a Christian home, but I never found Christ as my Saviour until I was fifteen years old. When I came to know Him as Lord I gave myself wholly to Him. Now after a period of training I go forth to China for any manner of service wholly at His command." He watched the careers of these fellow students, and before two years were over, almost all of them had met a young woman with whom they had promptly fallen in love. Marriage and the establishment of a home and family ended the vision of that particular young man to preach, to suffer and maybe to die for his Lord in some distant, unevangelised part of the country.

To George Hunter it was incomprehensible to speak of a life dedicated to such consecrated service and yet to be so easily side-tracked into conditions of life which made it quite impossible to carry out the high purpose. He positively disliked the missionary's home, which, to his way of thinking, might be compared to an establishment transplanted from England, and which, by its futile complexities, made incessant demands on time and energy. For himself he would have none of it. The conventions which surrounded mission stations, the social intercourse entailed by a missionary community, the prominent place which home, wife and children demanded in the missionary's life, he could not endure.

Fortunately for himself and for others, his highly individualistic character showed itself before he left the Language School, and at the end of term, when the time came for making appointments, he was sent to one of the farthest outposts in the north-west province of Kansu. It was divinely controlled wisdom which made that appointment, and opened to George Hunter the road to unknown Turkestan.

Missionary work was still in its infancy in Lanchow, the capital of Kansu, when he arrived there after a long journey of many months. It may well be that this first trek across China revealed to him both the value of missionary travel and also the problems arising in mission station life, where so often a man was tied to one spot and made the centre of every church activity until nothing could go forward without him. Hunter probably never formulated these principles, but something stirred within him which became an irresistible instinct to move out and leave the beaten track to others. The host and hostess who were accustomed to receive the young missionaries as boarders in their home were kindness itself. They told him, as they told all the young men, that breakfast was at 7.30, dinner at 12.30 and supper at seven, adding that punctuality would be expected at meals. Outwardly he acquiesced, but inwardly he raged. If he were in conversation on the *bazar* with an interested Moslem at seven o'clock, was he expected to leave his man and hurry home to eat supper and

listen to what he called the "chit-chat" of half a dozen people? "What were they in China for?" he asked, "To eat, to chat, or to walk abroad and meet the people of the country?" On the other hand, the smooth running of the house was definitely upset by the polite wilfulness of its troublesome guest. One thing, however, he did value exceedingly as member of a Christian household and that was the fellowship in prayer and the family reading and study of the Bible, but it was evident to all concerned that this way of living could not be a permanent arrangement, for George Hunter was too strong an individualist to share the communal life of any ordinary household.

Before long he was taking extensive itinerations from the base and making a temporary centre at such towns as Hochow in South Kansu, where Mohammedanism is strongest; here he lived for two months learning to know the Moslem. In Sining he was among Tibetans and taking his first lessons in how to meet a lama. At Ningsia he was at the crossroads of the caravan routes and at Liangchow he looked north-west, up the great trunk road toward Turkestan and dreamed of the land beyond the ranges. In spirit he was already launched on the life of a pioneer.

The interest of intercourse with the Moslem brotherhood had immediately gripped him. "When I arrived in China," he wrote, "I had practically no knowledge of there being a Mohammedan community there, and the first Moslem I met was on the long journey up the Han River, between Hankow and Hanchung. Here two young men came on board our house-boat and introduced themselves as friends of the late Dr. King. They boasted that they belonged to the 'Pure Sect,' by which name they always spoke of the Mohammedan religion.

"Later, on the overland journey, I noticed that the head mule-teen paid no respect to the Chinese shrines, but on the contrary struck them with his whip, and from this I learned that he was a non-idolator and therefore a Mohammedan.

"On one occasion, while camping on the beautiful mountains near Dangar, I was surprised to hear the muezzin give the call for prayer from the village mosque and discovered that many

Mohammedans were living on the borders of Tibet and understood enough of the language to do business with the Tibetans. Some of them were hired by official Tibetan lamas to accompany them as interpreters to Peking. The Chinese do not care to go far into Tibet, but the Moslems take long journeys into the interior for purposes of trade.

“In the city of Hochow, which is their most important centre, the Mohammedans are much more successful in business than the Chinese. They have a trait of character which the Chinese call *gien*, a word which seems to mean both ‘cunning’ and ‘deceitful.’ One man came to ask me if I could teach him the way to make false silver. I asked what he wished to do with it, and he replied that he wished to use it for purposes of trading among the Tibetans. When I mentioned this to a Chinese merchant, he told me that the Mohammedans made a habit of cheating the Tibetans with false silver.

“Some of the Hochow Mohammedans are fairly smart in argument. At one time I happened to say that Mohammed could not have been a sage as he had eight or nine wives, and I was at once told that Solomon was a sage though he had many more. I have also been taunted with the remark that no Mohammedan will become a Christian, and have been told that though I had frequently been at Hochow no one had become a Christian yet. In Taochow, however, I found that the kindness and the medical work of several women missionaries had done much to win the confidence of Moslems as well as of the Chinese. In the inn where I stayed the innkeeper and his wife were constantly quarrelling. The man fell ill and asked me for medicine to cure him, but his wife, on the other hand, asked me if there was any hope of her husband dying! Both at Hochow and Taochow the Mohammedans have shown much gratitude for the medical work done among them. Many have bought Scripture portions in Arabic and Chinese, although the mullahs prevent this when possible.

“During my stay in Hochow I had the opportunity of seeing how a rebellion starts. It is not unlike a pestilence in the air. Evil rumours began to spread, and the Chinese in fear removed

their belongings into the city. The well-to-do Mohammedans did not wish for a rebellion, but the rude and baser sort who had nothing to lose were only too glad of an opportunity for loot. This lower class was stirred up by the mullahs, and they set in motion rumours of a plot on the part of the Chinese to massacre the Mohammedans. Counter-rumours were not wanting on the Chinese side, and thus the quarrel started, the two classes of people becoming more and more excited and embittered against each other. The slaughter was terrible and I certainly have no desire ever to see another Moslem revolt. Nevertheless, I still say that there are more open doors among the Mohammedans in China than in any other Moslem country.”

The close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was a period of unrest throughout the Chinese Empire. The Manchu dynasty was nearing its close and the Moslem revolt was spreading in the north-west. The Boxer rebellion, a man-made attempt to stamp out Christianity and to massacre all the missionaries who had spent their lives in bringing it to the Chinese, was on the verge of an explosion. Orders from the Empress Dowager were being conveyed to each provincial governor and the command was uncompromising: “Kill the foreigner without delay.” But many intelligent Chinese officials knew that hatred had so maddened the “Old Buddha” that she was following a suicidal policy which must bring ruin on the country. The Governor of Kansu was one of these, and instead of beheading the missionaries who were under his jurisdiction he advised them to move to a safe coastal area and even advanced them a large sum of money to cover their necessary expenses.

So it was that after eleven years of work and experience George Hunter was sent back to Aberdeen and to the haunts of his childhood on Deeside, on the one and only furlough of his long missionary life. Had it not been for the Boxer Rising, it is probable that he would never have seen Bonnie Scotland again. He never spoke of the incidents of that furlough as missionaries are wont to do. He did not enjoy the time, but endured it until he could



FRIENDLY TURKI CHILDREN



QAZAQ WOMEN



THE JOURNEY TO MECCA OVER, HE IS NOW A HADJI

return to China. To him, as to many another missionary, furlough proved to be a period of opening up old wounds, of compulsory recalling of buried comradeships, and of facing those whom he would fain forget. In his young days he had loved a woman with all the intense devotion of which his Scotch heart was capable. The day came when she was taken ill and died at the early age of twenty-two. She asked that the New Testament which he had given her, and all his letters to her, should be buried with her. This was done, and George Hunter was left desolate and alone. It was then that he dedicated himself to missionary work, and Jessie and all that concerned her was buried deep within his heart.

On this furlough he revisited Aberdeen and all the agony and sorrow came back upon him. He went to the graveyard and found that the grave of the woman he loved was unmarked, so he approached her nearest relative and begged permission to erect a tombstone. This request was definitely refused, but George Hunter was still not satisfied, so after much thought he expressed his feelings by placing a heart-shaped granite stone on the grave. This he was allowed to do. For him it spoke of undying loyalty to the woman who had won his love, and was a token of admiration and devotion. His way now lay apart and the lonely pioneer trek must be faced with courage, enthusiasm and a mind free from home ties or preoccupations. Jessie and he would meet again when the pilgrim journey was over.

Chapter Three

IN 1902 a brief announcement in the China Inland Mission periodical *China's Millions*, read: "Departures for China. February 24th, per N.G.L. S.S. *König Albert*, G. W. Hunter."

For the last time he said farewell to home and fatherland and set his face eastward. A little later the further announcement occurred: "Designations. For Kansu: G. W. Hunter." The period of exile from China was over and the long, long trail lay before him.

Nominally he was reappointed to the provincial capital city of Lanchow, but he was not a man who could be tied to any job by a mere official appointment. He was unique and could not find a place for long in any missionary circle. He soon broke away from the exasperating toils of community life to breathe the freer air of a trek which was to know no limits. This time he took the main road to the north-west, passing through stretches of desert and widely-spaced oases until he reached the gateway of the Great Wall and stood upon the stony floor of the Desert of Gobi. Here he had elbow-room and here he need never consider whether he were trespassing on the preserves claimed by another missionary, nor was he compelled to write and ask permission to take long treks from someone whom Mission authorities were pleased to call a Superintendent. At last he was free, gloriously free, and though he might have to pay the penalty of loneliness, yet loneliness became sheer enjoyment when compared with the strain of trying to do what he was determined to accomplish under the restrictions of convention and the impediment of precedence.

In later years George Hunter often talked to the writers of this volume concerning his mental discomfort when the need for medical advice forced him to revisit a coastal town. There he met again those hampering conditions which were so irksome to his

spirit. The atmosphere of a crowded mission compound seemed unbearable after the silences of isolation in Turkestan, and although everyone did his very best to make the veteran feel happy and at home, he left the mission compound to go and live with a Russian family. Here he found help with his study of the Russian language, and in the free and unconventional disorder of the Bohemian household he was happy and unafraid.

George Hunter had cut his moorings and laid no further curb on the inward urge to visit lands where he found no foundations laid by another man, for his spirit could find no rest in any area where a claim had been pegged out by any missionary society. He wanted new territory; he wanted untouched people; he wanted space; above all he wanted freedom and liberty. "Time is passing swiftly," he wrote, "and I am anxious to get a start." At first he only reached Tunhwang, which is about twenty-seven stages from Lanchow, for a telegram from the missionary Superintendent of Kansu ordered him back, reminding him that he was acting without Mission authority. He reluctantly obeyed, but the Superintendent soon found out that he was dealing with a man who, having received an inward call, could not be restrained from answering it. Hunter was soon on the move again: "For some time my road seemed to be completely blocked," he wrote, "but now God has graciously opened it up."

He told no one what his ultimate plans were, but he had made up his mind for a big itinerary which was to take him beyond north-west Kansu and land him over the border of Turkestan. Once there he knew full well that the journey across the Desert of Gobi, with the inevitable hardships of the way, would ensure that he be left alone and untroubled for many a long year—which it did. His travel diary sketches out his itinerary, and as he started out it holds this entry: "This is one of my happiest days in China." At Kanchow gamblers not only kept him awake all night with their shouting and quarrelling, but when they dispersed at morning light they carried off his saddle-mat. In that city the gambling craze is proverbial, but he knew he would get no satisfaction from pursuing the thieves himself, and if he called in

the help of the police some terrible punishment, quite out of proportion to the seriousness of the offence, would probably be inflicted, so he let them go with their booty, though he was not a man easily to forgo his rights.

The cultivation of the opium poppy was unrestricted in this area. "The darkness," he wrote, "is terrible, and here are men and women given up to smoking of the drug, selling all they have, even to their children, that they may buy more opium, and sinking, with the inevitable Nemesis which awaits the drug addict, into utter degradation." He sold many gospels and large numbers of tracts at every stage of his journey, for in China the preparation of tracts, both as regards the reading material and the attractiveness of the makeup, is such that men willingly give money for the pleasure of owning them. He preached everywhere: "The faces of the people were a study," he wrote. "There was astonishment, suspicion, ridicule, friendliness, contempt and anger to be seen"; but before he left the district one man gave in his name as an enquirer and declared himself desirous of joining the Christian Church. The pioneer realises that the religion which he preaches will be judged by the character and behaviour of the man who declares it, so George Hunter endeavoured to commend himself to high and low by the earnestness, gentleness and courtesy of his bearing. In consequence, he was asked into the homes of wealthy farmers in many of the larger villages, being recognised as an honest man who spoke true words and must be listened to with respect.

During the time he spent at the city which ends the Great Wall of China, he records an expenditure of 5,000 cash, which to him, at that time, seemed a really formidable price for repairs to his cart. Five thousand cash then represented about 5s. which to-day would scarcely buy a few nails. But those were the days of cheap labour and abundant material, as also of freedom of movement, when the traveller was not worried by Government officials and had no need of travel permits, but moved far and wide and even crossed frontiers unquestioned and unhindered.

After passing the portal of the Great Wall and paying the small

tax which was then imposed for leaving China proper, he faced the first trip across the Gobi and he faced it with the same sense of apprehension which always grips desert travellers in regions where camel caravans or mule carts are the only means of transit, and three miles an hour the universal pace. Men fear such isolation and he records the intense loneliness of the journey beyond Ansi where he suffered the illusion of the mirage and the lack of sweet water, not to mention the new experience of travelling all night haunted by the fear of thieves and highway robbers, but at last he reached Hami, a large oasis where he could buy meat, fruit and vegetables. Here he was entertained in a Moslem inn where he met an old acquaintance from Lanchow, a Moslem Turki who showed him off with great pride to his own large circle of friends. It seemed a grand opportunity for preaching, but as soon as he began they stopped him and refused to listen: "I am determined to follow Mohammed, however convincing and true your words may be," was the best response that he got. A sidelight upon the perpetual vigilance required in those parts lest the missionary should inadvertently arouse suspicion in prejudiced and ignorant minds appears in one remark: "I wanted to take a walk, but I did not go into the country, as by doing so I might have caused suspicion, as would be the case in places where I was a stranger. Instead, I just walked to the Telegraph Office and, strange to say, when I arrived there I found some letters which had been sent by Government post. I little expected to enjoy this drink of cold water."

Another series of long stages still lay ahead which would take him down into the Turfan depression, below sea-level, and up over a steep pass of the Celestial Mountains, for George Hunter now knew his objective to be the capital of Chinese Turkestan, a town called Tihwa by the Chinese and Urumtsi by the Turki and Mongol population. On March 27th, 1906, he arrived there and found himself, as he expresses it, in "quite another world." Before reaching the city gates, he drove through the Russian suburb, past the Tsarist Consulate, which was

guarded by Cossack soldiers in their arresting scarlet uniforms. He noticed with amazement the many foreign-built houses, and the strange medley of all kinds of dwellings which is characteristic of Tihwa, rendezvous of many Eastern nations. Here he was met with kindness, for the City Magistrate sent him a courteous message with a present of fodder for his beasts. He also found a Western visitor in the town in the person of Mr. Ellsworth Huntington, an American traveller. With great joy, Mr. Hunter received from him the present of a Turki vocabulary and a set of good and accurate maps of the country. This was the earliest foundation of that valuable and highly prized collection of books which later on lined the walls of George Hunter's shabby work-room, and which gave him such unbounded pleasure. In the streets of Tihwa he met Chinese, Turkis, Mongols and Russians, and he decided in his own mind that this was the place to which God had appointed him. Here he would make his base, here he would preach and teach, and from here he would travel far and wide taking the knowledge of Christ to people who knew nothing of Him.

George Hunter's diaries are characteristic records; they are eminently naïve and limit their information to such things as he was prepared to tell the public. He wrote, as was his duty, to Mission Headquarters, but his journals were deliberately of a kind not calculated to enthuse younger men and make them anxious to join him. To those who knew him and who saw him at his work they speak of the high romance of the mission field, but this was not conveyed in those sober statements and records of mileage, areas visited and books and tracts sold and distributed.

Chapter Four

THE first and most pressing duty was to make some kind of survey of the field. Was any missionary ever faced up with a more exacting job? Many weeks of desert travel already lay between Hunter and the last fellow missionary with whom he had parted, and what difficulties were still to be overcome he could not know until he met them. In the course of years he became an authority on Central Asian travel, but now he was still an inexperienced man and needed to seek advice from others. He must have talked with many a Chinese or Turki carter before he could draw out an itinerary to cover any one of the possible explorations which demanded his attention.

The Central Asian population is perhaps the most widely travelled on the face of the earth. The country's business is the business of the highroads, and transport is its main occupation. In every *serai* where he rested he met carters taking what appeared to be fantastic journeys, conveying merchandise with an industry and patience which belong to the Middle Ages. Indeed, the methods of business had scarcely altered in the course of the centuries and the travel tradition was still the same as Marco Polo had found so thrilling in the sixteenth century. George Hunter was caught up into the stream of this mediæval adventure and he was going to experience its rigours in their full force.

He had yet to find out that the extreme climate of Sinkiang needed to be taken into account in planning long treks. The traveller can easily find his difficulties greatly increased through the fact that he has not taken seasonal conditions into consideration. Near the Siberian border there is one area where blizzards crash with terrific force and every winter travellers lose their lives through attempting the impossible. On the other hand, the midsummer heat of Turfan is almost intolerable, and no one who can possibly avoid it will take the South Road during that season. At the time when the snows melt, the river beds where water

had been low through the cold season become rushing torrents most dangerous to ford. During this flood season numbers of village men and of travellers are drowned, and in the travel diary which he kept constant mention is made of these dangerous rivers, and of the fact that he saw riders and their horses swept off and carried away in the wild swirl of waters.

Hunter's great missionary commission was going to take him into every kind of danger and make him experience all sorts of hardship, but wisely and intelligently he learnt how not to throw his life away, but so to avoid excess of hardship that he was able to last out until the door of Sinkiang was closed to the missionary.

In June, 1906, he left Urumtsi on a preliminary tour, in the course of which he met two Chinese brothers who, in their youth, had had contact with the Christian religion and with Pastor Hsi in his Shansi home, but who, during all the years they lived in Sinkiang, had heard nothing of the Gospel. These two men received the missionary into their home and entertained him hospitably. From that first visit they became staunch friends of George Hunter and their house became his home whenever he was in their neighbourhood.

Three months later he was on the highroad once more, and after revisiting the friendly brothers he took a mountain track across the Tianshan and on toward the Moslem centres on the South Road leading toward Kashgar. He passed through many places where the Moslem and Chinese populations live in twin towns and so avoid the friction which would certainly lead to clashes between people who have so little love for each other. In late November he was among the Mongols of the Karashar area, and by the end of the year he had reached the important town of Aksu. Everywhere there was a *bazar* where crowds who collected to do business supplied him with the audience he hoped for. The preaching was a novelty and men readily bought up the Scripture portions and accepted the tracts which he distributed.

Among the crowd of materialistically-minded Moslems,

lovers of religious ceremonies, but haters of true religion as applied to daily life, he only occasionally sensed a heartfelt desire for God. He notes that in one place a mullah came to him asking for a book and on receiving an Arabic New Testament he accepted it with evidence of great joy. He buried his face in the Book and kissed it many times.

Between the towns he found it to be a land where wild beasts abounded and where the wild boar did much damage to the farmer's crops. In the earlier part of the journey he had enjoyed an abundance of autumn fruit, grapes, pears, plums, apples, melons and pomegranates, but as the season advanced conditions became stiffer and there is mention of a long, hard tramp over a desert stage with snow falling. "This stretch of country is uninhabited," he wrote. "To the north are barren mountains, while to the south is forest land with long grass and bushes. It is really a wonderful country with winding rivers, marshy lakes and swampy meadows; the snow-bound mountains and glaciers sometimes rise to 24,000 feet, while some of the valleys and plains sink below sea-level. The deserts are cold in winter, but burning hot in summer. The many towns and villages stand in areas of rich land where grain, fruit and vegetables are grown in abundance, but they are divided by jungles, forests and stretches of arid land."

He was often among colonies of Mongols governed by a prince and controlled by a Living Buddha, to whom they owed allegiance and paid their dues. At Aksu Hunter met a renowned archæologist in the person of Professor Pelliot, leader of a French expedition which carried through some very valuable research in Sinkiang. He came away richer by the gift of a Kashgar-Turki volume which he had long wished to own. In time Hunter was to know all the scientists and travellers of renown who came to Sinkiang for research work. When he had a house in which he could receive them, many were his guests, and though he learnt much of interest from them, later on it was they who sought information from him.

At Yandama he wrote: "This morning I was wondering where

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I should stay in Kashgar, but to-day while passing a village, I was handed a letter from the British Consul-General, Mr. [later Sir] George Macartney, who wrote: 'Dear Mr. Hunter,— As you may be in to-day, allow me to send you a line to bid you welcome to Kashgar. Of course we hope you will come straight to Chimi Bagh (our house) where your room is ready for you.' I felt very thankful for this honour and kindness. The messenger had waited three days for me."

On January 12th, exactly three months after leaving Tihwa, Hunter reached Kashgar, where he was most hospitably entertained by the Consul-General, who showed him all manner of kindness.

Chapter Five

THE nine weeks spent in Kashgar had all the advantages of a furlough with none of its depressing effect. Hunter was the guest of the most considerate of hosts, whom he joined at meals, but otherwise was master of his own time. "I am called to meals by a deep-sounding voice speaking English; this is David, the Singalese servant, who has also stayed in Siberia and knows Russian. The man who attends to my room is from Ladakh. I am receiving so much kindness that I fear it will not be so easy to start off on the rough travelling life again." He took English services at the Consulate and spent several hours each day preaching and selling Scripture portions to the crowds on the *bazar*. He found Christian fellowship with the members of the "Svenska Mission Forbundet," or Swedish Mission in Kashgar. This Society was inaugurated in 1894 and its work lay almost entirely among the Turki population. Among its members were men and women of high educational qualifications, some of whom were devoting their energies to compiling primers, grammars and dictionaries of the Turki language, such as would be of great assistance to newcomers. Hunter spent part of each morning reading Turki with a mullah, and each evening a Swedish missionary who was proficient in the language gave him further help. With all these interests, combined with the pleasure derived from feeling his own progress, the weeks passed quickly and very happily.

Meanwhile far away, in Shanghai, an important Missionary Conference had been convened. Delegates were coming from the most distant provinces to take part in the discussions and a message reached Hunter urging him, if it were in any way possible, to attend. At Kashgar he had come nearer to more rapid means of transport than was the case at Tihwa. He considered the possibility of reaching Shanghai via the Karakorum Pass and India, but the season was not favourable to that difficult

journey, and it would also require a special permit from the Indian Government, which was not unlikely to be refused. Mr. Macartney advised Hunter to travel via the Trans-Caspian and Trans-Siberian route and himself made the application for his visa to the Russian Government Office at Osh, which was ten stages by post from Kashgar. The application form was returned with a notice saying that they only passed on telegrams in the Russian, French and German languages—English was out of order. With such delays, it looked as though Hunter could not reach Shanghai in time for the Conference, but, finally, when he had almost given up all hope, permission was handed to him by the Russian Consul at Kashgar, and he took to the road again on another new and untried trek.

“On March 12th I left Kashgar. My escort and guide was a native of Yarkand and we rode two mountain ponies. We soon left the cultivated fields and entered the hilly country which separates the Tianshan from the Pamirs. All went well until after sunset, when the darkness became so deep that I could not see the horse in front of me. I found that I was getting very wet and gradually the silent rain changed into silent snow. Then came a flash of lightning which dazzled me, followed immediately by the crash of thunder. At this juncture we completely missed our road, but finally the horseman found his way to a hut, where we spent the night. Next day all went well and by nightfall we reached a camping-ground among the Kirghiz. Later on it snowed heavily and a little after midday we missed our way again. Although we followed a camel-track over a river, we completely lost our bearings. There was no sign of life, and though we looked and we listened all that could be seen was the bleak snowy mountains and all that could be heard was the rushing sound of the lonely river. The horseman proposed staying the night by the river, but I had completely lost confidence in him; moreover, he continually bothered me for more money, although I had paid him according to agreement drawn up in Kashgar. I consulted my map and compass and found we were going too far north, so I made him go back by the way we had come. Finally, we saw

some fresh footprints in the snow and although I had anxious fears that we were still wrong we followed them. By this time it was getting dark and we felt we must find a place where we could spend the night. After walking a good way up the mountain, we looked back and thought we saw a farmhouse, so we started through deep snow hoping to find a night's lodging there. We were sadly disappointed, for when we reached the place where we thought we had seen the house there was no vestige of such a thing. It was like the old illusion of the mirage and nothing remained but ravines on the river bank and deep snow. It was now nearly dark, nor were we even sure that the mountain-path we followed was the road to Osh. Suddenly we met a man riding a mule who told us that we were on the Osh road and that there was an inn ahead. We tramped on through snow until 9 p.m., when we came to some Kirghiz tents. Here was a fire and protection from rain and snow. My hostess gave me a cup of milk and I left Turki Gospels with these people."

There were several more days of very hard travel before they reached Osh, and on the twelfth day after leaving Kashgar, Hunter took a Russian *tarantass* to drive to Andijan, where he picked up the train for Orenberg and later joined the Trans-Siberian Railway and went eastward toward Omsk, Tomsk and Harbin.

George Hunter reached Shanghai in time for the opening of Conference on April 25th, 1907. In his diary he observes: "I was glad to meet many old friends, but too much of the Conference was concerned with those parts of China which are largely evangelised, while vast fields outside this sphere were not very much referred to." This great Shanghai Conference was being spoken of everywhere as "one of the epoch-making gatherings of the time." Long preparation had been made for it by means of questionnaires directed to all mission stations of China by an army of secretaries assisted by a legion of typists, the whole organisation entailing a vast expenditure of money required both to bring delegates from overseas and to convey missionaries from all over China to the great assembly. They formed a vast

concourse of Western missionaries (the Chinese had not been invited to act as delegates). They talked, they discussed, they made plans, they formulated endless resolutions, some of which were put into effect and many more of which were laid on the table to be dealt with on some future and uncertain occasion.

During the Conference days George Hunter sat in the midst and listened to the discussion, but it never occurred to the Conveners to seek information from the pioneer concerning China's outlying dependencies. In the course of their findings, they certainly mentioned these lands as possible mission fields, but nothing practical was done and as Hunter listened his body truly sat in the audience, but his spirit was wandering up and down the trade-routes of the desert land. To him it was no longer a matter of talking about "opportunity in Sinkiang," but of buying it up, and of preaching Christ to men and women who had never heard His Name. He had a fund of accurate information which should have been tapped by the experts who might have overcome his natural reserve and compelled him to impart his knowledge. God's open doors are thus frequently overlooked and only when the opportunity has passed do mission authorities appeal for prayer and for ventures of faith to enter closed lands, forgetting that He who opens a door and no man shuts also closes a door and no man enters. This was the strategic hour when the Christian Church should have sent her most experienced men and women to win Turkestan for Christ. At that time the Gospel could have been preached without let or hindrance through the length and breadth of the land, but alas! as is so often the case, reports, statistics, estimates and discussion blinded eyes which should have been keen to discern that this door of opportunity must be entered without delay or it would be too late. Who in that concourse was ready to go to the Mongols, to the Qazaqs, to the Kirghiz and be a nomad missionary among the nomads? Who would bear the bitter burden of being herald of the Gospel among the Moslems? Who would accept as his daily lot the loneliness, the ignominy of the pioneer? If Hunter were the only one to know of these things or to care about these

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matters, he must also be the only one to bear the burden and to take his solitary way back to the dreary wastes of Central Asia. The Conference closed on May 7th, and two weeks later, on May 21st, George Hunter bade goodbye to the friends at Shanghai and reset his face steadfastly to the task to which God had appointed him and the sacrifice which He required of him.

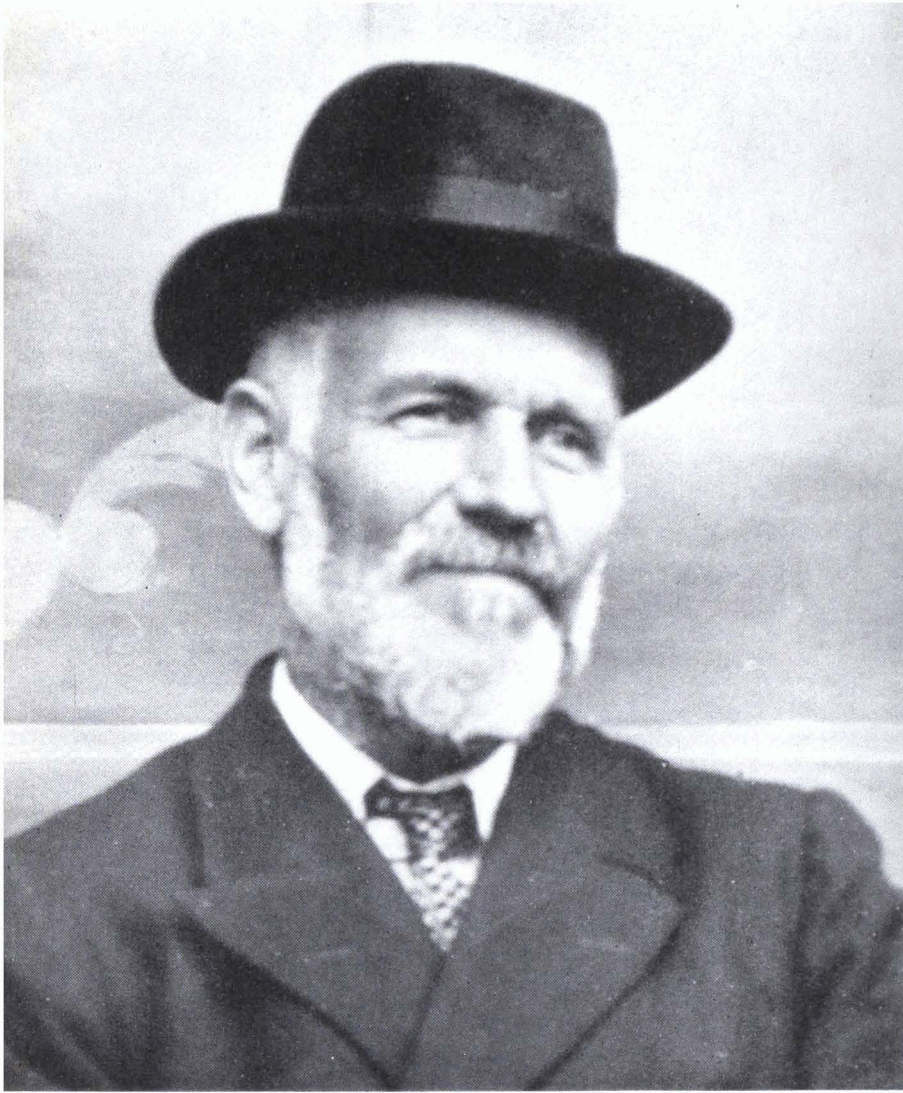
Chapter Six

BACK over the familiar trade-routes to Kansu Hunter travelled once more. At each mission station he was received with extreme kindness and sent on his way with the best available supplies of road provisions, but at each place he was told of the necessity of increasing the local staff of missionary workers. He heard of all the opportunities just waiting to be bought up and, every time he heard it, the vision of Sinkiang, Mongolia, Qazaqistan with himself as the one, single, itinerant missionary, rose before him. He courteously listened to all that was said, but on the following morning he left with joy in his heart that his commission was to wholly unevangelised tribes.

After Lanchow the stages were longer and the character of both land and people altered. This was the beginning of that narrowing strip of land which is irrigated by the melting snows of the Tibetan Alps and which is now called the "Panhandle." This strip separates Tibet from Mongolia, and once more he looked out on a territory untouched by the missionary. After several days of loneliness, it was heartening to meet a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society "faithfully doing his job of calling at farms and visiting markets and fairs with his pack of Scripture portions in many languages."

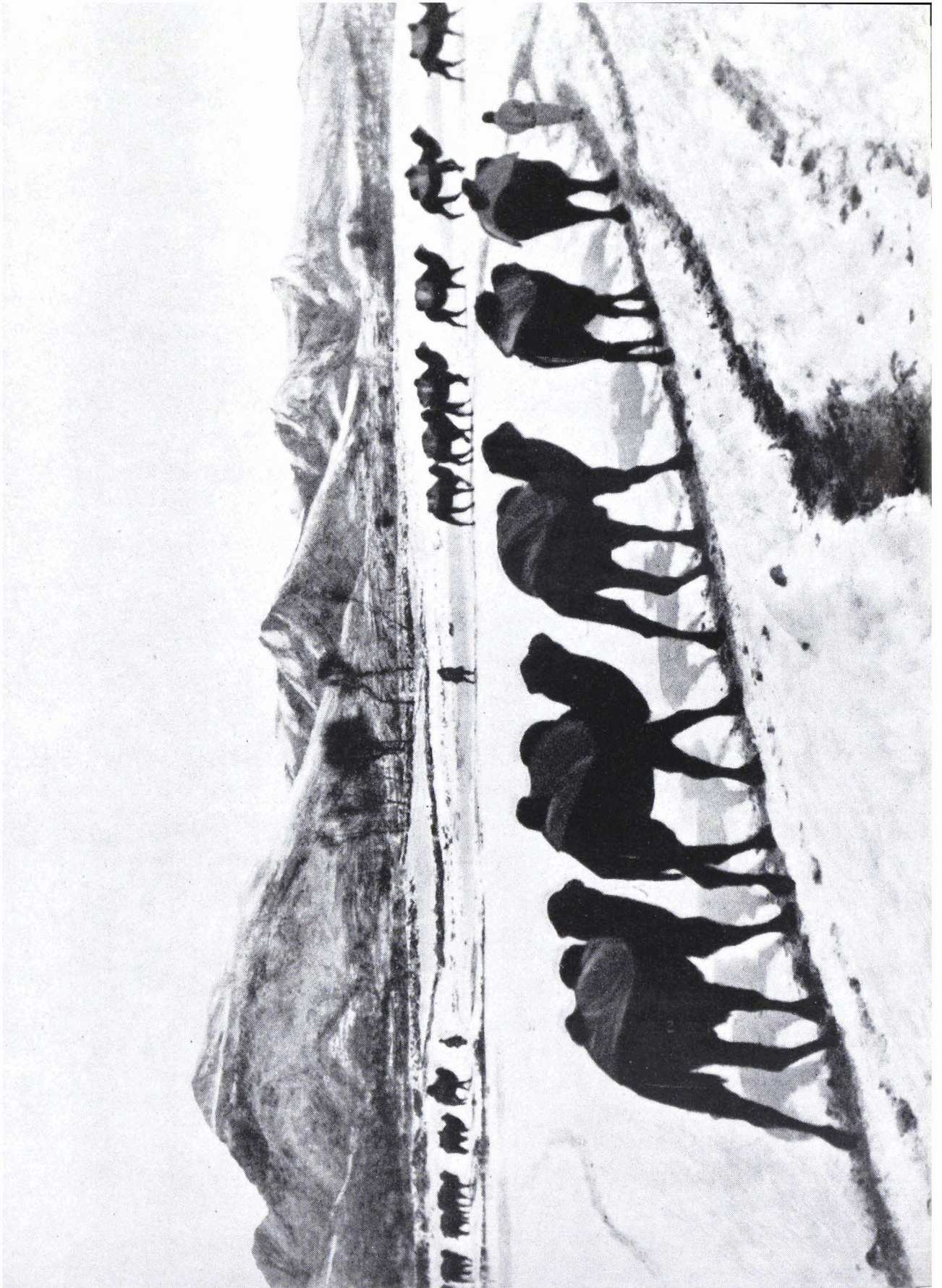
Road accidents are specially feared by all travellers on the rough and difficult tracks of Kansu, and Hunter records with gratitude that on two occasions he came through danger unhurt. "I had two rather serious accidents by the way: once the axle of my cart broke, another time a mule ran violently down a steep bank, but God protected me and I was not hurt, but arrived in Liangchow in safety. Here kind friends helped me to make my cart more comfortable before I travelled further."

In Liangchow he said farewell once more to the group who held the fort at this farthest outpost of the China Inland Mission. Before him lay the Gobi Desert, which he must cross once more



GEORGE HUNTER AND
HIS SERVANT NIMGIR





"THE WILD, WILD GOBI"

to reach those other lands which he had, so far, only glimpsed, but which from now on he must set himself the task of getting to know with complete intimacy. At Kanchow he had the very pleasant surprise of a first meeting with Dr. (later Sir) Aurel Stein of the Indian Educational Service, who had been exploring the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas with such conspicuous success, and was still engaged in archæological research in North-West China and among the buried cities of Khotan.

Leaving Kanchow, he got into difficulties before reaching Fuh-i. "The road was very difficult and twice the cart stuck in the mud. It became dark, but with the aid of a small lantern we eventually got through the water and the mud, but then we stuck in large sand-banks and at last reached Fuh-i about midnight, very tired and, I fear, in not a very good temper."

At Yü-men (Jade Gate) he recalled a tragic occurrence of Boxer Year: "This is a lonely and typical part of the Gobi. Passing this way, I have been thinking of the Nyström family who perished in this desert in 1900. Mr. and Mrs. Nyström were members of the Christian and Missionary Alliance and were stationed in that disastrous year at Ningsia in North Kansu. On hearing of the dreadful massacres in Shansi, they tried to escape to Urga in Outer Mongolia with their young family. The last that can be traced of them is that (probably by secret orders) they were escorted by the Prince of Aladran's police far into the Gobi and left to perish in the desert."

The spirit of the solitary wastes had captured George Hunter's imagination and on the long stages he yielded to the impulse of setting down in rhyme some of the impressions which he received in the silence and solitude of the great desert:

The Wild, Wild Gobi

I

Dear friend, if you will read this lay, and come along with me to-day,
I'll take you very far away, to view the wild, wild Gobi!
The lovely hart and pleasant roe in thousands wander to and fro,
This is their desert home you know, it is the wild, wild Gobi.

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2

The untamed camel you will see, for many years he's now been free,
For man he scorns to bend his knee, but roams in wild, wild Gobi!
The horses wild are also here, they've left their masters many a year,
They never now wear harness gear, but graze in wild, wild Gobi!

3

Large tracts of land are scorched and dry, of water there's but scant supply;
And walled around by mountains high, it lies this black, wild Gobi,
But where the deep pure river flows, the desert blossoms as the rose,
And rich and green the country grows e'en in this black, wild Gobi!

4

Sometimes the deep blue sky looks grand, when viewed from this great sea of
sand;
Above there is a better land, than this rough wild, wild Gobi.
When storms blow cold and fierce, and drear, the traveller knows that danger's
near;
No sheltered port or harbour pier, is found in wild, wild Gobi.

5

But were this all that could be said, with ease I'd sleep upon my bed,
I'd snugly pillow down my head, nor think of wild, wild Gobi.
But sad the news I've got to say, for thousands here are far astray,
And guides are few to show the Way, in this dark wild, wild Gobi.

6

The Kirghiz hordes they travel far, but never see the Morning Star,
Conquered by Moslem ruthless war, they wander wild, wild Gobi,
The Turks, they are the ancient stock, they're also bound by Islam's yoke,
Few shepherds care to seek the flock, in this great wild, wild Gobi!

7

The Mongol nomad cannot see, the Lamb that died on Calvary's tree,
He trusts the Buddhist phantom plea, and dies in wild, wild Gobi.
The Chinese everywhere are found, their dusty idols here abound,
They never hear the Gospel sound, in this far wild, wild Gobi!

8

The harvest's great, the reapers few, but ask what He would have you do,
And to His sacred trust be true, regarding wild, wild Gobi.
For His name's sake some hardship bear, to break His last command beware
Go preach the Gospel everywhere, e'en in the wild, wild Gobi!

Chapter Seven

GEORGE HUNTER, from first to last, was reckoned by his fellow missionaries to be a difficult man to live with. He knew no compromise in matters of what he was pleased to call "principle," but which others viewed as merely his personal outlook on life. In the old days of the Lanchow bachelor establishment, that interesting little community was often subject to upheavals in which he was the storm-centre, and his words or actions the occasion of outbursts of plain speaking. The young men who, as missionaries, were expected to live in unbroken peace and harmony found George Hunter a difficult member, and it was not a matter of unmixed sorrow when he packed his sleeping-bag and started on some long trek. His very rigid convictions upon all sorts of subjects made him utterly uncompromising in social relationships. There was, for example, one disastrous occasion when the Provincial Governor of Kansu invited the young men to a feast. It was a great honour that he did to the young Britishers, and an elaborate banquet was prepared in the most ceremonious fashion, with all sorts of *recherché* dishes, fine wines and every kind of entertainment for the guests. The Governor naturally reckoned it most suitable to ask the Dutch Jesuit Father to be fellow guest at the meal, for he imagined that the young Europeans would certainly be happy in each other's company and a pleasant social atmosphere would thus be created. When the time came runners were sent to the various houses to inform the guests that all was now ready, and they were asked to come to the banquet. Hunter and his party arrived dressed in the very simple Chinese gowns which they always wore, and all went well until the fellow missionary of the Roman Church made his appearance. "Nothing will induce me to sit down to a meal with a Roman priest," said George Hunter, and, in spite of pleadings from the bystanders that he would not cause difficulty to the Governor, he was adamant, and absolutely

refused to take food with the Catholic, much to the distress of all concerned. In the end the young Protestant walked out of the building, leaving the Governor to make what excuses he could to the other guests. His Excellency is reported to have passed it off with one puzzled remark: "How can one ever know what will please these Christians? When I asked two of them to meet, one of them flatly refuses to sit down with the other. Truly it must be strange doctrine which makes men look on each other with such dislike, so different from the teaching of the sage Confucius, who said, 'All men within the four seas are brethren.' Truly it must be a strange doctrine." So the vagaries of the Christians seemed to him as great a mystery as they have been to many another on-looker, but George Hunter, in spite of the appalling social difficulty which he caused, was convinced that he was right in refusing to yield to the opinion of others. This incident, needless to say, brought about one more big storm in the bachelor compound.

"The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small." Several decades later George Hunter and a Roman Catholic shared one cell in the Soviet prison in Urumtsi, and for more than a year were shut in to each other's company. Nothing is known of the talk of those two men during the long and dreary months, but it seems certain that, in face of the interrogatories, the torments and the anxieties which they shared, they must have found some point of contact where they could meet in fellowship at the feet of God.

Another point on which he was utterly unyielding was his antagonism to the celebration of Christmas, or, in fact, to the observance of any religious holiday. "Christ *Mass!*" He said with positive rancour when a group of Chinese who had come from distant places begged for some commemoration of the great day in far-distant Urumtsi, be it only that they might meet together for a simple service. "Christ *Mass!* There shall be no *Mass* said in this church." It proved a difficult problem and was only solved when the gathering took on an entirely social aspect at which the nearest reference to Christ *Mass* was the singing of

carols and whispered seasonal greetings, of which, officially, he knew nothing. On one occasion a Christian man, not realising the intransigence of his views, ventured to suggest that not only should a Christmas service be held, but that the church be decorated for the festival. At this his indignation burst forth and the flowers which had been bought for the purpose were all thrown out lest anyone should associate the birth of our Lord with the objectionable word, Christmas—"Christ *Mass.*"

Years later an old missionary friend once spent some time in his home and was indiscreet enough to bring a draught-board and a set of draughtsmen with him to Urumtsi. "I thought we might sometimes have a game of an evening," said his old friend. "A game!" replied Hunter, "do you think I am here to play games?" The offending board never showed itself again. Many years later still a band of young recruits was appointed to Sinkiang and one of them packed a football in his kit. He innocently produced it, but the withering displeasure of the veteran missionary was such that it was hastily removed from his view and hidden at the back of the box-room with other unwanted articles. Another of these young fellows, seeing for the first time the large guest-hall of the compound, thoughtlessly exclaimed: "Wouldn't this be a grand place for table tennis?" "Table tennis!" Hunter flamed forth, "I did not build this house for it to be used as a hall for amusements." The plan for playing table tennis died a natural death at that minute and was never mentioned again. Like Cuhoollin, who fought the tide for four days and was overwhelmed by it at the end, so Hunter fought to keep the younger generation from the door, and as they burst through, he died.

Needless to say, he always kept the "Sabbath," as he called Sunday, with scrupulous exactitude. Not only at home, but whenever and wherever he was travelling, nothing would induce him to cover a stage on the "Lord's Day." No matter in how miserable an oasis he was landed, he read his Bible, he talked with the people, he preached and gave away tracts and Gospels to those who

gathered, but neither he nor his animals ever broke the letter of the law.

His interpretation of Scripture was sometimes very disconcerting, for he took the Bible text quite literally and without subtlety of interpretation. He would preach with complete literalness on such a subject as our Lord's illustration of the camel and the eye of the needle, and that in towns where the people were quite accustomed to see camel caravans being halted at the little low gate to remove their bulky loads before they could pass through. If handled a little differently, what an appealing lesson could have been drawn from the word of the Master, but instead the realistically-minded Chinese would often go out from the service shaking their heads in amazement at the doctrine they heard. His confidence in the Heavenly Father's care for his daily needs of food and of raiment was very beautiful, nor did anything ever happen to shake it, but he felt that on his side he must live by the divine rule, and although God would certainly provide all that was necessary, and His promise to do so could never fail, yet the Word of God only spoke of one day at a time and man must not ask for more. One young man was somewhat taken aback when he innocently suggested that there was enough food left over for next day's dinner. This remark brought him a reproof, for Hunter did not like to feel that thought had been taken for the morrow when daily bread was only assured for to-day. Our Lord had clearly said: "Take no thought for the morrow what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink," and it was safer not to talk about to-morrow's dinner. Yet no one would dare to sneer at the childlike confidence of this man who, through a lifetime of persistent effort and of difficulties only known to himself, seldom knew how the money to supply his needs would reach him. While the China Inland Mission never failed to transfer remittances to date, he was often far, far away in some inaccessible place where no postal system functioned, and where he was literally dependent on God for daily rations of bread and water. George Hunter was a dour man with a character compounded of severity, sternness and obstinacy, but he was sterling to the

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core and showed occasional facets of faithful affection, and even tender-heartedness, which were most surprising. It was an almost unbelievable sight when, as the story of Jephtha's daughter was being read at morning prayers, his eyes were seen to be glistening with tears.

A man's character is revealed in the choice of his pastimes and no man has allowed himself fewer, but even Hunter had an occasional hour of relaxation, perhaps at a time when the Urumtsi house was snow-bound and he could not get outside the door for days. A peep into his study would have revealed the Scotsman of the Gobi putting the Song of Solomon into passionate and tender verse!

Chapter Eight

THERE were two main objectives to be pursued in the years which followed the trip to the Shanghai Conference: one was to become familiar with all the travel-roads of Sinkiang, and the other was to become acquainted with all the people who used them. It was quite evident that George Hunter's headquarters, such as they were, must be in the capital city of Chinese Turkestan. This busy, crowded centre was officially known by its Chinese name of Tihwa, but all the Tatar, Turki and Mongol tribes who jostled each other in its streets spoke of it as Urumtsi, while the caravan-men called it Hung-miao-dz, so that the names were interchangeable.

Any one man might have thought that the demands of such a town constituted a full-sized job, but George Hunter's passion for contact with primitive people drove him to seek them out in their desert encampments or among the folds and valleys of unexplored mountains, where they hid themselves with the skill and cunning of wild animals.

His travel journals take the reader out on little-known roads where the only Europeans he met were scientific men following some line of specialised discovery. "At Lo-to-ih I met Professor Mergbacher and Dr. Joeber, who are exploring in the Tienshan mountains. I continued my journey, travelling north-west, mostly downhill, to the city of Manas. Leaving there I made an early start from the city, as I heard that the Manas River, which I had to cross, was not so swollen in the early hours of the day, and therefore more easily forded. But when I reached its bank I found myself confronted by a broad, large river. I saw that it would be foolishness to attempt to cross without help, and as there was no one near, I waited on the bank. Presently four Mohammedans came along, riding on horses. I tried to get some information from them about the whereabouts of the pilot cart, but they were too much concerned about their own crossing to give me

much help. So I waited on and watched them. At first they got along all right, and one safely reached the other bank; but the other horses got beyond their depth and for a time it seemed that horses and men would certainly be drowned. After splashing and floundering about, however, the men regained control of themselves, and were able to hold their fallen horses' heads out of the water and help each other till eventually they all reached the other side. Thanks to the pilot cart, I got safely across. Later on, when in conversation with the elderly Mohammedan, I reminded him how near he had been to death, but the old man turned on me and said abruptly: 'If God wills it I shall die, but if not I shall live.' A terse summary of the Moslem outlook on life and on God.

"At the next large town, as courtesy required, I called on the Tzarist Consul, whom I had known in Urumtsi. When I came away an alarm was given—the Russians reporting that six Russian revolutionaries had arrived carrying bombs. As I was going to buy grain, my cart was stopped and I was roughly accosted by the police. I refused to answer all the private questions they asked me in the street, so I was dragged to the Chinese police station and was cross-questioned. Such treatment did not leave me in the best of moods and when the official demanded my papers I produced them all—English, Chinese and Russian documents. The matter was then quickly settled and I felt sorry that I had not been more patient through it all. Another day a Russian called me to come and see his books, which were precious relics he had hidden for years. Among them I was delighted to find many Bible portions in Russian. It was good indeed to secure these."

He continued his journey as far as Sin-si-hu (New Western Lake), where he was in Mongol country. "One Mongol came early with a present of two water-melons and wanted Mongol books. To-day I sent my card to the Prince, and he returned his own. His name is Payaer, and he is called by the Chinese Prince Pa."

Later he reached Toh-to-keh and mentions that, although he had travelled fifty-three miles, he had scarcely met anyone,

and only passed two or three houses. "Sometimes the road led through a tunnel of high willow-grass; at other times through a forest of desert poplar. In the high willow-grass there were millions of mosquitoes and I went quickly so as to get in before dark. When going through a willow-grass tunnel I was confronted with a deep sheet of water filling up the highway. There was no alternative. I had to push into the water, not knowing how deep it was, and gradually it became a rushing stream. The bed of the river being very uneven, one of the mules stumbled into a deep hole and fell. I went into the water and, after much difficulty, got both mule and cart put right again. The mosquitoes were really vicious; as I had to use my hands to put the cart right, they had full access to my face and it felt as if scorched by fire. To-night I thanked God, perhaps for the first time in my life, for the moon. I was glad to get in and get safely inside my mosquito curtains!"

The next part of the journey was over shifting sand mounds to Sand Fountain, and this road was negotiated with great difficulty. "The last two days the sun has been very hot, and to save the team I had to walk a good deal over the sand mounds. To-day I was so tired that I could scarcely sit or even lie in the cart. This morning I either forgot or lost my water-bottle. I became very thirsty and my mouth very dry. I tried to moisten it by sucking lump sugar, but the sugar would hardly melt in my mouth, and when it did it turned into glue, so that I was glad to leave the dry, sandy desert and to get to Chinhuo Ting, where there are trees and rivulets of running water."

The diary continues: "I have been rather unwell and dependent on a kind Mohammedan for milk, which was the only thing I could take." Some days later he writes: "I am much better to-day and preached both in the city and on the *bazar* outside the town. I had some opposition from a Tientsin man. These Tientsin business-men are numerous all along the north side of the Tianshan. Some of them have been Boxers, and nearly all of them have stories to tell about how the members of the Protestant and Roman Churches fight with each other in the

district of Tientsin! Most of them belong to a society called 'Tsai-li,' which demands that they do not smoke opium or tobacco, nor may they drink wine. But nearly all of them excel in fighting, gambling and immorality. To-day I met my old Turki servant, Jacob. He wishes to go to Ili and as I do not feel very well, I asked him to go along with me." The new escort was not to be relied on, and Hunter writes: "I trusted to Jacob to pilot me over the Chinhuo Ting River, but we had not gone far when both Jacob and the mule got beyond their depth. I shouted to him to turn down gradually with the current, as it was impossible for the mule to pull the cart against such a weight of water. He then turned too quickly and upset the cart in mid-stream, so that all seemed for a time to be floating down the river. I quickly got into the water, adjusted the cart and led the mule gradually over with the current. But really the strength of the water surprised me and Jacob was amazed that we got out of the difficulty so well. We came on forty-three miles, mostly through tall willow-grass to Tahoyen, where we dried our bedding."

A few days later they were at Sitai, where the northern and southern mountains almost meet and where there are many mounds and narrow valleys which make it a notable place for thieves. "As the sun was setting, a man on horseback rushed out of one of the valleys and rode up a very steep mound in front of us. I thought at once that he must be a mounted robber. He looked at us for some time and then rushed back and was soon joined by another man on horseback. It was getting dark and we were going in and out amongst gorges and I was thankful that Jacob was with me—not that he would be of any use against the robbers, but he was company to me. The men watched us closely from a distance, but we managed to get out of the gorges before it was quite dark and found a good road with a slight declivity. Here the animals went well and we soon left the evil-looking men behind in the lonely mountains. It was quite dark before we reached the stage and the large inn was filled with carts and travellers, but a man in the street volunteered to show me the military camp, as I

wished to tell them about the men we had seen in the mountains. We knocked at the door and asked them to open, as I had important matters to report. This they refused to do, but set the camp dog on us; my guide was unable to defend me, and I was bitten severely on the arm. The soldiers knew what was going on, but did not defend us from their dog. Had it not been for the man that was with me, I should have been torn to pieces by the ferocious brute. After some time I found an inn on the banks of the lake where I heard the occasional breaking of the waves on the shore, which reminded me of the shores of our own sea-bound home. But to-night my body is tired, my arm is sore from the bite of the dog, my heart is out of tune, and I fear my prayer cannot fully harmonise with the sound of the waves of the far-off lake, so as to praise 'the Lord of heaven, and earth, and sea.'"

Chapter Nine

THE winter of 1911-12 was the time when China, under the leadership of Sun-yat-sen, overthrew the Manchu Imperial Dynasty and became a republic. This event was not without repercussions in distant Sinkiang, and when the political crisis occurred, George Hunter was on the South Road and visiting Kashgar for the second time. He relates the incidents of that period in a letter to Shanghai: "During my stay in Kashgar, a great many alarming rumours were in circulation. Early one morning, M. Sokoff, the Russian Consul, told us that the city gates were closed, and that a number of men connected with the 'Gamblers' and 'Old Brothers' societies had collected at the Yamen and were murdering the Tao-tai.

"We found this to be true, and some time afterwards, on entering the city, we found that all the Republican flags had been taken down, leaving only the Russian and British flags, which were still flying over the Indian and Russian merchants' premises. The murderers had formed themselves into a kind of soldiers' camp and seemed to be in full charge of the city. A little later I heard of the murder of my friend, Mr. Wang, the Prefect of Aksu, and also that the Aksu Tao-tai had been massacred.

"Later on we heard of the murder of Mr. Chang, the Prefect of Karashar. The City Magistrate of Barkul and the Military Official were also killed. During the time that these massacres were going on, the British Consulate became a city of refuge for mandarins and others."

Lady Macartney, in a book entitled *An English Lady in Chinese Turkistan*, has spoken of "young Hunter" as their guest during the dangerous days of 1911. With the fall of the Manchu Dynasty, the queue which they had imposed on a conquered people went and where it was retained it might be cut off by a Republican soldier's sword at any city gate. Lady Macartney writes: "Mr. Hunter was dressed as a Chinese, with his own hair in a pig-tail, and my

husband insisted on his cutting off this appendage and dressing as a European. Otherwise he might be mistaken for a Chinese and get murdered. He was a big, tall man and none of my husband's things would fit him, so we sent to Mr. Högberg for a suit of his clothes and a hat, as they were of the same build; and we turned Mr. Hunter into what he really was—a splendid Scotchman.”

Continuing his diary, George Hunter writes:

“While staying in Kashgar, I received a letter from the Swedish missionaries in Yarkand, asking me to go there and help them with the Chinese work. On my arrival there, my servant was taken very ill, having been unwell for some time previously, and he died a few days later. I felt this very much indeed; he had been with me for several years, sharing many hard journeys and much rough travel. He was not a baptised Christian, but I read and prayed with him every day as we travelled, and when he was ill, he read his Chinese Gospel. To bury my Chinese ‘boy’ in this far-off place was a great grief to me. While staying in Yarkand, I continued my studies in Turki and preached to the Chinese on Sundays, receiving much kindness from the Swedish missionaries.

“It impressed me to see the numbers of men, women and children who came to the services for Turki Mohammedans every Sunday. The Swedish missionaries also have a printing press for Turki literature, and some of the Mohammedan tracts proved to be of great value on my return journey to Urumtsi. While staying in Kashgar, I saw that there was a good deal of friction between the Russian and Chinese soldiers, which once or twice nearly broke out into open hostility. One night the city gate was blown up by the Russian soldiers owing to some misunderstanding about paper-burning by the Chinese.

“In September I left Kashgar on my way back to Urumtsi. At the first inn I noticed that my host and hostess were grumbling at each other. Their careworn, sad faces too plainly told the tale that this practice was of long duration. They had no hope, no joy, no comfort, and I felt led to speak to them about our Lord. The old man admitted, as all Moslems do, that Jesus is

coming again, so I sang to them in Turki, the hymn 'Jesus is coming again.' The old couple seemed astonished to hear this from an infidel and they were much moved; the woman sighed and said, 'O God, what shall we do?'

"I have always been received kindly in Mazar, and I have often left tracts and spoken to the people here and I can but ask the question: 'What will the harvest be?' Will these people die as they have been brought up, trusting in Mohammed or will some of them trust in Christ?

"I pushed forward to Yakuduk, preaching and selling as I went. The people were very friendly and kind, but when I tried to sell books and tracts in the *bazar* some of the mullahs were very rude to me. Beyond Aksu the axle of my cart broke, so I had to stay at a little place halfway to Jam to get my cart repaired. At Bugur a rather shy young Turki followed me to the inn. I did not know what he really wanted, but soon discovered that he wished to buy the book from which I had been preaching in the *bazar*; he wanted the one that spoke about the 'Prodigal Son.'

"I next visited Korla. Here there is a Chinese Mohammedan who knows the Gospel very well, and is always very kind to me; perhaps he is a secret believer. Being a very windy day, it was hard travelling, and while turning the cart round, it was blown over and my boy's Turki cap was blown away. He ran after it like a roe as long as it kept on the ground, but when it rose towards the clouds he had to give up the chase.

"I was much concerned about the cart and prayed that the animals might not start before I got them taken out, as I really feared the cart might be blown away also. The boy, however, seemed more concerned about his cap, commencing to tell me the price of it. With great difficulty, we managed to turn back and wend our way by a longer route round the foot of the mountain. I pushed on in front of the animals so as to break the wind for them, and as the cart was now uncovered, it was easier to pull. Next day the wind was still very high and very cold, so much so that it was hardly possible to go outside the door.

“Carrying the mails in this disturbed province is a dangerous business. The roads are very unsafe and two of our own mail-carriers have been murdered recently, while others have been severely wounded. They are required to travel through the most disturbed districts, to cross deserts at all hours of the night and in every kind of weather, so they are in constant danger.

“On the road I heard that our landlord’s shop had been burned to the ground, and that my house was almost burned also. On reaching home I found this to be true. The boards at the front of our bookshop and preaching-hall were charred black and the building on the opposite side of the street burnt to the ground. A friendly Turki Mohammedan, a watchmaker, saved my house by using a small water-hose. The fire started at midnight on the opposite side of the street, and the strong wind blew the flames to our side, so that boards in front of neighbouring shops were burnt out, and it seemed that our place must also be in flames very soon. The neighbours say that a strange thing happened, for the wind suddenly changed and blew in the opposite direction; all agree in saying that God saved my house from being burned to the ground. This is the second time in Urumtsi that we have escaped from destruction by fire.”

A MONGOL WOMAN GLAD TO
EXCHANGE BUTTER AND MILK
FOR NEEDLES AND THREAD



A MAN OF THE NORTHERN
STEPPEES



SAND MOUNDS MAKE A TIRING STAGE



“WE REACHED DELIGHTFUL, COOL, SWEET WATER”



OUTSIDE URUMTSI ARE THESE HOT SPRINGS



A BUDDHIST PILGRIM ON THE LONG TREK

Chapter Ten

DURING these uneventful years George Hunter had re-schooled himself to a life of complete detachment from Western interests. By nature uncommunicative and at all times slow to share the deep things of life with others, he now lived surrounded by men to whom the most vital matters of his Christian life were but an occasion for idle curiosity or even light jest. When he prayed it was the lonely lifting of a heart to God, when he murmured a familiar hymn it was with no fellowship of praise, when he rejoiced he rejoiced unto himself, and when he faced disappointment there was no fellow creature to share its bitterness. For nearly a decade he lived alone and he carried this inward isolation so far that he even lost all natural desire for a companion, largely owing to the fact that among the Westerners whom he had met there did not appear to be one whom he considered suitable to share the life to which he had now completely adapted himself, and it never occurred to him to make friendship with a native of the country. As companion he would have required a man who, though completely loyal to the China Inland Mission and its principles, would be so detached from its organisation and traditions that he would never bring Turkestan and the work there under Mission control. Liberty and freedom of action he must have, and if any plans were suggested to control him he would quietly mount his horse and disappear for months. Was there any available man, he asked himself, to completely fulfil the apostolic declaration, "This one thing I do"? If so, he had not yet met him.

This was George Hunter's mind on the matter, but God who has ordained that it is not good for a man to dwell alone was already preparing, by strange and unknown ways, a fellow worker suited to meet such unusual demands. A young man who had come out some years previously from the town of Fleetwood in Lancashire was at that time tramping and preaching in the

villages of the province of Anhwei in Central China. As he travelled God was speaking to him and preparing his mind for an unknown future. During the brief time he spent at his mission station between itinerations, he heard some journals read at the weekly prayer-meeting which were written by a pioneer missionary who described very strange experiences in Chinese Turkestan. The pioneer's name was George Hunter and the younger man was Percy Mather, two names which were eventually to be associated in a remarkable missionary fellowship. At the same time the young man's thought was being stirred by the reading of an epoch-making book called *Missionary Methods, Paul's or Ours?*, by Roland Allen. God was controlling his thought as well as exciting his interests by the stimulus of this volume, and his outlook on missionary work was being revolutionised. From the day when he first read this book he never again allowed a Chinese to address him by the title usually given to missionaries of all societies, and which can be translated "Pastor." Henceforth he was "Mr. Mather," plain and simple, with no further title, and he there and then determined that nothing should ever hold him down to conventional methods of work. He would give himself to preaching Christ wherever he might be, but would not be restricted by the rules of precedent which so easily become law in the conduct of a mission station. Percy Mather was by now no longer a new worker and had enough experience of life in China and sufficient command of the language to form an independent judgment as to what should be the true and right relationship between missionary and Chinese convert. How often in later years he was heard to say: "Why all this super-care of the converts? They have the same Lord, the same Holy Scriptures and the same Holy Spirit as we have. We had to rely on these for our spiritual growth and they must do the same."

The letters and journals written by that distant pioneer, George Hunter, captivated his imagination, and gradually the conviction came to him that this was the sphere of work to which God was calling him. He studied the map and saw that Chinese Turkestan was in the very centre of Asia right outside China proper, but the

prospect of isolation and hardship had no terrors for him. Yet it was not a decision to be hastily made, and it was only after a considerable period of prayer for guidance and much earnest thought that a letter went from him to George Hunter at Urumtsi suggesting that he felt himself called to that distant place, and offering himself as a companion in the difficult pioneer job which was being done.

The first reaction of George Hunter, the canny Scot, to the offer, was to discourage this young enthusiast who, he imagined, had probably been unduly influenced by the glamour of adventure. Suppose this young man were to join him and then find the hard, exacting conditions of the life he was asked to share too much for him without the relaxation of a home and a family, what a calamity it would be. George Hunter knew only too well what might happen, and he knew that in the existing conditions a woman had no place in that life. If a married missionary couple came to live in Urumtsi it would automatically cease to be his centre. He sat down and wrote a straight and honest letter to this young man, whoever he might be. He warned him that life in Turkestan was very rigorous, that he could not count on normal food supplies, that he would often be in conditions where life itself was in danger, and therefore that it was a life for a celibate, and though he himself might be welcomed there must definitely be no thought of marriage. Percy Mather faced the conditions; he came to a definite decision, and to Hunter's surprise raised no difficulty even on the marriage question. He then wrote to the head of the China Inland Mission asking to be transferred to Turkestan. In the interval before the two men met George Hunter often questioned whether he had done right to even consider the offer or would he have been wiser to immediately discourage the unknown young fellow who might run well for a time but eventually find the strain of long isolation too great. In that case all his own life of sacrifice and self-imposed austerities might be wasted.

In the early summer of 1914 the pioneer missionary of Sinkiang was travelling southward to meet Percy Mather, who with his

escort, Arthur Moore, had been demolishing his long journey, stage by stage, and was now nearing the portal of the Great Wall of China, where he would enter the Gobi Desert. Soon they would meet and each would receive that first impression of the other on which so much of future happiness would depend. That day came, and as each looked into the other's face and took the other by the hand all fear was dispelled, and a most unusual and beautiful relationship grew up between the two men founded on the deepest sincerity and complete mutual respect and trust. From that hour to the very end neither ever let the other down on any single point. Although they often disagreed, no one could ever come between them. Strange to relate, with a curious rigidity which belongs to a bygone generation but survived as a missionary tradition in the China Inland Mission, through all the years of intimacy, close companionship and shared hardships, and in spite of the affection which grew into a relation comparable to that of father and son, they retained to the end in addressing each other, the formality of "Mr." Hunter and "Mr." Mather.

It now fell to George Hunter to introduce the younger man to the tribes of Central Asia. He took him travelling to places where he met Mongols, Tibetans, Turkis, Russians, Chantous, Hassas, Indians and Manchus. As the days went by Hunter rejoiced in the treasure which had been given him of a companion who utterly satisfied him and made no demand which was uncongenial to his nature. As for Percy Mather, he looked back on his own earlier experiences in China, and with an exuberance which only those who have had a similar experience can begin to understand he wrote: "Truly God plucked me out of Anhwei." Both men many a time said to each other regarding their companionship: "Blessed be God, who only doeth wondrous things."

The next year they had to consider building a little house on a piece of land Hunter had secured on a busy street in Urumtsi. Talking it over they felt it best that each should have his own house where he could live his own life, receive his own guests and use his own leisure as he wished. Years later a Turki pundit described the building of those houses in such a way as to make it a dramatic

performance. "That bothersome old man," he said, "would have everything his own way and, of course, the youngster had to give in to him. They worked from early morning to late at night making mud bricks, mixing mortar and working side by side with the two or three Turki masons they employed." In the end two three-roomed houses stood side by side. They were built of baked-earth bricks, the inside was daubed with whitewash, and the special pride of the two men was centred on the windows which, instead of being covered with paper as is usual in these parts, were fitted with small panes of glass, which actually were photographic plates bought from the local photographer and prepared for use by Mather.

Chapter Eleven

GEORGE HUNTER, the simple, unpretentious, unassuming man, was brimful of all kinds of first-hand knowledge. Learned men honoured him, and many whose names are world-famous would acknowledge that they had much to learn from this plain pioneer missionary. He knew that the commission which had sent him forth on the great trek was more important than any that brought them from Western lands, and he set about fulfilling it by means of every faculty of his being.

The trade-routes which intersected at Urumtsi led in many directions. The direct north-west road passed over into Siberia at Chuguchak, but one branch cut east through the Tarbagatai hills to the Altai Mountains, over the Irtysh River to Outer Mongolia. This trek afforded a rare opportunity of life among the sturdy tribes of Northern Mongolia. Another branch of the main road took westward to the fertile oases of Kuldja and Alma-ata. He was already becoming better acquainted with the southern trade-routes, but the mystery of the Barkul Range lured him to cross over and see what lay behind those lovely snowy peaks. He had travelled once already the road to Kashgar, but further south still lay the track across Lob, and this too he must cover. His travel equipment was of the simplest, and nothing but real necessities found a place in it. He never owned a camera, nor a typewriter. His journals were written by stylo on the flimsy sheets of an old-fashioned interleaved carbon book. He had no brilliant linguistic gifts and he did not set out to master the many languages of the trade-routes, but to make himself intelligible in as many of them as possible.

He went up to Sinkiang with a working knowledge of Chinese, and his first stay in Kashgar afforded him an opportunity for a good start in the Turki language. Life among the nomads taught him to make himself understood in Mongol and in Qazaq, but when he came to Kuldja and its neighbouring oases he heard the

people talking a language which was quite incomprehensible to him. It was neither Chinese, Turki, Qazaq, Mongol nor any of the Tatar dialects spoken among the tribes of the Siberian border. There were some Buriats in this neighbourhood, but their language was different from this. As he listened his interest was quickened and on making inquiries he found that the language which so intrigued him was Manchurian. He, of course, knew that Chinese had become the universal language in Manchuria, but he now learnt that large colonies of the troops who had fought under the Manchu Emperor Chien Lung (A.D. 1736) in the conquest of this area had settled down in these very fertile oases and their descendants still retained the old speech and customs of those far-off days.

Moving among tribes of such ethnic interest, and whose opportunity of hearing the Gospel was so scanty, focused George Hunter's thought on the importance of translating at all events one Gospel into the Qazaq tongue. The difficulties were great and he realised that he would require much more thorough knowledge of the language than he had at present before he could undertake the task. He was aware that a translation of a kind had once been attempted by a Qazaq-speaking Russian, but though he sought diligently for that volume it seemed impossible to trace any copy. This thought, as were all his thoughts, was translated into the region of prayer, and he told his own heart to be patient and trustful, but also to be alert to detect any leading of God which would make it possible for that Qazaq Gospel to come into being. Several years went by before an unsought contact brought that coveted volume into George Hunter's hand.

Travelling on one of the trade-routes, he was, as usual, selling books to the crowd which collected in the *bazar*, when he was approached by a man who asked him if he would give him a book in exchange for one he had which he himself could not read. Hunter was a match for any Eastern bargain-hunter and he merely told the man to bring along his volume that he might see what it was worth. When the man returned he had in his hand a

Gospel in the Qazaq tongue, but written in the Russian script. It was a discovery which brought joy and confidence to the missionary's heart, but the canny Aberdonian hid his satisfaction and the man still thinks that it was he who got the bargain. Now at last Hunter held the key with which the fount of knowledge would be opened, enabling him to produce the Gospel he so longed to distribute among the nomad tribes, and he went on his way rejoicing.

He returned home to give himself with new zest to the work of translation. From now onwards both he and Percy Mather realised afresh the urgency of getting the Scriptures into the hands of every tribe in Central Asia. Percy Mather was making good headway with the Kalmuk dialect and George Hunter quickly secured the help of an efficient mullah whose calligraphy was worthy of the task of transliterating the Gospel story into the script of the Qazaq people. They now worked harder than ever before, for between the arduous journeys which took up all the summer months, they applied themselves throughout the long, dark winter evenings to the task of making the Scriptures accessible to every man whom they might meet on their summer travel.

Meanwhile, a letter addressed to the British and Foreign Bible Society, Queen Victoria Street, London, was speeding on its way across Asia. It carried a request that if any Manchurian Scripture portions were available at the Bible House they might be dispatched to Urumtsi. The Bible Society is the missionary's best friend, and without delay parcels were packed and sent off as requested. They contained Manchurian Gospels which the Bible Society had never thought to place again in circulation. No longer needed in Manchuria, they found a use among the northern oases of Sinkiang. When the snows melted and the next travel season came round George Hunter started northward better equipped with Scriptures than he had ever been and both Manchus and Qazaqs eagerly received the book which was God's personal message to them and of which they were now aware for the first time in history.

Chapter Twelve

THE word “translator” conjures up varied pictures in the minds of those who hear it, but perhaps the most usual is that of a scholar seated in a beautiful library with walls of panelled oak. Around him are shelves laden with books of priceless value, and the huge oak table in the centre of the room is furnished with blotters, inkstands, and all that contributes to the comfort of a writer. A large chair is drawn up and on the table stands a beautiful reading-lamp carefully shaded so as to supply the writer with the best possible light for his intricate and difficult work. This imaginary scene includes, moreover, an able assistant ready to turn up passages in reference books and dictionaries, and to supply the savant with all the information that he may need at any moment. All that this translator writes is carefully typed and recorded, and no disturbance is permitted to reach him during the hours when he is at work. When he finally announces that he has finished the section on which he was working, and that the difficult task now nears completion, all rejoice that the world will soon have the benefit of what he has done.

To many who have lived in far-off lands, however, that same word “translator” evokes quite another picture. They may visualise a man working in a grass hut in a jungle clearing, in a snow dug-out in Arctic regions, or in a tent pitched on a sun-scorched Indian plain, for it is under any of such difficult conditions that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been re-expressed by a painstaking translation into some new language. In a small mud house of a Central Asian land and in one of the mud rooms which he has built with his own hands there sits an elderly man. His writing-table is made from a packing-case which has come to that remote place filled with Bibles from the British and Foreign Bible Society, the front of which has been cut away so as to enable him to put his knees under the table. Round the room are

a few rough wooden shelves, and on them stand books which are very shabby, but are this translator's priceless treasures. The man has no good light, for kerosene is too expensive at the moment for him to use it; he has only a native iron lamp holding vegetable oil in which floats a small piece of cotton twisted into a wick. With a pair of pincers, he patiently pulls the wick so that the bead of flame may be as large as possible and the light shine on his paper as he writes. By his side there lies a book—one which he has taken a long time to secure and from which he would not part for any money. This translator actually is George Hunter and many a mullah has complained bitterly of the long hours and the close work required of him when he has undertaken to act as helper and calligraphist in the preparation of this exacting book.

His first effort as a translator had been made in the early years of his Central Asian life. It was the custom in that Moslem land to transcribe all religious books by hand. These manuscripts were not easy to come by, but he was able to secure one which was a standard theological work largely read by the Turki people in Sinkiang. The book was entitled *Narratives of the Prophets*, and it contained seventy-one articles dealing with the creation, the lives of the prophets, and ended with an account of the death of Mohammet and incidents regarding his disciples. There was one long chapter on Alexander the Great, while another on the various heresies of the early Church related that, according to one Christian sect, Jesus is God, that according to another He is the Son of God, and that according to yet another He is Son of the Trinity. In a short chapter on the Virgin Mary it was stated that Jesus frequently spoke with His mother before His birth, and also that during His lifetime he restored life to men like Shem, the son of Noah, "who had been dead for thousands of years." It was a bulky volume measuring fourteen inches by ten, four inches thick, and weighed from fifteen to twenty pounds. Hunter translated portions of this book at different times and ended by producing a very quaint volume which was of considerable interest to the restricted public which knew anything about

Sinkiang, its remarkable population, and the beautiful language spoken by its Turki inhabitants. The coarse paper was made from local material, often from the leaves of the desert iris, and the format was the usual style of Chinese book, with each sheet written on one side only and folded back to back. The sheets were stitched together by a deft Chinese workman and made a neat volume. George Hunter had succeeded in buying a second- or third-hand duplicating machine, and a skilled writer transcribed the Turki text on the waxed stencil sheet while Hunter wrote the English translation below. Every sheet was rolled separately and the curious little volume went out in small quantities as its author and printer could find time to issue the tiny editions. A few copies even found their way to the Oriental bookshops near the British Museum in London. A review of this book by Dr. St. Clair Tisdale appeared in the *Moslem World*: "This little book presents several features of considerable interest. The copy that lies before me is not printed, nor even lithographed, but produced by hand in the following circumstances. 'The best I could do,' says Mr. Hunter in the Introduction, 'was to take one hundred copies off a private mimeograph and use the Chinese style of binding. I ask my readers to bear with me, if it is a little difficult to decipher.' The result is a little book well worth the cost as a curiosity, to say nothing of its intrinsic interest as a sign of the brave spirit in which its translator, publisher and editor (for all these titles rightly belong to Mr. Hunter), is working to fit himself the better to preach the Gospel of Christ to the Moslem inhabitants of a very remote part of the earth."

Chapter Thirteen

THE first few months after Percy Mather's arrival were spent in familiarising himself with a country and a people totally different from those he had met in the Anhwei villages. The cold of the Central Asian winter surprised him and when the thermometer registered from forty to fifty degrees of frost he appreciated Hunter's determination that he should have a little house where there was sufficient comfort to make life bearable under these hard conditions. He had never seen such snowfalls as those which now piled up the drifts to the height of eight feet in their own courtyard, so that the two men had to cut a narrow pathway for themselves to the front gate between walls of congealed snow. When the blizzards swept across the Urumtsi plain the wind whistled through every crack and crevice of the little mud house, and the Russian brick stove, which had seemed to give luxury conditions earlier in the year, now barely supplied warmth enough to make life tolerable.

The main feature of the Urumtsi spring is the dissolution of snow and ice into a sea of quaking mud which makes it impossible to get outside the city gates. Several weeks of hot sunshine are required to bring the roads back to anything like their normal condition. George Hunter by this time knew every phase of this climate of extremes, and while they were still kept indoors by the mud he would say: "Now is the time to overhaul our travel outfit, for in three weeks we shall be on the road again."

From then on, the long treks began and Percy Mather was taught all the travel lore of Central Asia by the only Westerner who had completely mastered it. At one time their route lay south-west among the Mongols of Karashar and at other times it led north-west among the Kalmuks and the Qazaqs. Very soon Percy Mather had lost his heart to the nomads and particularly to the Mongols. On one of their trips a Mongol Living Buddha presented the two missionaries with a Kalmuk boy who had

caused difficulty in his own tribe by his wilful ways, and this boy, Nimgir, became a faithful attendant and travel companion on many a long trek. He handled animals as none but a nomad herdsman can handle them, and he saved his masters hours of fatigue in caring for the beasts.

Hunter's travel journals are full of incident, and the following is typical of many: "Mr. Mather and I started on a journey to Kuldja, a Chinese town on the Russian border. As we wished to meet as many of the Qazaqs and Mongols as possible, we went by the mountain route. The first day we travelled about ninety *li*¹ and camped on the stony banks of the Tou-tuen River. By the time we had got our ponies unloaded, tent pitched, food cooked and grass cut for the animals it was dark and we were all very tired. Owing to the rain, the river was in flood and the water very thick with mud, so that our food was submerged and when we came to use our rice it was very yellow and the tea looked like cocoa and tasted like mud.

"Next morning two carters seemed rather interested to see foreigners camping out in such a place, so they stopped their cart and spoke to us. They told us they had people at home who could read, so we gave them Chinese Gospels and tracts to take back with them. Later on two other Tungans helped us to find a place where it was possible to cross the flooded river; we made several attempts and in the end we managed to get across safely. We paid our guides their fee and gave them in addition two copies of the Gospels. Later on in the day we reached the banks of the Changi River, which, being in flood, looked very forbidding. However, two camel-owners were riding horses and picking out a safe place for their camels to cross, and they served as excellent guides. Later we crossed the Hutupéh River, which, being in flood, was rather dangerous, but again two camel men piloted us safely over.

"We camped near a farmer whose family received us very kindly. The name of the place is 'Clear Water River' and we were glad for once that it was true to its name, for it was good indeed

¹ The *li* or Chinese mile is one-third of an English mile.

to drink clear snow water once more. Later on we came to Hsi, quite an important place situated at the junction of three roads, which has a very mixed population. We camped a few *li* outside the city and many people visited us. One day a man told us that his mother was a member of Pastor Hsi's church and that one day Mr. Hudson Taylor had visited their home. He remembered the old missionary, who took him by the hand and exhorted him to repent. Another day we met a Tungan, who had travelled a great deal, having visited India and Arabia. He knew Arabic well, so we gave him an Arabic Gospel. A few days later we camped on a damp, marshy meadow where Mongols were passing backwards and forwards. Some of them visited our camp and some friendly Qazaqs also brought us milk. This district belongs to the popular Mongol Prince Biyer, who was educated in Japan and is at present in Peking.

"In a few days we reached a place called Toto. This is one of the hardest parts of the summer road to Kuldja on account of the horse-flies and mosquitoes. The former begin to calm down at sunset, but then the armies of gnats and mosquitoes come out in full force, so that there is no rest day or night for man or beast. When we reached the edge of a hot, sandy desert we found it impossible to camp, so set off again towards evening when the heat was less and the horse-flies' fury abated. We had not gone far before we met an old man who was utterly exhausted and parched with thirst. A fellow traveller had a gourd of water which he held to the old man's lips and he gulped the water down most eagerly. Thus his life was saved, for when thirst overtakes a traveller he soon becomes delirious and loses his bearings. After that we had a hard journey of about 120 *li*, first on the main road, then across soft sand dunes, then along the hard, stony bed of the Agal River. There was very little grass, so we pushed on long after dark until, hemmed in by steep rocks on one side and the river on the other, we were obliged to stop. We pegged the horses down with long ropes and let them pick up what grass they could, which was very scanty. By the time we had made our supper we were completely fagged out and

all three of us fell asleep just where we were without pitching our tents, spreading our beds or even shackling the horses. We slept soundly until daybreak, when we awoke rather cold and shivering, but thankful indeed to see that none of our horses had been stolen.

“The next day we crossed the Agal River, which was not easy as the water was deep and swift and carried with it many large stones, but we managed to get over all right excepting that some of our stores and clothing got wet. About noon we arrived at the junction of two roads where was a log cabin, a kind of guard-house kept by a Mongol and his wife who were very kind to us. In this district and near the Kash River are many Zungar Mongols who speak the Kalmuk dialect. We camped near the head of the pass, close by forty-five Qazaq tents and five Mongol tents. Here we bartered needles, thread and dried fruit for milk and butter. One small boy who could read brought us some milk and went away extremely delighted with a Gospel in exchange. We visited the headman of the Qazaqs in this district. He invited us into a large tent, the sides of which were adorned with beautiful tapestry all made by the women of the tribe, and the floor was covered with most expensive rugs. When we left, the chief’s son escorted us for part of our journey and when we next camped, our Qazaq neighbours most kindly gave us a dish of *pilau*, which is rice cooked in fat with carrots, meat and dried fruits. Most of the tent-dwellers had left for the hills and would not return until winter.

“On the return journey we passed the junction of the Tigris and Kongus rivers and travelled for sixteen hours in great heat, covering sixty-three miles without meeting a single man or beast. At midnight we found some water of which we drank almost a bucketful between the three of us, and I was so tired I could not even help to unload the ponies. We slept amid rushes, which proved to be a real hotbed of mosquitoes. Next day we camped close by some Qazaq tents, and here one of our horses vanished. We searched in vain all the rest of the night and the next day. Later we moved our camp upriver to escape heat, horse-flies and

mosquitoes, and pitched our tent next to that of the man who had stolen our horse. We knew nothing of this, but a Sart farmer brought us word that he knew where the horse was and if we gave him five taels he would take us to it. Mr. Mather went with him and very soon found out that he did not really know where the horse was, but knew some people who had heard that it had been found. Each of these people demanded money before they would tell anything, so we refused all payment and instead sent for the Qazaq headman. He quickly sent out some men, who brought the horse back to his tent. Of course, in accordance with local custom, we had to give the thief something "for his trouble," but that was a small price to pay for a valuable beast.

"Later on the Qazaq headman, Urus Bai, sent for us, but we objected to taking a day's journey over very hard roads to see him. The messengers then gathered the neighbouring Qazaqs together, seized us both, bound Mr. Mather with ropes and proceeded to do the same with me. We did not struggle in any way, and on our consenting to go with them we were unbound. I was really ill and Mr. Mather would not hear of my taking the long journey, so he set off with our servant while I remained behind and looked after the camp. Happily for us, there were some Chinese officials collecting taxes about thirty *li* the other side of the headman's tent, and Mr. Mather demanded that he be taken to them. They apologised for the rough treatment we had suffered, rebuked the headman, and ordered that the thief should be taken to our tent and flogged publicly, whilst the man who had ordered us to be bound was also to be taken to our tent and beaten. Mr. Mather and the servant then set off for the camp, but when it was dark the two Qazaqs who were acting as guides refused to go any further, and they were obliged to find the way home as best they could. Happily, the horses remembered the road and I was very thankful indeed when I saw them return safely about midnight.

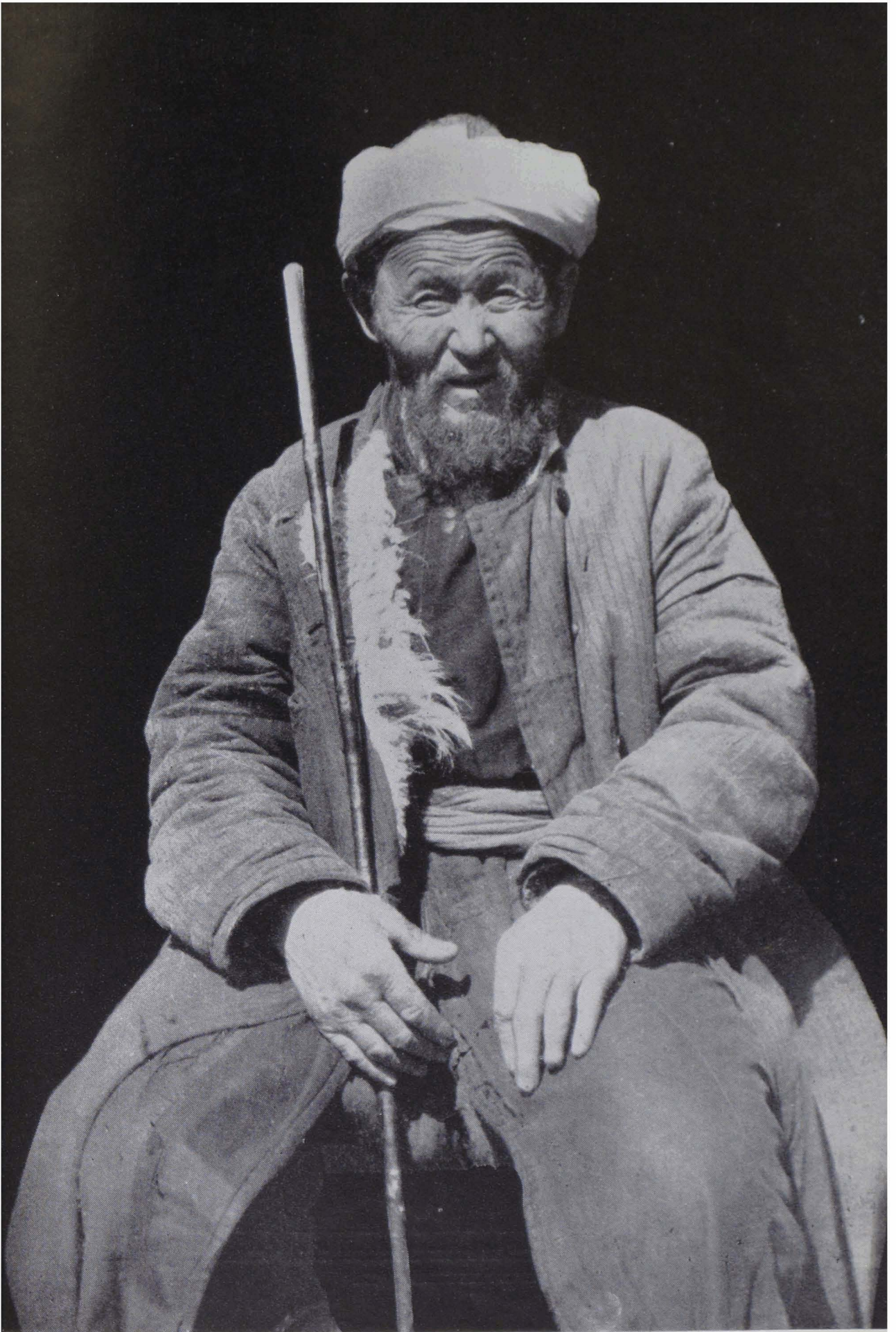
"Next day, the Qazaq headman sent round a small official accompanied by a young simple lad who was alleged to be the thief. We cross-questioned the boy and found that he was only



THE TOWER OF SIRKIP. WHEN THEY PASSED IT, THEY KNEW THEY WERE NEARING HOME



A MOUNTAIN SHEPHERD



A MAN FROM THE HILLS



A SHAMAN PRIEST OF THE OLOT TRIBE. HE BEATS THE DRUM AND SPINS AROUND TILL ALL THE LITTLE BELLS JINGLE

servant to the real thief, and, being a stranger to these parts, was to act as scapegoat. From the evidence we all agreed that the boy's master was the real thief. When we sent for him, he turned out to be our near neighbour and the very man who had taken a leading part in binding us. He confessed his guilt, took off his coat and asked to be allowed to receive his beating. 'No,' we said. 'We will conform to your own custom that when a thief steals a horse and is found out he must refund four. Our stolen horse is now very thin and his back very sore through the rough treatment he has had at your hands; perhaps he will not hold out to the end of our journey. However, we do not want four horses, just give us one and that will be sufficient.' As soon as he heard this he flew into a rage and kicked his young servant boy for giving him away as the thief. The boy had his own horse with him and the official generously offered to give us that one, but of course we refused it. So he returned to report the matter to his chief while we packed our things and went our way, thankful indeed to get away safely from such a wild place.

"We continued our journey along the banks of the river where there were miles of wild apple tree forests. The path often passed among the trees, so all we needed to do was to lift our hands, break off a small bough and help ourselves to apples. It was rather early in the season, yet many of the apples were fairly sweet and most refreshing. We forded the river, climbed the watershed and travelled part of the way in company with two Qazaq boys riding oxen laden with bags of apples.

"On Sunday several Qazaqs and Kirghiz came to our tent and listened to the Gospel. One young fellow played on a guitar and sang for us. We also sang some Turki and English hymns, which he seemed to enjoy and asked for more, and although the weather was cold and damp, he stayed until it was almost dark. Next day the weather cleared a little, so we packed up our things and continued our journey. As we looked back we saw we had just crossed the mountains in time to avoid a snowstorm, for snow was already falling on the pass. After some days we camped at the head of the Yoldus Valley, where there are many Mongol tents.

One old lama read Tibetan very well and translated it fluently into Mongolian. We then journeyed on through uninhabited country and camped near an *obo*,¹ in the same place where I stayed when journeying this way some eight years ago. On the Lord's Day we rested. Some Mongols visited our tent, also two Tungans who were collecting the horse-tax and had got into trouble, the Mongols threatening to beat them. They asked us to help them and spoke of fighting the Mongols, but we advised them not to do so, but to report the matter to their own superiors. The tax is farmed out by the Government to one Tungan, who in turn sends other men to collect as much as they can. This plan is a source of trouble and danger, the taxes on timber and hides being farmed out to Tungans so that timber is now six or more times the price that it used to be. The large fir trees floated down the River Tigris are now so dear that many cannot afford to buy them and are obliged to use the poorer trees which grow on their farms and round about their houses. A friendly shepherd and his boy brought us milk and butter and told us of the horse tax trouble, saying that formerly the tax for a horse was 30 cents; now it is taels 1.50.

"To-day the mule fell while crossing a mountain stream strewn with large granite boulders, and all three of us had to jump in the water before we could get it on its feet again. We were high up the mountains and close to the snow and so had rather a cold journey. We came to a Government horse ranch, where were about four hundred horses. We knew the Mongol in charge, he having visited our house in Urumtsi last spring in company with a Tibetan lama. We gave a Gospel and some tracts to a lama who could read and understand Tibetan very well.

"Next day the road was hard and rocky and led over high mountains; we camped near four Mongol tents and the Mongols brought us milk and butter. Later we crossed the Shar Davan Pass, a most difficult road and doubtless the highest mountain we have traversed this journey. After a long steep descent we camped in a Mongol farming district and a Mongol farmer came and

¹ Mongolian shrine.

helped us to shoe some of our ponies. We gave him a Gospel and some tracts. From there the road ran east for a short distance, then north, and we got a glimpse of the mountains of Urumtsi. Now the road was mostly downhill until we came into the region of pine trees and down to the farming districts again, and so, a few days later we arrived back in Urumtsi. We were glad to get our mail and to find our servant had looked after things so well during our absence. Altogether we were away seventy-five days and journeyed over a thousand miles on horseback.”

Chapter Fourteen

MOST of the correspondence relating to the period 1916-25 told of journeys, treks and itinerations in all directions. The two indefatigable travellers knew that the only way to get their message scattered abroad was to carry it themselves along the highroads and among the byways. They fully realised that as time went on the work of evangelisation was becoming more difficult. Restrictions closed in on them so gradually that only the alert would take note of them. The Soviet Government was antagonistic to the missionary, and wherever she could tighten up her control of travel permits she immediately did so. The year 1920 was the last occasion on which George Hunter was able to send one of his detailed reports of an itineration in the Altai and Kobdo districts of Outer Mongolia. From that time onward no missionary has been allowed to travel there. The journal makes it abundantly clear that the two men were welcomed by the Chinese, Qazaqs and Mongols alike. They started out well equipped with Scripture portions in all the languages of Central Asia and everywhere they found ready acceptance of the books.

“Mr. Mather and I started with Ningir for Altai and Kobdo,” writes George Hunter, “and all through the journey we sold Chinese, Turki, Mongol, Qazaq and Arabic Gospels. At Manas we met a young Russian who had had some trouble with his Sart master, who cut his head open with a stone, so we dressed the wound and took him home. One farmer gave us grass and bran in exchange for tea and salt, and all through the trek we bartered such goods for food and fodder. Later on we came to a pool and finding the water undrinkable we set off through the brushwood, and after much searching came to the deep, muddy water of the Manas River. Here we met a Kalmuk from Karashar who could read Tibetan, so we gave him a Tibetan Gospel. A colony of Tungans live here, but as a recent flood broke their

dam and they had no water for their fields they left for the Russian border to plant opium. We were attacked by swarms of fierce flies, mosquitoes and horseflies. The Post Office couriers were most kind; they cooked some food and shared it with us, and helped us over a deep branch of the river. We had difficulty in finding our way through the brushwood, marshy grass and high dunes, and it was dark when we got in. We even had trouble in getting coarse grass for the beasts, and it was hard to get water because of the soft muddy shore. When at last we did reach water, it was bitter and had a strong taste of soda. The next morning we were very tired indeed, but had to leave before the swarms of horseflies got abroad; we thought we had escaped them, but they attacked us in full force, driving the poor horses almost mad with pain. They needed no urging forward and were as thankful as we were to leave the lake behind. For some time we followed a cart road used for transporting salt, then struck north over a bare, stony desert where the wind was like a blast from a furnace. It was with great delight that we reached a beautiful little oasis called Goat Spring, where we found fairly good grass and delightful cool sweet water. Here we spent Sunday. Again the horseflies became unbearable and we hurried on to an encampment of one hundred Mongol tents—Torguts of the Kalmuk branch. Just as we were leaving, a party of Russian military refugees came along, and among them one officer who could speak English fairly well told us they had escaped from Siberia and were on their way to Altai, intending to go through Mongolia to Harbin. The next party we met consisted of some fifty Torgut Mongols with bullocks and camels bringing telegraph poles from the mountains two or three stages away. We gave them some Gospels and tracts, then pushed onward as we had many miles of desert to cover before we could reach the water of the Hobuk River. After dark we missed our way and it was 10.30 p.m. before we reached the river and midnight before we found a camping ground and got the horses fastened down for the night. We ourselves only took a drink of cold water and lay down hungry and tired. Next day quite a number

of Mongols and their children came round to see us, so we gave them tea and sugar in exchange for milk. The head Mongol sent round to report our presence at the Yamen and the magistrate sent a soldier to see who we were. The soldier was very friendly, having previously seen us in Tihwa. We distributed Chinese and Mongol Gospels, then continued our journey for about twenty-five miles, camping near some Mongol farms. Here we met two lamas and gave them Tibetan Gospels. At a place called Heh Shan Teo, there were about forty-three bullock carts and we gave Chinese Gospels to the Shansi carters. Next day we travelled downhill for about thirty miles and camped on the shores of the Ulungur Lake, but the horses did not like the reed grass, nor did we enjoy the brackish water. We rode for about seven hours along the shore of the Ulungur Lake, then struck across the desert and camped on the banks of the Irtish River. Here again we were badly bitten by mosquitoes until a strong cool wind sprang up and gave us a little respite. A Russian called at our tent and we gave him a Gospel in Russian, then we came on a long stage partly through sand dunes and partly stony desert, crossing the Kran River by ferry and journeying on until, after dark, we camped near to Altai.

“One day some Qazaqs passed us and quite a number called at our tent. We gave them Qazaq Gospels and at dusk a man from the Yamen brought us our passport written in Chinese, Qazaq, Turki and Mongolian. The General was out early this morning inspecting the irrigation channels, and as he had to pass our tent he called in and stayed a short time. After he had gone we went on the street preaching and bookselling. We met one Kalmuk Mongol and when we asked him if he would buy a book he replied, ‘I have got one,’ and putting his hand into his bosom pulled out a well-thumbed Kalmuk Gospel. He said he had had it for four or five years and that he got it from another Mongol, who had bought it in Tihwa. This man is four or five days’ journey from his home, but he carries his Gospel everywhere with him. We spent the next few days preaching and bookselling and we were glad to leave the burning plains and come on to a place high

up in the cool mountains. We called at a Qazaq tent and found one old woman, her only son having gone to visit some friends. We gave her matches and needles in exchange for milk. Further on were more Kalmuk tents where again we gave Gospels and tracts in exchange for milk and butter. We visited some Mongol tents in one of which was a Halha lama doctor who was greatly revered by the people. He could read Tibetan and Mongol, so we gave him some Gospels and he gave us butter and cheese. We visited some more Mongol tents where the people belonged to the Ölot tribe of Kalmuks and we left books with them. Several Qazaqs visited our tent, so we preached to them and gave Gospels to those who could read. In the evening a Mongol gave us milk in return for eye medicine.

“On our way to Kobdo, as we drew near to the camp of one of the most popular Qazaq chiefs in Altai, we were met by one of his officials, who requested us to call and see the Chief, as he was ill. When we reached his tent, we were welcomed by Bai ta Mullah. I was glad to see him; he speaks perfect Chinese and had previously helped me with the translation of the Qazaq Gospels. We found the Chief suffering from heart and lung trouble; we gave him some medicine, but fear there was little hope of his recovery. His men were very kind to us and gave us boiled mutton and milk.

“At our next camp quite a number of Qazaqs passed, so we preached to those who visited us and distributed books. We then crossed the Uragaitu Pass, 9,700 feet over a fairly good road. Some Qazaqs who could read travelled with us, and we gave them Gospels. We camped on the bank of a river that rises in the Uragaitu and flows into the Kara Lake and whose waters eventually flow into the Kobdo River and then to the Kirghiz Lake. Another day some Mongols passed us, and we gave one of them some Gospels and tracts in exchange for a wooden basin. Later on we missed our way, taking the west side of the lake instead of the east. When we tried to ford the river that runs from the Kara Lake to the Dain Lake we found it too deep, so had to return and go by the eastern shore. On the way we saw

some official-looking Qazaqs with guns; they asked us for bullets, but we gave them Gospels, and also distributed books to many Qazaqs in the district of the Kara Lake. On a beautiful green plain, just under some fir trees we saw what seemed to be a large *bazar*, but as we drew near we found it was a party of Sart merchants going to Kobdo who had met another party coming from the place, with some hundred donkeys, loaded with brick tea. The Sarts were exchanging *salaams* and conversing with one another in high-pitched voices. While crossing a river that runs into the Dain Lake, one of our mules tripped over a huge boulder and fell into the river. Mr. Mather and our servant went to the rescue, and eventually got the mule on his feet again, though in the struggle Mr. Mather was also knocked over into the icy-cold water, which rises in a lake which even at this time of the year is covered with ice. We journeyed along the ice lake for about two miles and then crossed the Akorom Pass and camped near a bank of snow not far from the top. Quite a storm of hail swept down the valley just in front of us and we were very glad to escape it. After some days we left the Qazaq district and found ourselves among the Urungu Mongols, where thousands of yaks were grazing on the mountains. We met a young lama, who took us to see some of the Chinese merchants who trade in hides and wool. We left Scriptures with them, gave a Tibetan Gospel to the lama and sold Gospels and Acts in their own language to two Noghai men. Then we came to a house occupied by a Russian merchant. Two Qazaq travellers stayed there for the night with us and an Ölot Kalmuk Mongol asked permission to travel in our company. We found him to be a well-informed man with a good knowledge of geography.

“One day we took the wrong track, following a big cart-road which we felt sure must go to Kobdo, but it only went as far as some Russian and Chinese wool-merchants’ store tents, all the time taking us too far south. We had been trying to avoid this southern route so as not to have to cross and recross the swollen Bujungtu River. We crossed it once all right, but as we went along the bank it grew bigger and bigger until it was impossible

for us to follow the road through the gorges as it crossed and recrossed the river, so we made a big detour and followed a path which led us up a steep mountain. The path proved to be an old cattle track to some tents which had moved away; we could not very well retrace our steps, so pressed on in order to cross the mountain and again reach the Bujungtu River. The task got more and more difficult as we ascended the mountain and nightfall found us in a place where the foot of man has seldom trod. There were huge boulders of rock perched on ice and snow and we had no grass nor fuel. Our servant was much afraid, and no wonder, for it was a really dangerous place. We divided a small piece of bread between us, but we did not eat it, each thinking he had better save it until morning so we went to rest hungry and tired and spent a cold night. Next day we set off without breakfast, first going to the top of the rocks and taking our bearings, then trying to find a way over the east shoulder of the mountain. By dint of a lot of manœuvring we were able to get safely down and were extremely glad to find we were clear of the gorge. When we found a place where we saw the marks of cattle all our fears vanished, but our servant was quite exhausted, so we decided to camp at noon and have some food and rest.

“We overtook some Qazaqs who gave us a piece of mutton and invited us to travel with them, but as they were taking the short road, which meant fording the river three times, we had to decline, one of our horses being lame and the rest too tired to cross the swollen stream. We left them and went due east up a small river, a longer way, but the only way possible for loaded horses with the river in flood. All along the tributary there was splendid wild rhubarb growing, so for want of a better name we call this Rhubarb River. We gathered a good supply, also a stock of wild onions and mushrooms, which grew plentifully. We camped near the top of Rhubarb River, where there was an abundance of good grass which the horses enjoyed while we rested and had a feast of rice, rhubarb, mushrooms, onions and the portion of mutton which the Qazaqs gave us, our Turki servant specially enjoying this latter.

“After we crossed the watershed we struck the Kobdo main road. Until then we had not been quite sure whether we were on the right path or not, but now we were soon in the Mongol district. In the first tent we found only one woman at home, so bought dried cream from her and bartered needles for milk. We camped near the end of the valley close by a lama’s tent. He was very kind to us and gave us milk and butter in exchange for Gospels, needles and thread. When we left several young lamas rode after us wanting our books, and we were glad to supply them. A young Mongol caught up to us and in conversation told us he was a Torgut and belonged to a prince with whom we were friendly at Tihwa. He was acting as postal courier and showed us the mail he was carrying. We gave him a Gospel, and after talking for some time he left us and galloped on his fast, fresh horse while we went slowly along the south-east bank of the Bujungtu, past a Mongol prince’s encampment, and pitched our tents by the river about two miles above Kobdo. We called on the Russian Consul, who kindly gave us some Peking newspapers only a month old. These were the first papers we had seen for about six months. The mail between Kobdo and Peking goes by fast courier and only takes one month.

“We also visited the Kobdo Governor, who received us very cordially and provided us with a special passport in Chinese and Mongol for the Kobdo district. We then went on the street and sold Gospels in the Chinese, Mongol, Kalmuk, Qazaq, Sart and Russian languages. As there are practically no small coins here, all trade being done with bricks of tea, we accepted Russian rouble notes, but these are not of much value, seeing the rouble exchanges for 1 cent only. A Mongol led us to the tent of an official in charge of the Customs, who examined all our Scripture portions and bought books in Mongol, Kalmuk and Tibetan. A few days later we moved our tent further down the river where there was better grass for the horses and where we were nearer to the town. On the *bazar* many Russians asked for Gospels and some wanted the complete Bible. One Greek priest, a refugee, was very much interested, but as our Russian vocabulary is very

limited we could not converse with him, but a smart little Russian boy, whose father is head of the Russian merchants here, could speak to us quite well in Mongolian. We sold out all the Mongol and Tibetan Gospels we had brought with us, with the exception of a few which we reserved for the return journey. As one of our horses had a sore back, we bought a horse from a Qazaq for fourteen bricks of compressed tea. We also called on the various officials and thanked them for their kindness to us, bidding goodbye to the friends we had made. During our stay in Kobdo, Russians, Chinese, Mongols, Sarts and Qazaqs, both officials and people, have all been quite friendly to us.

“When we left Kobdo and started back for Altai we kept to the north side of the river for some time, then turned west and made our way toward the Terek Pass. After going up and down some steep mountains we began to wonder whether we were on the right road or not; however, we travelled on until dusk, and just as we had pitched our tent a Qazaq came along leading a caravan of Sarts and two Chinese merchants who were going to Altai. For days we followed the caravan, crossing and recrossing the rocky, rapid Terek River, and overtook the party just at the foot of the pass. This is the most difficult pass on the Altai Kobdo road, 10,500 feet, and as we climbed up the steep winding path a heavy hail-storm came on, the wind blowing the hail right into our faces. It seems almost incredible that the wonderful Qazaq and Mongol camels can cross this pass with a load. None of the ordinary camels from the plain can do it, and many even of the mountain camels perish on the way. We saw one poor helpless beast that had just been abandoned, and the bones of many others were strewn along the road. We all managed to cross the pass safely, but wondered that none of the horses had a broken leg.

“We travelled quickly along the northern shore of the Tala Lake and camped on the bank of the river that flows out of it. Though it is only August, we were caught in a snow storm and the water in the pools was all frozen. I have often heard Chinese say, ‘The Qazaqs are like the Sarts; they don’t understand kindness.’ This is not true of all of them, for a party who stayed with

us thanked us for all our trouble when they left. We passed many Uranghai Mongol tents, forded the Saksai River and camped not far from a Russian merchant's store-house. It was a cold ride in snow and sleet for several hours. A few days later we were surprised to see a solitary Chinese riding toward us. He had come from the Saksai district and, hearing that we were travelling to Altai, had tried to catch up with us, but had failed and had spent the night all alone on the Akorom Pass, trying to sleep while holding the horse's rope. He lives amongst the Mongols in the Saksai district, sells silver coins to the Mongol women, who use them for ornaments, and also barter Chinese cloth for fox skins and lamb skins. He is a Honan man named Yang and proved to be quite an unselfish and genial travel companion. Some Russians and Qazaqs came to our tent and we bartered Scriptures for ropes that we were badly needing.

"We then came to a district where we found friendly Qazaqs who supplied us with milk, cheese, curds and butter. We also met a very interesting Qazaq named Jangravel who came from the Kobdo area. He had been a very rich man, but lost his cattle in the Kobdo district because of the ravages of white and blue wolves. He listened with interest as we preached, but when I spoke on the subject of the Rich Man and Lazarus it caused great merriment and the Qazaqs laughed until they cried as they talked about it to each other. "The rich man—just like those *Bais* [rich men] who oppress us, and that is what lies ahead for them."

"Before I end this journal," George Hunter writes, "I should mention that while Kobdo is the land of lakes, Altai is the land of rivers. Here is the source of the Kran and Irtish Rivers, whose waters pass into the Zaisan Lake and from thence into the Gulf of Obi in the Arctic Ocean. In ordinary times Russian steamers come as far as Burchen on the Burchen River where it joins the Irtish, but ever since wars raged in Europe, the houses have been empty and the steamers have not been running."

The two missionaries returned to Urumtsi, but before they did so Hunter records: "I have written to the British and Foreign Bible Society asking for more Russian Bibles. I have done this

before, and a little Russian girl came to ask me if I had yet been able to secure one. 'Will it come to-day?' she asked."

The tone of George Hunter's reports was subtly changed, and unconsciously to himself they now revealed the happiness which had become possible, even in the same arduous conditions when shared, as they now were, by a young, congenial, spiritually keen and mentally resourceful companion. By himself he had been a lone wanderer, but now the two formed a team, and viewed their commission as a joyful adventure in which each was a faithful partner, bound to the other by the indissoluble tie of Divine appointment.

On this one trek alone they met with Russian military men, refugees and a priest of the Greek Church, with Turkis, Chinese, Qazaqs, Sarts, Tibetan lamas, Noghai Tatars, and Mongol men, women and children of the Kalmuk, Torgut, Ölot and Halhas tribes. To every one of these they brought the Gospel and left with them copies of the Scriptures in some language which they could read. This could only be possible through the persevering work of missionaries, backed by the generous, willing co-operation of the great Bible Society to which George Hunter was so firmly devoted.

Chapter Fifteen

THIS rough travel continued throughout the years, and though the travel diary may seem monotonous to those who read it casually and with an eye mainly to record-breaking adventures, to these two men their life of pioneering with Good News for everyone was a daily thrill, for wherever they went they left behind them the Book which is God's message of reconciliation to man. From the geographical angle, they had the interest of constantly exploring territory which was almost unknown to the Westerner, and from the human side they learned to know the people of those lands. They made themselves increasingly beloved on the trade-routes and in the nomad pasture lands, and so many contacts were made that during the months they spent in Urumtsi their house was daily besieged by people who had seen them elsewhere and who looked them up in their own home.

They never dared to relax their efforts, for they had a sense of urgency which warned them that the doors once so widely opened before them were gradually but relentlessly closing to shut them out. Military passes became necessary for certain districts where they had not previously been needed, and special permits had to be obtained in order to enter several of the areas. Neither of them ever spoke of taking furlough, for Hunter had for so long been completely detached from home ties that he had lost the desire to revisit Scotland, and Percy Mather, though he was bound to home and family by links of tender affection, and kept in close touch by means of constant and intimate letters, yet never took it for granted, as most other missionaries do, that there should be a recurring furlough at stated intervals. The subject therefore was never discussed between them until 1928, when Mather had been fully sixteen years in China and the Mission authorities wrote from Shanghai urging him to take this long-delayed journey home. In the summer of

the same year, a letter came to Urumtsi which announced that three women missionaries of the China Inland Mission would be travelling through that town on their way to the Trans-Siberian line and Europe. A decision was quickly made; Percy Mather would join the party and they would travel together to England. The three women, Eva and Francesca French and Mildred Cable, had been at work on the north-western border of Kansu and in Sinkiang for several years. They were the nearest missionary neighbours to the two men at Urumtsi, and only the breadth of the Gobi Desert divided them yet, so far, they had never met and excitement in Urumtsi at the prospect of this visit was very great. Percy Mather had not seen a fellow-countrywoman for twelve years, and such a visit called for extensive preparation in that simple bachelor establishment. A guest-house must be adapted to accommodate the three women, for neither the Hunter nor the Mather house was suitable to the purpose.

Bricklayers and carpenters were called in and a third three-roomed house rose in another corner of the compound which was referred to as "The Ladies House." The men felt that in their austere life they had perhaps forgotten how women expect to be received, but they comforted themselves with the thought that these women were, as themselves, pioneer missionaries, and that their living conditions were probably reduced to somewhere near the same level as their own. Moreover, those women were crossing the whole length of the Gobi to reach Urumtsi, and when that formidable journey has been accomplished the simplest entertainment is luxury.

George Hunter announced that he would travel south-east that summer, that he would meet their guests at Hami and would escort them back. Two months of travel would cover the whole trip, and this was not much to undertake for the sake of receiving honoured guests. Meanwhile, Percy Mather would hold the fort at Urumtsi and have all in readiness for the great day of arrival.

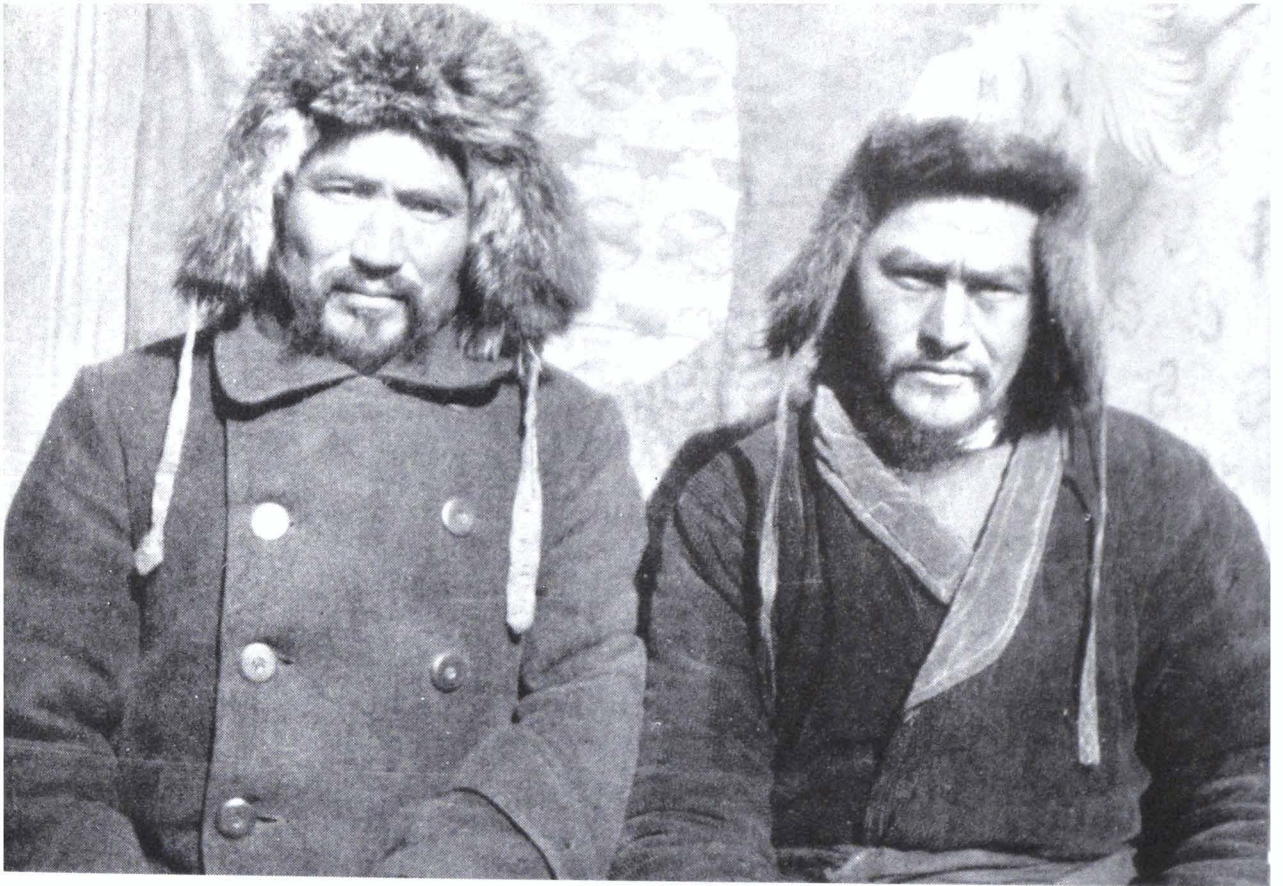
During the hot season, the three women pursued their slow and dusty journey over the track which links the oases of the Gobi trade-route. That road carries news more quickly than it conveys

travellers, and while they were still several stages from Hami, a report reached them that "the aged preacher of Urumtsi" had been seen on the road, and that he was on his way to meet "honoured guests from a distant place." A few days later they saw a very unusual little cart drawn up by the roadside from which a tall man dressed in coarse white Turki cotton had alighted and was standing at the horses' heads. There was little to distinguish this man from any Turki traveller, yet the women immediately sensed that here was a Westerner who could be no other than George Hunter himself.

His tall, loose-limbed, upright figure wore even this suit of coarse cotton with dignity. His hair and close-clipped beard were white and his eyes were of the bluest. George Hunter was already a legendary figure of the mission field and each of the three women had an unconscious mental picture of what he might be like, but in simplicity and in dignity he surpassed all expectation, and the acquaintance made at that hour deepened, as the years went by, into a great friendship.

There were still many miles to go before the stage would be reached where there was food and rest for man and beast, so Hunter took the lead while the heavily-laden desert vehicle did its best to keep him in sight. Hunter's cart was quite different from any other which was met on the road. It was a British cart and had been specially designed by the British Army to carry light ammunition from the base to the front line on the battlefields of France. After 1918 this small cart found its way via Russia into Sinkiang, where Hunter saw it and immediately bought it. It was very strongly constructed and became his home on many a long trek. He always owned a team of first-class beasts, and the little cart, laden with the books which are the missionary's munitions of war, and flanked by Mather on his grey horse and Nimgir on the chestnut steed, was a familiar feature on all travel-roads.

George Hunter did everything in his power to make the journey to Urumtsi as easy as possible for his women guests. Everywhere he had friends who made it an honour to help him,



ROAD ACQUAINTANCES CALL AT THE URUMTSI HOUSE



MEN OF THE ALTAI LISTENING TO WIRELESS PROPAGANDA



“YOU ROBBER OF OTHER MEN’S RELIGIONS. WE ARE DETERMINED TO FOLLOW MOHAMMET
HOWEVER TRUE YOUR WORDS MAY BE.”



TIBETANS



A FEW MILES FROM TUNHWANG ARE THE CAVES OF THE THOUSAND BUDDHAS

so everywhere they found the best rooms of the *serai* placed at their disposal, and they were helped over every difficulty by the men of the trade-route. On the last day, as they neared Urumtsi, a galloping grey horse brought Percy Mather to their side. He took over the duties of escort and a little later the travel cart with its strong team of mules went ahead and disappeared. When the party reached the crowded Urumtsi thoroughfare and drew up at the Mission house, Hunter was already there to welcome them, but the Turki traveller had been transformed into a Scotch divine. He wore his best black suit with turn-down collar and a black tie, the clumsy travel boots had been changed for highly polished leather shoes, and in a most courtly manner he welcomed his guests to his home.

Even such an unusual happening as the arrival of these visitors was not allowed to interfere with the daily routine of the household. Dinner was served in the usual way by the "boy" placing on the table some steamed mutton and a dish of plain boiled rice, but great delight was expressed when one of the women took over the housekeeping and produced different food which cost no more money, but proved to be more appetising than mutton and rice. However, when the guests left, the household resumed its normal ways and excepting for the treat of a large quantity of jam which had been made and placed in their store-room, nothing but mutton and rice was served again.

The visit lasted for several months for there were endless formalities connected with securing a transit permit through Russian territory, and the whole party left again for the Siberian frontier, for Hunter had decided that he must escort his friends as far as he could, and that when they had parted he would spend the winter on the Siberian border. The dread with which he faced the separation from his companion culminated in a great emotional strain shown by both men on that last day when they parted by the roadside among the foot-hills of the Tarbagatai Mountains. George Hunter had fulfilled the conditions—he had left all for the Name's sake, and after he had been stripped of home, land and

kindred he had received a hundredfold in perfect companionship from this understanding comrade.

It is not surprising that when friends at home questioned Percy Mather about his senior missionary, he, remembering that scene, would often turn his face away lest they see tears in his eyes. However, the year of furlough passed very quickly, and as soon as George Hunter heard that his comrade was leaving England and expected to cross India, reaching Kashgar by the Karakorum Pass, he himself started on another slow trek over the south road to Kashgar that he might meet him there.

Chapter Sixteen

KASHGAR was full of conflicting rumours. A dam had burst in the Himalayas and the travel-route over the Karakorum was reported impassable. Hundreds of Moslem pilgrims who had left earlier in the year for Medina had been unable to get through, and the one undoubted fact was that many of them had been drowned in the turbulent rivers before the others had turned back to Yarkand. This seeming disaster was accepted as being the will of *Huda* and a happy hereafter was said to be assured to the men who died on such a pilgrimage. George Hunter was accustomed to discounting rumours; had he heeded them his trips would have been fewer, but this time he actually met the pilgrims who had been turned back, and the same might well have happened to Percy Mather on his way from Kashmir.

He waited, spending several hours of each day on the *bazar*, preaching whenever there was an audience, talking to individuals when there was none, and always and everywhere distributing the books which carry the message home to any serious seeker. At last he was rewarded with good news. A caravan was through and it was reported that Ma Sien-seng (Mr. Mather) was not far behind. Within a few days he had arrived safe and sound after an incredibly difficult crossing of the mountain passes. A brief rest and they were on the old road together again, and furlough with its separation seemed already like the merest interlude in their long companionship.

The political news of Sinkiang was, however, enough to profoundly disturb their minds. Ever since the proclamation of the Republic in China in 1911, this province had been kept in peace under the firm control of Governor Yang. Now, while still in Kashgar, they had heard of the brutal murder of this man, and they knew that political and local disorder must inevitably ensue, and also that trouble in the province would place a limitation on their activities. Governor Yang had been asked to

distribute the prizes at the Russian College in Urumtsi, and while the ceremony was still in progress his bodyguard was disarmed and he was killed. Not only the provincial capital but the whole of Turkestan was horrified by this outrage. The man appointed in Yang's place was a weakling, quite unlike the autocrat who had ruled before him. He was an opium-smoker and absolutely inadequate to the task of controlling the lawless element which would certainly seize this chance of making trouble.

The murderer was caught and executed, and the populace watched to see what the next move would be. There were endless riots and disorders, and Sinkiang never regained the stability which it had enjoyed during the rule of Governor Yang who, during the long period when China proper was torn asunder by the depredations of war-lords, had so held his province that it was possible to travel the long, lonely Gobi roads in quiet and in peace.

So the two missionaries quickly resumed their hard work and their austere way of life, travelling, preaching and working till late at night at translations into the Mongol and Qazaq dialects. It is noticeable that after the simple enjoyments of home life which gave Percy Mather such pleasure during his furlough, there was no thought of easing up the hard life of Central Asia. Even during his absence he had rigorously disciplined himself, and only chose to eat the plainest food so that he might in no way lose his adaptability for pioneering.

It is probable that no missionaries have done more efficient evangelism over so wide an area as have George Hunter and Percy Mather but, advanced as was the initial stage of heralding the Gospel, the building up of the Church did not keep pace with it. As early as 1908 George Hunter had reported the first two baptisms, but after that this figure stood unaltered for many a long year. There were undoubtedly converts, but Hunter was so fearful of their backsliding or drifting away from the truth that he would not take the risk of keeping a communicant's roll. In evangelism no effort was too great for him, and he had compassed heaven and earth to make a convert, but the normal procedure that this same convert should confess his faith by

baptism and be admitted to the fellowship of the Church was not this missionary's way of doing things. He would quote St. Paul's statement; "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel," and at a given moment in his preaching, panic seized him and prevented him from leading a believer into full fellowship. He always foresaw the possibility of the man failing and in some way bringing disgrace on the name of Christ.

Percy Mather's influence was all on the other side, and after he came the number of baptised Christians gradually increased, though progress was slow both in respect of recognition of the convert and of delegation of authority in Church administration. As to the reception of a woman to Church membership, Hunter never felt himself competent to judge in such a difficult matter, and therefore thought it wiser to keep his hands off and take no risk.

Urumtsi is a city to which people converge from all parts of China, and in the course of time many were transferred to the local church. In this way a fairly large body of communicants was established, some of whom were cultured men holding important posts under the Government, and some of whom were women.

What was the secret of this strange reluctance to enjoy the fruits of the harvest? At the back of it was certainly Hunter's cautious temperament, and there was also his knowledge of the dark side of Urumtsi life and the snares it spread for young men, most of whom were separated for years and by the whole length of China from wife and children, but even this could not wholly account for his attitude. He truly feared dishonour to the name of Christ, but like others of his fellow missionaries his chief fear was not in regard to the judgment of God, but in respect of the cruel, critical sentences which might some day be passed by those who succeeded him in this land. He knew only too well the comments which might be made by those who followed him: "I thought there was a strong Church in Urumtsi, but I found it to be dead," with perhaps the addition: "My first painful duty was to dismiss the leader who had been Mr. Hunter's right-hand

man." Better than this were it to scrap the Church roll, he thought, and when converts were baptised to send in no report nor even to preserve a note of the fact. Percy Mather had a more balanced outlook in matters of Church government, and there was a great deal of talk and argument between the two men in regard to this matter. These discussions resulted in a measure of responsibility being delegated to the most reliable Church members, so that Sunday services and week-night instruction might be carried on regularly even when the missionaries were away from home. Thus Christian work in Urumtsi gained in continuity. The town was ready for a forward movement, and the harvest resulting from the two men's indefatigable labours was certain, but they never stayed to reap it.

When the three women already referred to spent one whole winter in Urumtsi they held special evangelistic services for the city women who crowded in day after day, in response to a widely-distributed invitation. When Percy Mather saw this happen he wrote home to his sister: "It was fine to see the Church crowded every midday, and to watch some three hundred women listening to the Gospel message. Our Sunday services are now a great sight and at last the women's side of the Church is filled as well as the men's."

Hunter's nature lacked the gift of drawing people to himself or even of attaching them to each other. He was truly the messenger of the Lord to them, but he took no personal interest either in the hearers or in their families. No one who believed through his ministry would ever say that George Hunter had won him by his genial and warm disposition, yet he prayed earnestly and with unfailing regularity for them all.

It would be quite impossible to measure the results of his wide-flung sowing of the seed of life, but here and there something came to light which was tangible proof of a spiritual harvest. The following account comes from the Rev. A. Moore, missionary of the China Inland Mission in Kansu. He escorted Percy Mather to Sinkiang, and on the way they had the following experience. "While travelling through north-west China in the

early part of 1914 we stayed one night in a village called Pulungi. After a wash and a cup of tea, we went on the street to preach the Gospel. While I was telling forth the message of salvation, I noticed an elderly man push his way into the centre of the crowd of listeners. He had rather a bright, happy face and he began to say, 'Why! It's just the same. There's no difference. It's exactly alike.' He was not talking to me or those around him, but to himself; in fact, he was just thinking aloud! To almost everything I said he repeated one of these sentences. On our way to the inn we talked about this man and called him for convenience 'Mr. Just-the-Same.'

"After our evening meal when we were getting ready for bed there was a knock at the door, and to our great surprise in walked our unknown friend, 'Mr. Just-the-Same.' After the usual exchange of remarks required by Chinese etiquette, I began to preach Christ, Saviour of the world, to him. He listened very patiently, but when he could get a word in he said, 'Truly we are brothers.' 'Well,' I said, 'there is only one true ground of brotherhood and that is to be brothers in Christ.' 'But,' he said, 'we are brothers because we worship the same God.' 'Oh,' I said. 'Have you heard the Gospel preached before?' 'No,' he answered. 'I have never heard the Gospel preached.' 'Then,' I said, 'tell us what you know about Jesus and the Gospel.' He told the following story: 'Seven or eight years ago a foreigner passed through our village on his way to Sinkiang. I had been working at the farm and was returning home late. While crossing the street this foreigner called me and gave me a book, saying, "Old gentleman, I want to give you this book. Take it home and read it. It contains the true doctrine!" He was an elderly man with a beard and I have never seen him again, but,' he continued, 'I took the book home and as I read its pages I destroyed my idols, I tore my household gods off the door and burned them, and I severed my connections with the three secret societies to which I belonged. Since then I have worshipped the God of that book.'

"We were astonished at his story, and asked him to tell us the name of the book that revolutionised his life. He answered,

'It is called John's Gospel, and when I came into the village this evening and came up to listen to your preaching, I was astonished when I heard you, for all you said was just the same as that book. There was no difference. It was exactly alike.' We rejoiced together in the wonderful power of the Word of God, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword." Needless to say, the foreigner who made this wayside contact and left the book in the man's hands was George Hunter.

One of his great joys was the fact that during the furlough of Percy Mather and the three women, reports had been taken to Bible House in London of the great need of Russian Bibles and Testaments among the congregations of Siberian Nonconformists which were gathering in several of the Sinkiang towns. There were whole congregations which only possessed one copy of the Bible, and they met to hear it read by their leader. When the Bible Society knew of this need they immediately set about to meet it and many parcels of Russian Bibles were posted to Urumtsi. Hunter wrote in acknowledgement: "I am exceedingly thankful to you for the Russian Bibles. They have been a great help here. At Duburgin it was 'Beeblee! Beeblee! Can you sell me a Beeblee?' on all sides. Also with the Russian soldiers in Urumtsi. Every Sunday I hear requests for a 'Beeblee, Beeblee.' These books have been most valuable since they arrived from London and I am now able to meet the most pressing demands, though it will require many more parcels before everyone who clamours for a Beeblee is satisfied."

Chapter Seventeen

ONCE more, and for the last time in his life, Hunter left for Shanghai in 1931. The Turk-Sib. Railway was now functioning from Sergiopol to Novo-Sibirsk, thus connecting the Turkestan border with the Trans-Siberian Railway for Harbin. The passing years and the hardness of his life had exacted their toll of his tough frame, and now the development of physical disability forced him to seek medical aid at the coast. Nothing less would have taken him away from Sinkiang, and as soon as his suffering was relieved he planned to return to Urumtsi. In the early part of 1932, however, there was trouble in Shanghai which delayed his departure.

The first signs of war in the Far East had appeared a few months previously, when the Japanese provoked an incident in Manchuria which served them as an excuse for invasion of that province. Now occurred the first attack in the series of undeclared wars which followed one another for the next decade. The pretext given was the boycott of Japanese merchandise, and the declared objective was to bring the Chinese outlook into line with the superior vision of the Japanese. The inhabitants of Shanghai awoke one morning to find that the Japanese were shelling the native city and the outer circle of the International Settlement. However, the period of this uncalled-for attack was brief, for by the end of March American intervention brought about an armistice which lasted more or less until 1937.

By the time Hunter could move again a new missionary policy had been formulated by the China Inland Mission for Sinkiang, or rather a policy which had been in abeyance for over twenty years was suddenly put into effect. In the course of a series of interviews, Hunter was informed that he was to escort to Urumtsi six young men who had recently arrived from England. He was told that they must be helped with the language and initiated into the peculiar conditions of Central Asian missionary work, as it was

expected that their future sphere of service would be among the tribes of Sinkiang. Meanwhile, Percy Mather, realising the critical political condition of the province, judged the moment inopportune for such a large increase of staff and telegraphed a warning to that effect. The young men, with Hunter, however, left for Sinkiang.

George Hunter was not born to the task of handling young men so skilfully that they would gladly bow to his discipline. It was thirty years since he had left Europe, and during that period the spirit which animates youth had undergone radical changes. His previous experience of initiating a junior worker was limited to the exceptional case of Percy Mather, who had so readily understood the principles which governed his senior missionary's actions that he had immediately entered on a relationship which made of him a perfectly congenial companion. These young men were extremely competent in the activities that interest modern youth. One of them had had some training as a motor engineer, another was a good chauffeur, and, as far as travel arrangements went, Hunter's experience counted for nothing in the new adventure. By the time they could leave Shanghai they had secured two Ford motor trucks which were to carry the whole party over the newly surveyed motor road across Mongolia with an ease unknown to former generations. They passed the camel caravans leaving them far behind, and arrived safely in Hami after about twenty-one days motor trip. Here they met an awkward situation, for the entire north-western area was honey-combed with preparations for a Moslem *coup d'état*. A young war-lord, Ma Chung-Ying, had rallied the Tungan forces and was on the point of invading Sinkiang with his irregular army. His followers purposed to make him Governor of Sinkiang and the Moslem ruler of a Moslem province. The moth-eaten Government of the North-West was at its wit's end to devise a means of saving itself from his dreaded rule, and the only outside power to which it could appeal was Russia, the northern neighbour. From her there was immediate response, but with the help came the tightening up of many kinds of control.

The arrival of six young Britishers could not pass unchallenged, and George Hunter was immediately suspected of introducing a group of secret agents to his household in the guise of junior mission workers. During all the peaceful years no young people had come to work under the seniors. Why, therefore, should they arrive at this critical hour? Had a couple of experienced men with knowledge of the Chinese language escorted the veteran missionary back to Urumtsi the situation could have been easily explained, but nothing could persuade the secret police that the arrival of the six had no political import. The new recruits did all kinds of quite normal things, such as riding out into the country in the early morning or indulging in an occasional hike. These rides took them sometimes past the wireless station and out beyond it, and the secret police, who were being trained to suspect everyone of treachery, made careful note of each such happening. In far more Westernised parts of China there is still curious questioning as to the purpose of the foreigners' unaccountable habit of tramping out four miles into the country and then turning back again with apparently nothing accomplished. These young men did this very thing, and all was duly reported to the Head Office by inconspicuous paid agents. Promotion depended on the frequency of reports on suspicious acts, and the most was made of these dark deeds.

The political situation rapidly deteriorated and Sinkiang was soon in the throes of civil war. The young war-lord, General Ma, made a few brilliant moves and appeared with his troops at the gates of Urumtsi. There were massacres in the streets of the town when the Governor's troops fought hand-to-hand battles with the Moslem population.

Emergency hospitals were opened in every public building, and these young men now proved their worth to the community. One of them was a fully qualified medical man who accepted the superintendence of a military hospital, enrolling his companions as Red Cross assistants. None of them spared himself any effort, but it was a heart-breaking business for the doctor. A man better experienced in the ways of Oriental administration might

have stood it better, but the strain of attempting to run a hospital full of wounded and typhus-ridden men in which he was the only surgeon, and in which he could count on no efficient and honourable backing from the Government which had asked him to undertake the job, was more than the young man could endure. Then the most crushing blow that could have come to George Hunter fell. Percy Mather came in from hospital very unwell. His temperature rose rapidly and it was evident that he had succumbed to one of the terrible fevers which every day was carrying off hospital patients. His resisting power was not as great as it would have been before the strain of the last six months had been brought to bear on him. All through his life he had helped everyone to the limit of his ability. During the time in which the Urumtsi household was increased four-fold, and hungry men required feeding, Percy Mather's responsibilities were greatly increased. Only he, through personal influence, was able to buy enough food for their daily rations; it was to him that everyone looked for help, and he it was who had to act as interpreter for the young doctor. Between whiles he was in and out among the hospital patients, helping, encouraging and exhorting the sick men. Three days later the doctor was stricken with the same disease, and others were fighting to save his life as he had fought for the life of others. The two men died in the space of three days. The Government, in recognition of the great services they had rendered, presented a piece of land outside the East Gate as a cemetery in which they might be buried.

The first anguished period of George Hunter's loneliness was spent in building with his own hands, and with the help of the sorrowing Nimgir, the wall which kept the ravening wolves from prowling round the graves. When Hunter met his old friends again he tried to tell them what his feelings had been when he realised that Mather's constitution was so impaired that he could not resist the ravages of typhus. "When I knew that he must die I gave one loud cry to God for mercy," he said, "but then I realised that I must bow to the Will of God for him and for myself, and I stilled my heart to accept His decree."

Chapter Eighteen

WHEN Percy Mather was dead and the companion of all the long years had gone, the Urumtsi house no longer seemed the same. The bright, cheery, keen comrade who made everything seem interesting and so gloriously worth while was no longer in it. Yet the daily round had to be faced, and Hunter knew that he must not shirk his work, so he disciplined himself to remember God's Will was good and perfect and acceptable, and that he must not complain. But no amount of resignation could remove the sense of loss which had descended upon him. In his agony, he sometimes called aloud for his friend, and then his sense of the majesty of God came upon him and he rebuked himself for even daring to repine at the dictates of One so mighty and so wise. Months went by and once more the "aged preacher of Urumtsi," as he was now called by men of the trade-routes, was again seen driving his little travel cart on the roads which he had so long frequented. Once more he took the two months' journey from Urumtsi to Kashgar, but, although he considered it a great honour, he told no one that, while there, he received from the Consul-General the Order of the M.B.E. which the King had been pleased to confer on him.

Inured to hardship as he was, he was still able to maintain his austere conditions of life, but now Nimgir relieved him of much work which he had once handled unaided. On arrival at a *serai*, it was evident to all that the old man was too weary to superintend the stalling of his beasts as his habit had always been, and indeed too tired to do anything but to hand over the reins to Nimgir, who was always near at hand, and to retire to his room to rest and eat a meal before he went on the *bazar*, books in hand, to meet the exacting claims of the lusty Central Asian crowd. The treks which he undertook were now almost too much for him, and he would reach home after several weeks of travel so exhausted that it was impossible any longer to fill up

all the spare time with work which could be done at his study table. Several attacks of bronchitis were a warning to him that he must not expose himself to storm or blizzard, and slowly-ebbing strength compelled him to recognise the limitations of old age.

An unexpected comfort came to George Hunter at this time in the form of a book called *The Making of a Pioneer*, which was the life-story of his comrade and friend, Percy Mather. The authors, knowing the critical quality of his mind and his devotion to his friend, feared that he might resent the production of such a book. Their relief, therefore, was immense when George Hunter said to them: "I never imagined that so beautiful and truthful a volume could have been written about Mr. Mather. I re-live the old life when I am reading it." He carried the book everywhere with him, and seemed to find immense consolation in reading and re-reading it.

About this time the staff at Urumtsi was strengthened by the appointment of Mr. and Mrs. Hayward who were American subjects and missionaries of experience, but their residence in Sinkiang was necessarily brief for the authorities who were imposing their will upon the province had determined that no Christian missionary should be allowed to carry on work in those parts.

From this time conditions of life, both in Urumtsi and on the trade-routes, rapidly deteriorated. Inflation of the currency was the inevitable result of bad financial administration, prices soared and the standard of living fell. More irritating than any of these difficulties were the restrictions imposed on personal liberty. It was no longer possible to take the shortest journey without being obstructed by endless formalities which resulted in long delays. All letters were censored, and it was necessary to omit many of the things which correspondents were anxious to say, both in the letters which left as well as those which entered the country. Hunter wrote of having warned some well-meaning but indiscreet friends: "I am writing to Mr. X and Mr. Z telling them not to send any more letters here. The homes to which they

have written have been officially searched and the people are in danger. I am not afraid of your letters, for you know what it is safe to say." On more than one occasion he was treated with some indignity by municipal authorities, and one day sentries were placed at his front door and he was informed that he might not leave the house without permission. None of these restrictions on his liberty proceeded from any ill-will on the part of Chinese officials. On the contrary he was, from first to last, held in the highest respect by the Chinese, officials and populace, but the municipal authorities had to bow to the dictates of the higher authority which had taken control of Turkestan.

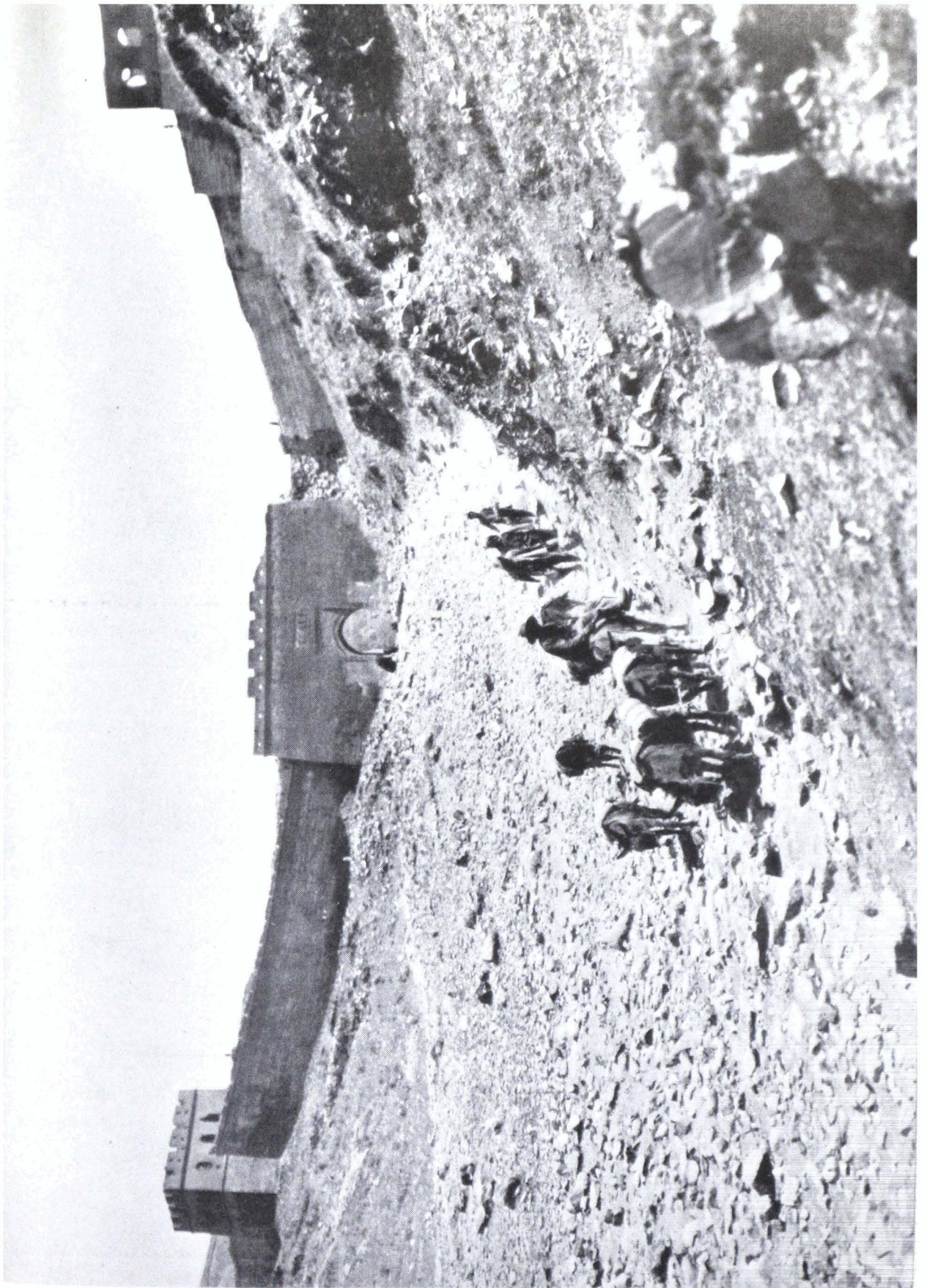
They had once asked and received help from a too powerful neighbour, and now, in consequence, their own domestic affairs were settled for them in a way which was far from pleasing to themselves. An informer was appointed to keep an eye on all that took place in Hunter's house. The name of every visitor was listed, and in consequence they were notably fewer; his letters were severely censored and all his movements were checked. As conditions grew worse, all the missionaries were told to leave the province. The younger men saw there was nothing for them to do but obey the order and go. Not so George Hunter. He had done nothing which could be used as an excuse for sending him out, so he refused to leave his home. Then, one day, there was a peremptory knock at his door and the secret police walked in, told him to pack a suitcase of clothes and to follow them to headquarters of the N.K.V.D. on the plea of a necessary interrogatory on matters of importance. He was then thrown into a prison cell, where he endured the worst forms of mental torments that his torturers could devise. Frequent orders were given that Hunter was to be shot and he heard loud-speakers blaring forth noises of shootings, shoutings and screams. Often he heard a call in the voice of one or other of his former companions, voices which must at some time have been caught on a record, and he thought that they had not, as he hoped, left the country, but were actually with him inside the prison walls. Sometimes he heard cries as of Chinese Christians under torture

and yet again the shouts of a mob reached his ears and their yell of hate was "Hunter shall die! Hunter shall die!" This form of torment produced the most painful nervous reaction until he found himself calling aloud: "I shall not die, but live and proclaim the Word of the Lord." "You are a spy" was the constant charge brought against him. "No," he said, "I am a servant of Jesus Christ." "You have made maps and supplied secret plans to your Government." "I only know Christ crucified," he wearily reiterated.

A Roman Catholic priest who was imprisoned at the same time endured the torture of being made to stand for long periods, first eleven days, then eight days and finally eighteen days. The authorities tried by every means to elicit a confession from each of the men that they were both anti-Communist and pro-Japanese. Two of their judges were Russians and the rest were under Russian control. The two meals a day which were served them consisted solely of millet porridge, and exhaustion added to their miseries.

The imprisonment lasted for thirteen months and then came release, but Hunter's life for Sinkiang was over. His earnest request to be allowed to re-visit his own home in Urumtsi was refused, and instead he was conveyed direct to the aerodrome, where a plane was waiting to carry him to the provincial capital of the Province of Kansu. In Lanchow there was a missionary community which welcomed him into its homes, but he would have none of it, and the missionaries had to endure the pain of seeing him organise life in one small room near the Christian church. Here he fed on the poorest and scantiest of food, which he prepared for himself, only awaiting the hour when he might get back to his loved home in Urumtsi. He preached, he sold books and he talked with men on the *bazar*. He joined with the missionary community for prayer and Bible-reading, but he had no use for their ordinary social intercourse.

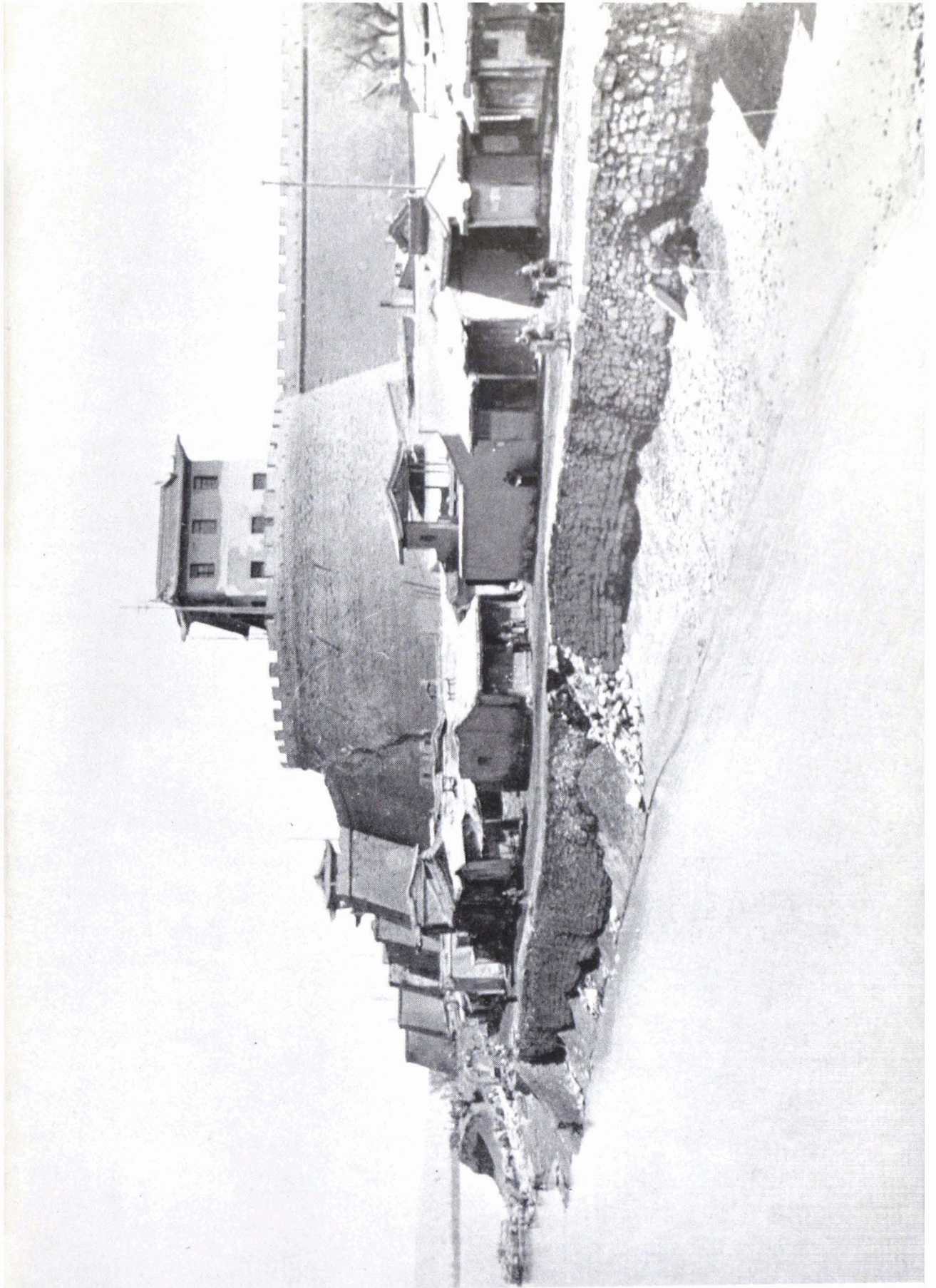
Then once again it seemed as if the Lord whom he loved sent him a special and private blessing. George Young, a missionary of the Baptist Society, came to Lanchow on tour. The two men



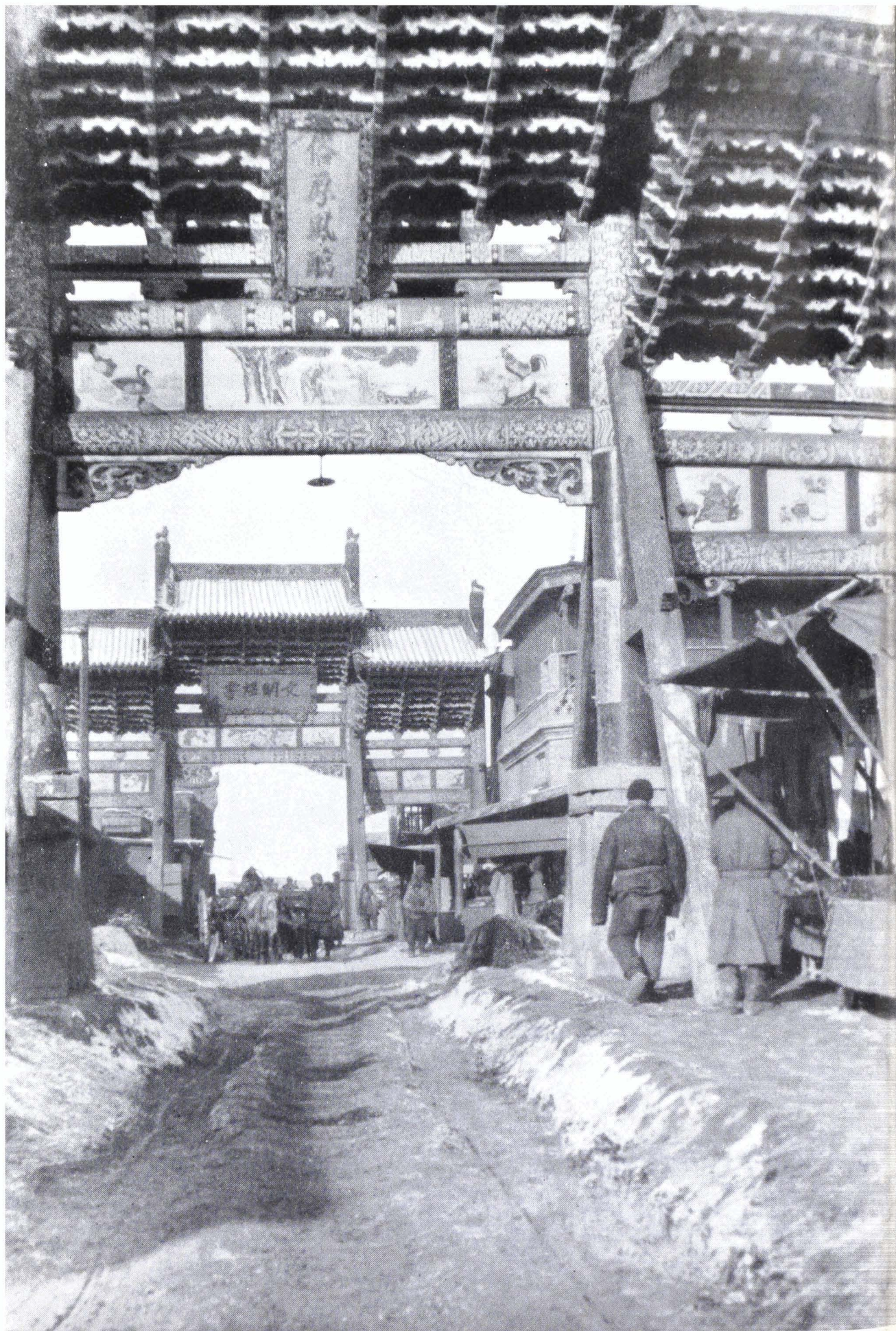
THE ROADS WERE STONY AND THE GOING WAS BAD



THE DUNES TOWARD LOB



LANCHOW CITY WALL



A STREET IN URUMTSI

GEORGE HUNTER

met and in a moment George Hunter had found a comrade and George Young a hero. For long hours the men talked and prayed together and Hunter cherished the hope that when he returned to Sinkiang George Young might go with him. The spontaneous love of Hunter for this man was easily understandable to some of his friends, because George Young bore a strange likeness to Percy Mather, not only in personal appearance but even in little tricks of manner, such as could not fail to impress those who had known the pioneer companion of Hunter's earlier days. The attraction was mutual, and when Hunter died this new friend wrote the following account of the time which they had spent together.

Chapter Nineteen

THE REV. GEORGE YOUNG writes as follows: "During a visit to the Kansu and Chinghai Provinces in the autumn of 1944 I had many interesting experiences, but for me the high light of that trip was meeting George Hunter. I knew him by name, for I had read of him and he was one of my heroes, like Gilmour of Mongolia, David Hill of Hankow, Robert Morrison and other missionary pioneers. Thus it was with a thrill of expectation that I heard that he was living in Lanchow. Next day I was introduced to this great apostle of Central Asia.

"The tall and slightly bent veteran with white hair and beard gave me a gracious smile of welcome as we shook hands, and invited me into his room. It was a real bachelor's room with books scattered about on tables, chairs and bed, and on dusty shelves against the wall. His desk was littered with Bibles in English, Chinese and other languages, and papers with translations written thereon. He wore a long, shabby overcoat and an old tweed suit, but notice of outward things was soon lost in the fascination of the man himself.

"He was not a man who would attract the attention of men of the world. He did not impress by his efficiency or his ability. His personality was neither dramatic nor glamorous. He was not a 'good mixer,' preferring to live apart from other missionaries, buying his food on the street and cooking it himself. Those accustomed to external judgments would dismiss him as an old crank and politely ignore him, but to the child of God with eyes to see, here was spiritual greatness of the highest order. There was something grand and inspiring about him. One look at his face and his bearing revealed the white purity and shining serenity of a man of God. Cheerfulness and gentleness radiated from him as he spoke about his work. Gaiety sparkled from his eyes as he related some humorous incident. He was one who obviously enjoyed life, for to him to live was Christ, and daily

communion with his Lord had kept him fresh and alert. His faculties were amazingly bright for a man of eighty-three; he was vigorous in mind and good in memory as he related past adventures. What an interesting talker he was and what varied interests he had in travel, geography, exploration and languages, and yet one dominant purpose shone through all his talk—the Will of God, which for him meant bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the needy people of Sinkiang. It was that which impressed me—his single-mindedness. He did me good by unconsciously revealing his interior simplicity of aim. He was not cluttered up by doing many things. He was unentangled by the affairs of this life. He just lived to do the Will of God. Everything else grooved into this narrow way. Like an athlete, he cut out of his life all comforts and indulgences that his body might be tough and inured to intense suffering and strenuous effort. As we talked together I felt I had the rare privilege of talking to a saint.

“Yet he was no conventional saint, self-consciously pious and unctuous, sweet and suave in manner. He was not soft and sentimental. No, he was a rugged Scot from Aberdeen, with much of the granite of that highland city in his nature. Aberdeen granite is clean and white as it shines in the sun, but it can give you a pretty hard knock if you don’t watch your step. So with George Hunter. He was not an easy man to get on with. He had strong views and definite beliefs, and an obstinate determination to go the way he believed right. He had high standards of discipleship for himself and for those who would share his life. Central Asia had given him a shrewd insight into the vagaries of the human heart, and this made him slow to give men his confidence. He had learned by experience not to put trust in outward things.

“It is a constant wonder to me that he was so very generous in sharing with me his inmost thoughts, for I belonged to another Mission and we were only together for about ten days. Some mutual attraction drew us together in converse and prayer, and during that time I came to know and love him and to respect his judgment. Though apparently aloof, this was not due to a sense of superiority, but to a humble shyness in human society due no

doubt to a lifetime of desert solitude. He was not by nature effusive, but he was deeply affectionate, and during the past ten years he had greatly missed the strong companionship of his ideal partner, Percy Mather. He told me so much about him and the work they had done together.

“He spoke of the various tribes and races of Sinkiang, and about the large Russian community in the north, and especially about the Russian Baptists, in whom I was particularly interested. He described vividly his visits to the Russian churches at Kuldja, Chuguchak and other centres, and was warm in his appreciation of the zeal and faith of these Christians. At Kuldja there were two hundred families, he said, who formed a strict Christian community; they had endured severe persecution by the Reds; and they were in need of mature guidance and spiritual help in building up the Church on New Testament lines. He spoke very affectionately about these Russians and showed me piles of a paper-covered Russian hymn-book which he had just printed and which he was hoping to send them. This was one of the burdens on his heart—the spiritual welfare of the five thousand Russian Nonconformists in north and north-west Sinkiang.

“On another occasion he asked me what my attitude was to the Revivalist sects which were agitating and rending many of the Churches in the north-west. For the last seven years our Church in Shensi had been sadly disrupted by these people, so I was able to speak from experience. He was interested in what I related and agreed with our attitude, but he said he would be even stricter in opposing them. He spoke very sternly about the danger of this wishy-washy emotional piety which was appearing in the Chinese Church, and gave a warning about being deceived by excitement, fleshly zeal, visions, tongues, and signs which he said were all deceits of the Devil. He argued from the Bible that the dispensation of the Apostles was past; therefore signs, miracles and tongues were things of the past. These heretical revivalists should be opposed or they would wreck the Church; they had even got as far as Sinkiang and he was concerned for the faith of

the Christians. He had no use for a religion without strict morality. He was insistent that a true Church must thrive not on emotion and ignorance, but on knowledge of the Word of God, and obedience to that Word in practical every-day Christianity. There was some sentiment in his nature, but not a bit of sentimentalism. He was a spiritual realist.

“We spent many hours talking about the work in Sinkiang and the type of workers needed. It was on this subject that he had much sound counsel to give. I noted down in my diary the points he mentioned: Missionary work in Sinkiang was still in the early stage as compared with work in China. There were vast unevangelised areas which needed pioneer work. There were scattered groups of Christians who needed building up and welding into a strong, united Church. He said that his work had been ploughing the ground and sowing the seed, and that although he could see some green shoots sprouting it was still a long time till harvest.

“At this stage there was need for many missionaries. These missionaries must be sound in the faith and united in aim though specialising in different kinds of work. I asked him what he meant by ‘missionaries of the right sort.’ He said that this question of the right workers had occupied his mind for many years, and he spoke very strongly and frankly on this subject.

“He was most emphatic that new recruits should on no account be sent to Sinkiang. He said that some years ago six new recruits from abroad had been sent to work with him in Tihwa and it had been a mistake. He praised the zeal and courage of these young workers, but he said that through no fault of their own they were ignorant of the complex and delicate political state of the province, and without knowledge of the local conditions and conventions of the different racial groups. As a result it was very easy for well-intentioned good actions and harmless recreations to be misunderstood by a suspicious people, and this had made the work more difficult. I could see that he felt very strongly on this point.

“I was impressed by his sound understanding of missionary

strategy and tactics, and by his forward-looking mind. There was something apostolic about this grand old warrior of eighty-three planning to go back to Sinkiang, planning the various types of work to be done, and the kind of workers needed. None of his suffering, his imprisonments, his loneliness, the loss of his parchments and translations and his precious books, none of these things moved him or deflected him from his set purpose. "I must go back," he said to those who advised him to stay. I gazed at him in silent admiration, and said I would fain go with him. He was moved by my offer and said he could desire nothing better. But it was not to be. Sinkiang is still a closed land for missionaries, and my friend and hero has joined the saints triumphant. I thank God for the priceless privilege He gave me of meeting George Hunter. Only one thing greater I could have desired—to have been his fellow worker after Percy Mather.

"The secret of his great life of devoted service to Christ is in something he rarely talked about—his disciplined life of prayer. After each talk, and before we retired for the night, it was our custom to kneel together beside his bed and pray to our Heavenly Father. Such a holy experience is too sacred for words. The amazing humility and boldness of this man before God, the trusting faith in asking for things, the wide sweep of his intercession which included the whole world, his oneness with the Father's will, and his single desire to seek first God's Kingdom—these aspects of his prayer-life were a rebuke and an inspiration to me. He showed me more than he was aware. He taught me more than he knew; just this, that the man who will keep right to the end of the chapter is the man whose gaze is fixed on God, whose joy is in God's company and whose heart is pure in its devotion to the will of God.

"My last sight of this heroic soul was like Odell's last sight of Mallory and Irvine on Everest, battling against great odds and in the teeth of a raging blizzard 'going strong for the top.' From the summit above and ahead of him nothing could turn him back."

Later on George Hunter travelled once more on the North-West Road, hoping against hope that he might be allowed to re-enter Sinkiang and end his days in that land which he loved but which had become so inhospitable to him. He reached Kanchow, where there was a colony of Chinese Christians, and here he remained, waiting for an occasion to slip over the frontier. That occasion never occurred, and it was in Kanchow that he died. The Christian household had made him welcome, and when he was ill they nursed him and cared for him.

To the last he had a faithful servant near him. This man had gone up as far as Urumtsi with the three women missionaries, and there had been seized and kept in prison for several years on the accusation of attempting to leave the province without official permit. When released he had returned to Hunter's house and service, and his faithful attendance had brought great comfort through the dark days which followed. He was a native of Kanchow, and when he heard that his old master had trekked north-west again, he went and stayed with him through the last months of declining strength. About the middle of December 1946 it became evident to all at Kanchow that George Hunter was sinking fast, and word to that effect was despatched to Lanchow, where his fellow missionaries were living. It was on 20th December that the news reached them, and communication by telephone was at once made with the Kanchow Post Office. "We want the latest report regarding Mr. Hunter," was the enquiry. And the answer came: "The aged pastor is dead. He breathed his last a few moments ago."

His body was laid to rest in a corner of the Christian compound. He had hoped and prayed, and prayed and waited for the day when Sinkiang would again be open to the Gospel, but this time it was not to be his commission to re-enter it. Man's decree was allowed to close that door to the Western missionary, but not to the Winds of God, which blow as they list and are not subject to the commands of human arrogance. George Hunter would have been more than human had he never asked himself whether his long and arduous journeys might not have been in vain, but if ever

GEORGE HUNTER

there was one who fed on the Word of God, this was he, and that Word does not admit of failure except by reason of unfaithfulness. A handful of seed was committed to the man Hunter, and he sowed it in such fashion that in his most far-seeing moments he could declare: "There shall be a handful of corn in the land . . . the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon . . . the hand of the Lord hath done it. . . . Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Chapter Twenty

AND now not only Percy Mather but George Hunter has been removed from the Church militant here below to join the Church triumphant beyond the grave. Two pioneer missionaries of most unusual calibre have passed on, leaving behind them a trail blazed through the tangled undergrowth of superstition and prejudice in one dark land.

Certain characteristics they had in common; first and foremost was such a clear-cut sense of objective as to govern and control everything in life. The words spoken of Winkleman might with perfect truth be applied to each of them: "Nothing was admitted to life unpenetrated by its central enthusiasm." That central enthusiasm was Christ and the knowledge of His personal commission to each of them. They were true Christians, for they were Christ obsessed. To be His ambassadors, His witnesses, was to them the greatest honour and the greatest privilege which could be extended to anyone. There was even a certain deep joy in sharing His sufferings, and whenever they were homeless, cold, persecuted or despised, each of them knew an inward delight that he was counted worthy of enduring such an experience.

When they preached the glorious Good News they knew that the Spirit of God was working with them and that the harvest was sure and certain. Intercourse with their Lord made clear to them the meaning of His words: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also must I bring," and this drove them to the most distant places and among the wildest tribes where life itself was often in danger, in order to seek and find the lost.

So as the better to fit themselves for the fulfilment of such a high commission, they submitted themselves to the most severe discipline, and neither man permitted himself any indulgence whatsoever. The rooms in which they slept were bare but for a rough bed and the sheer necessities of life. It could be said that

they were always on duty. Their daily diet consisted of porridge for breakfast, a small piece of steamed mutton and a bowl of rice for dinner, and whatever remained over supplied the supper. This was the menu which was served at their table for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

Lest anyone should ever seek an occasion to spread "idle words" about their bachelor house, neither man would ever accept an invitation which necessitated absence from home for an evening. They were always in their own rooms by nine o'clock though they often worked there until midnight. The Mission House in Urumtsi boasted nothing which made it suitable for entertaining the renowned scientists who sometimes visited them there, yet each one of these celebrities realised that his had been the honour when he was received by either of the men. The simple cup of tea with a Chinese cake was all that could be produced, and some who stayed to a midday meal must have wondered at the austerity of the fare which was offered. Nevertheless, even the most learned would find himself a learner as he sat and talked with the two missionaries. They were poor indeed in this world's goods, yet the old suits, the faded and torn overcoats, might easily have been replaced with something smarter, for their missionary remittances made full allowance for these needs, but in their estimation the money was much more urgently needed for the supply of paper for those mimeographed Gospels, and for the payment of the mullahs who helped to translate them. They were however rich in the treasure which they laid up in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupted and where thieves could not break through nor steal. They had investments of surpassing value there, and they looked eagerly for the interest which would accrue from that deposit.

They felt rich in the bread which God supplied to them each day, and that bowl of steamed rice was eaten with joy and acknowledged as a gift direct from their heavenly Father. Few gourmets enjoy their *recherché* meals as these pioneers enjoyed their plain fare. They knew that their life and walk must be of a kind which would appeal to Christian and non-Christian alike,

and that in a town where sin walked unashamed they must be entirely without reproach, even where it necessitated a clear cut from the social life of the place. Such separation was naturally misunderstood by many for it is not often that such complete other-worldliness is met on life's journey, yet it were well if more such people might be found in the missionary body, where too few are prepared to pay the cost involved and some even resent the fact that such a price should be required of them. Hunter and Mather did not see themselves as losers in the great transactions of life, for the result of this unique fellowship and friendship was that the Good News was carried to lonely *yurts*, to distant lamaseries and to tiny *isbas* on the travel-routes of Central Asia.

"The powers of darkness," wrote George Hunter, "are roused in Sinkiang and we are ever conscious of the terrible forces which are arrayed against us." Such completely sincere and faithful soldiers of the cross as were these two men could not fail to find the battalions of darkness ranged against them, but they armed themselves with spiritual weapons and used them to such good effect that having fought to the finish they passed on victoriously. In losing life they found it.



U. S. S. R.

Sergiopol

Lake Balkash

Turk-sib Railway

Baxti

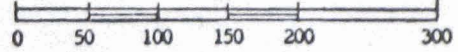
Chuguchak

R. Kran (Fleish)
Chengwasze (Altai or Shara Sumi)

Buyunti R.
Kobdo

Kara Lake

English Miles



URGA

M O N G O L I A

Alma Ata

Ili R.

Chinhuoting

Totokeh

Kuldja

Shihu

Manas

Santai

URUMTSI

Kucheng

Turfan

Tokioking

Takianus

Toksui

Karashar

Bagrash Kul

Tarim

Hami

Changliushui
Hsinghsinghsia

Gaskun Nor

Sogo Nor

Desert of Gobi

Kashgar

Jam

Aksu

SINKIANG

Makan Desert

Chaklik

Cherchen

Top Nor

Tachuan

Shahmen

Tientsan

Maomu

NINGSIA

Su-lo

Ansichow

Yumen

Tunhwang

Kiayükwan

Suchow

Fuyi

Kanchow

Edingol

Ningsia

GREAT WALL

Karakorum pass

KASHMIR

NANSHAN

Kara Nor

Liangchow

Koko Nor

Tangar

Sining

Yellow River

LANCHOW

Hochow

Tienschui

KANSU

INDIA

TIBET

CHINGHAI

TSUIDIM

TAI

CHINGHAI

INS