

the atmosphere was uncommonly balmy and seemed to encourage a sort of little brown beetle. I counted over six hundred around my lamp. They swarmed in dense battalions, rushing backwards and forwards over the paper while I wrote. When the temperature was only a couple of degrees above zero these little pests stayed at home, and I was able to write my notes and letters in peace.

ARRIVAL OF FORTY-TWO CAMELS

Just as we sat down to lunch on the 28th one of our Mongols came in and announced to LARSON that a herd of camels was approaching. We hastened out with field-glasses. Two of the Mongols we had sent out to the north-east, themselves riding upon camels, were driving the herd in the direction of the camp. They drew rapidly nearer over the steppe. When the animals were quite close they shyed at the tents and bolted off in a wide arc to the north, veiled in clouds of whirling dust. The riders soon had them in hand again, however, and they once more approached the stream. They came splashing over, and LARSON and I went up to inspect them. The forty-two newcomers were fat and in good condition. We now had nearly two hundred camels in camp. We had paid for a further forty, and expected their arrival at any moment.

ANIMAL LIFE IN AND OUT OF CAMP

We had acquired a yellowish dog from the nearest Chinese village, a few kilometers to the south-west. He was christened Hami, for he had once visited this distant town with a Chinese caravan. He was a plucky dog. One evening I heard his hoarse bark retreating from my tent and finally dying away in the distance. The next morning I heard that three wolves had been skulking about the tent of the Chinese. The night-guard had hastened up, to see Hami chasing away the wolves and pursuing them to the hills in the east. Another night, too, he kept wolves at a distance from our tethered sheep.

We had ordered four sheep from the nearest Mongol camp. An old Mongol brought them over, and he was all of a dither when he arrived. A large, ravenous wolf had followed him and the sheep nearly all the way, and he had no weapon, not even a stick.

One night a mare in the vicinity was overpowered by wolves, and they had not left much more than the skeleton behind. Their chief prey, however, are the antelopes: but these animals are on their guard, and their fleetness is their best safety. When grazing they always have their noses in the wind.

Wolves are seldom dangerous for man in these parts; their hunting-grounds are too well stocked with easier prey.